



‘ROLE OF HOUSES OF GOA MUSEUM IN PRESENTING GOAN HISTORY And CULTURE’

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Abstract:

‘Houses of Goa’, a unique museum by the well-known architect Gerard da Cunha, encapsulates for posterity the phenomenal outcome of the amalgamation of eastern and western architectural styles. Goa has a strange but novel history and that it is a part of the first sustained encounter between the East and the West.

KEY WORDS:

western architectural styles , rich history , phenomenal outcome .

INTRODUCTION-

Though it has a long and rich history from times immemorial and much before the arrival of the Portuguese, this encounter produced a unique culture and architecture. This museum showcases houses which were the prime expression of the Goan identity. The museum is built as a traffic island in Torda, Salvador-do-Mundo, Goa. Strangely enough it is in the shape of a triangle and resembles a ship. Viewed from the outside it is a mystery, but as you begin your visit, it slowly unfolds its charms (da Cunha 2000).

CONCEPT BEHIND THE MUSEUM

What is so special of a Goan house? When the Portuguese colonized Goa, architect Gerald da Cunha says, "They brought in their own architectural designs and lifestyle to influence the already strong culture and architecture that prevailed here in Goa. As a result of the amalgamation, an entirely new thing emerged. What you see in Goan houses, you don't see in Portugal, or elsewhere in the world." The highly creative architect claims that it is "our own Goan style, Goans, who were the converts, were looking for a new identity, and thus embarked on the experiment in architecture, to produce something unique and unseen anywhere in the world".

When asked about how he has conceived the museum concept, he says; “Being an

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architect it is my responsibility to document the architecture as a local person, who has thrived in the picturesque village Salvador do Mundo in Bardez". So Gerard da Cunha created a ship-like structure to house all the goodness in Goan architecture, which would otherwise be lost.

The Houses of Goa Museum is a resource-cum-research centre for the traditional architecture of Goa. They welcome any form of documentation, objects in the form of donation or on loan. The museum has no outside funding and is a self-sustaining project. The museum has been built with a bank loan and is being run without any funding. Purchases at the counter (books, photos, pamphlets etc.) help tremendously to make ends meet. Apart from this, entry fee, museum guide, workshops and light show also help the museum in earning (da Cunha 2000).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MUSEUM

There are certain aims and objectives which are followed at this museum. While constructing the museum the architect had followed some rules and the architectural brief was quite simple.

- To create a village core with urban design considerations.
- The building was to house a Museum of Traditional Goan Architecture.
- It had to look crazy enough in the tradition of museum buildings which would attract also the local vegetable seller into buying a ticket.

COLLECTIONS

Mr. Gerard da Cunha's collection in the museum takes one on an eventful journey, showing 'Goa in the context of the world, the wealth of Goan architecture and the details of various elements' that make Goan houses so special. It is a repository of painstakingly collected doors, windows, a rare hat stand and door shutters, old French doors from a house in Margao built in 1917, old tiles from late nineteenth century, old china mosaic patterns of different houses, a glass tile, dressed laterite, 16th and 17th century tiles imported from Europe, old terracotta tiles, religious pictures, altars, statues, etc. There are three galleries at the museum.

On the walls of all the galleries are the pictures of imposing, important buildings in the world on one panel and beside is another panel with equally important Goan monuments, showing when they were built. This is done in order to enable the visitor to compare what was being built somewhere else in the world while for example, the Se Cathedral was being built in Goa. Five-hundred-year-old pictures of Goa collected from various sources worldwide, and rare postcards of Goa dating back to 1900, give an exclusive picture of what Goa and its cities looked like a century ago. There are maps, architectural designs and plans of some very old houses like that of Mario Miranda's, (one of Goa's most celebrated artists) with a bit of its history and location of each house. Having finished seeing all that's on the wall, around the round pillars, one can approach the computer systems where one can click on to the documentation of Goa's history right from the day the Portuguese landed on the Anjediva Island. The history of Goa from the pre-historic times, the Bhoja dynasty, the ancient Rashtrakutas, is also found. Moreover, there is an album of large panels giving all the pictures showing the colour, flooring, doors and windows, old railings, etc. of a typical Goan house. Rare pictures of the first things in Goa like the first telephone are displayed on the walls.

