



EDUCATIONAL TRIP TO BHOPAL **(SHRM 2024)**



School of Heritage Research and Management, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi organised an educational trip to Bhopal from 12th March - 14th March 2024 to foster cultural cognisance, refine historical knowledge, provide new perspectives in art historical studies and acquaint

students with contemporary practices of archaeology and conservation through empirical knowledge. Students accompanied by the faculty were fortunate to be the first batch of students to complete an educational trip and push the boundaries of their knowledge further. Students were taken to museums, heritage and archaeological sites, temples and ecological sites. Further, lectures, interactions and discussions with doyens of conservation, archaeology and museology industry has been an outstanding opportunity to stay abreast of latest developments in the field and expand their horizons

Day 1 - 12th March 2024

The group arrived in Bhopal in the morning, and the first destination was the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Bhimbetka. The eminent professor of SHRM, Dr Anand Burdhan, began a series of scintillating lectures from here. He began with an introduction to The Bhimbetka rock shelters, which are an archaeological site that spans throughout the Paleolithic and Mesolithic period. These rock shelters and caves provide evidence of the earliest human settlement and cultural evolution from a period of hunter-gatherers to agriculturalists. These rocks are part of the Gondwana Zone, Vindhyan Range. The rocks are of quartzite, resulting in high ferrous content. The place is associated with mythical stories, giving out its name as Bhimbetka. It was believed that Bhima used to sit here for his meditation and was the site of his first meeting with Hidimba.

Within these caves of Bhimbetka, we witness an auditorium, double-storeyed caves, huge cave shelters and a huge rock cliff showcasing the depiction of a grand zoo with many animal paintings. The caves show evidence of geoglyphs, including cave paintings using natural pigments. The major themes are animals, hunting scenes, and domestic life. The major attraction of these paintings was the dynamism they portrayed through the limbs of the animals, and one can feel the movement through their depictions. The theme of pregnancy within animals reflects the respect of motherhood in the paintings is noticeable. An interaction was held with Dr Manoj Kurmi, Superintending Archaeologist of Bhopal Circle, who warmly welcomed our party.

The next stop of the itinerary was Ashapuri. Eponymously named after the village, the site is rich in terms of archaeological pieces of evidence. Dr Burdhan explained to students that John Marshall is the progenitor of site museums in India. Museumising archaeological relics and remains has been essential to safeguarding national heritage. After Bateshwar, evidence of 108 temples was discovered here. Dr Burdhan led the students to the edge of the site to attract their

attention towards the magnificent panoramic beauty of the environment. Since epigraphical evidence of Ashapuri has not been found, the site's sacred geography provides volumes of information. The significance of water cosmology and building temples in lower ridges was explained to students. King Bhoja was the first to perfect the water management system in India and must have been enchanted by the site. Visiting the site was an immersive learning experience for students of both Archaeology and Conservation batches, as the practice of anastylosis was employed at the site. The subject of conservation refers to anastylosis as a reconstruction technique through which a ruined building or monument is restored using the original architectural elements, which in this case were recovered through excavation. Major features of the site included - systems of interlocking, weight and balance, socket and groove, beams, rafters, pillars, keystones, stapling, Rathika pattern, kudu motifs, Padma adhisthan on top of vedika, among many others. A site museum has also been established nearby.

The last place to visit on the first day was Bhojeshwar Temple in Bhojapur. Housing a shivling more than 7 feet high, this incomplete 11th-century temple has carved a special place for itself in the history of temples in India as pieces of evidence of architectural drawings have been found engraved on rocks near the temple. Students were taken to the site, each drawing protected by a railing around it. Dr Burdhan showed students the Mason marks, which have helped them understand temple-building techniques. An interpretation centre has been created to disseminate information about various aspects of Bhojeshwar Temple.

Day 2-13th March

Our journey to Sanchi Stupa unfolded the folklores of the past, a captivating exploration into the heart of Buddhist heritage. The majestic stupa, a hemispherical dome enshrined within a railing, stood as a testament to the bygone era. But the true treasure lay in the intricate carvings adorning the four ornate gateways, the toranas. Here, under the guidance of our knowledgeable professor, we embarked on a visual journey through the Jataka tales.

Our Professor, Dr. Burdhan, explained that these Jatakas were stories narrating the previous births of the Buddha, the Bodhisattva. Each meticulously sculpted panel unveiled a moral lesson waiting to be deciphered. We began at the southern gateway, where the professor pointed out the depiction of the Hamsa Jataka. This tale, illustrated with captivating detail, showcased the selflessness of the Bodhisattva, who offered himself as food to a starving family stranded at sea. As we moved to the western gateway, the professor drew our attention to the Mahakapi Jataka. Here, the magnificent carving showcased the Bodhisattva, in his form as a monkey king, bridging a river with his own body to ensure the safe passage of his fellow monkeys from hunters. Just the opposite of this gateway a school associated with Buddhist teaching was found.

The eastern gateway offered a poignant narrative – the Sama Jataka. Anand sir elucidated the story of the Bodhisattva's unwavering filial piety. The panel depicted the tragic yet heartwarming tale of Sama, who sacrificed his life tending to his blind parents, only to be revived by a divine intervention. This story resonated deeply, highlighting the virtue of devotion. Our exploration culminated at the northern gateway, where we encountered the Chhaddanta Jataka. The professor described the story of the six-tusked elephant, the Bodhisattva, offering his tusks to a greedy king who sought them for jewellery. This tale served as a powerful reminder of generosity and the folly of material desires.

Dr Burdhan's insightful explanations breathed life into the Jataka tales. Each panel wasn't just a beautiful carving; it was a window into the core Buddhist principles. As we walked away from the Sanchi Stupa, the stories remained etched in our minds, a profound reminder of the path to enlightenment. Apart from the great stupa of the Sanchi, we found many other stupa standings beside it. A temple from the Gupta period was also there, giving the earliest example of stone temple architecture.

The next site on our itinerary was Udayagiri Caves. Not only is there a series of twenty rock-cut caves on Udaygiri hills, but the site also features petroglyphs, remains of buildings (possibly temples), inscriptions, water systems, pillars, etc, which make it a site bestowed with archaeological evidence. The site is unequivocally associated with the Gupta period with inscriptions of Chandragupta II (375-415 CE) and Kumargupta I (415-455 CE), which have been

a valuable source of history for scholars. The most striking feature of the cave is the presence of Bhudevi Uddhar Pratima, which tells the story of Vishnu's Varah avatar saving the earth and emerging from the water. Dr Burdhan painted a fascinating verbal account of the mythological tale, indicating that Varah symbolises the endogenic force that created the Indian subcontinent from Gondwana. This supercontinent existed more than 500 million years ago. The symbolic representation that the Indian subcontinent emerged from water is backed by present scientific research. A beautifully adorned, placenta-like shape is attached to the Bhudevi, further pointing out the genesis of life.

The