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Climbing the spiral steps to the theatre upstairs, one can see rare ancient lamps and a machila (ancient mode of transport), and with a seating arrangement for about 100 people. Here Gerard da Cunha conducts a slide show, with an adaptable screen, taking one on an architectural tour right to the earliest mud house.

GROUND FLOOR:

At the ground floor of the museum there's a reception at one corner and the café at the other, the two ends supported on giant grinding stones.

1. Reception
2. Toilet
3. Kitchen
4. Café

Gallery 1:

This Gallery is about Goa in the context of the outside and its wealth of Domestic Architecture. Around the staircase core are panels that place Goa in the context of the world. Along the periphery are examples of the Goan houses. Various displays in this gallery are:

1. Introduction of Goan houses,
2. Sunita Dalvi's (local artist) sketches of houses of Goa,
3. Model of Casa dos Fernandes,
4. Plans and pictures of Casa dos Miranda's at Loutolim,
5. Plans and pictures of Casa dos Kelekars at Priol,
6. Plans and pictures of Casa dos Quadros e Costa at Loutolim,
7. Plans and pictures of Solar Loyala Furtado at Chinchinim,
8. Plans and pictures of Casa do Godinho Jaques at Majorda,
9. Panels depicting elements of style,
10. Plans and pictures of Visconde de Pernem (Deshprabhu House),
11. Plans and pictures of Palacio Santana da Silva at Margao,
12. Mario de Miranda's painting series titled Glimpses of Goa,
13. Chronology of world architecture,
14. Historic pictorial records of Goa,
15. Encounters with the outside world.

Gallery 2:

This second Gallery of the Museum is dedicated to the details about materials, construction, interiors, furniture of Goan houses and Goan climate. It contains the following display. Titles of this display are kept as it is.: Letters 'a' and 'b' in the brackets denote that there are two displays of the same exhibit.

1. China mosaic (a), 2. Materials and construction, 3. The interior, 4. Home altar ludurico da Costa, Curtorim, 5. Verandah railing, 6. Climate and architecture, 7. Frescoes and wall paintings, 8. Cast iron grill, 9. The Security door, 10. Column of a French door railing, 11. Cabide (an architectural feature of a Goan house) (a), 12. Railings, 13. Roof tiles, 14.

Laterite, 15. The Hands, 16. Flooring tiles, 17. Hindu Gods and Goddesses, 18. Devghar, 19. Window grill, 20. Hat stand, 21. 4-Poster bed head, 22. Indo-Portuguese furniture, 23. Pelmet, 24. Wall cupboard, 25. The Oyster shell, 26. False ceiling, 27. China mosaic (b), 28. Eaves boards (a), 29. Columns, 30. Front Door, 31. Date Plaque (commemorative plate fixed on a wall), 32. Cabide (b), 33. Eaves Board (b), 34. Windows.

GALLERY 3:

This gallery consists of a Theatre and the ‘final’ Goan house. This level has sections on tulsivrindavan, balcaos (veranda), the Double storied house and the raj angann(enclosed courtyard within a house, around which were the rooms). In this section one can see the culmination of the Indo-Portuguese style which culminated in creating the most extroverted house in India. The gallery converts into a 35 seater auditorium which is used to deliver PowerPoint presentations/lectures. Displays in this gallery include:

1. Tulsivrindavan, 2. Tulsivrindavan and Crosses, 3. Casa de Sobrado (Double Storied House), 4. Helder Carita (a Goan artist), 5. The balcao, 6. Early Goan houses, 7. The Public Face (paintings of Mario Miranda), 8. Mario Miranda (house and its Setting), 9. Rajangan, 10. The machila (ancient mode of transport).

Mr. Gerard da Cunha has been collecting these things for several years. He decided to have a building to house this collection, since he possessed this ideal piece of land. He envisaged a design of a traffic island. Architecturally, he calls it a ‘most modern of modern buildings’. “There is nothing traditional about its architecture but it is nice sometimes to display traditional things in a modern building”, he says. The shape of a ship emerged, because the site was like that. Now to people it looks like a ‘Titanic’ ship. From a different viewpoint it appears like a big bird. Its top view (from a hillock nearby) it looks like a rocket about to take off finally from the south it looks like set of a play.

A pre-recorded commentary in Mr. Gerard’s own voice along with continuous playback of soft background music is played in the gallery. This commentary imparts all the information that a visitor requires. Gerard’s landmark museum provides a ringside view of the unique Goan architecture. The impressive collection is consistently burgeoning with people being gracious enough to loan their rare heirlooms and Gerard da Cunha hopes that more people would follow the example to enhance the exclusive ambience of Goa’s unique museum, ‘Houses of Goa’.

DISPLAY TECHNIQUES

- Arrangement or layout of the objects is done in a proper manner.
- Each gallery is a specific theme.
- The galleries are arranged in a particular way, so that one gallery automatically leads to the next one giving the visitor a holistic experience.
- The background for the photographs/exhibits have dull as well as pleasant shades
- The labels are well written in English and on printed charts.
- The photos in the gallery were very well displayed with information boards. Lights were perfectly fitted to highlight these photos.

Lighting Arrangements:

This museum has made the lighting arrangements in a good way.

- The source of light is invisible to the visitor
- The lighting is sufficient and the objects are visible
- The natural as well as artificial lighting (fluorescent tube lights) is used. This is the main feature of lighting used in all the galleries of the museum.
- At some places bulbs and spotlights are also used

Labels:

The labels are well written in English and on printed charts. Write-ups, graphs and also graphic representation are some of the other type of labeling technique used.

MUSEUM FACILITIES

Library:

The museum library has a good collection of books on a variety of subjects like architecture, art, history, geography etc. It is open to students, scholars and other museum visitors also. It is housed outside the museum building.

Museum Store:

It is located just at the entrance of the museum building. The articles for sale include the museum brochure and pamphlets (in English), and museum photos. Apart from these, it also has many books on sale on architecture, houses of Goa, etc.

Cafeteria:

The museum also has a cafeteria or canteen which provides the basic refreshments for the visitors and staff of the museum. It is located on the ground floor of the museum building. It has a good seating arrangement.

Washroom:

It is located at the ground floor and has toilets and bathrooms.

Facilities for the Under Privileged:

Admission is free for the physically challenged visitors of the museum. Wheel chairs and ramps are also available.

Parking and Museum Guide Facilities:

There is a parking facility for both two and four wheelers vehicles. Museum self-guide is available on request at Rs. 10/-

Working Days, Timings and Admission Fee:

Timings are from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm. without lunch break. The museum is open on all days except Mondays. Entry fee is Rs. 50/- per person and for children it is Rs. 25/- per head. On Sunday it is Rs. 25/- for everyone.

CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION TECHNIQUES

There is no such conservation methods carried out at the museum.

MUSEUM ACTIVITIES AND OUTREACH PROGRAMMES

Workshops:

The museum conducts short term workshops on the following subjects:

- 1) Traditional Housing in Goa
- 2) Creative Design
- 3) Innovative Construction

Light Show:

Daily light shows are being conducted at the museum. The show is about details of the museum, its collection and about houses of Goa. Prior bookings are done at the reception of the museum. The charges vary according to the size of the group.

CONCLUSION

The museum is not just repository of the objects; it has inherited the culture of Goan people in the past. Houses of Goa Museum is owned and privately run by Christian Goan. It shows different stages of the houses of Goa of the Portuguese and Pre-Portuguese periods. Being an Architect, the owner has made the visitor understand the different types of Goan houses and their specialty with their architectural features, furniture and lots more. The owner has designed the museum with modern building to house these all age old artefacts.

The museum has very carefully maintained the flavor of Goan culture and are exerting to the best of their capacities to enhance the same. This research was carried out to highlight the unique characteristics of the ‘Houses of Goa Museum’ and it intends to serve as a model in the study of museums and their functions.

REFERENCES

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**DISPLAY TECHNIQUE AND LIGHTING ARRANGEMENTS AT
GALLERY 1 001**



HAT STAND AND DOOR SHUTTERS (GALLERY 2) 002



SPIRAL STAIRS OF THE MUSEUM 004



VIEW OF THE MUSEUM 006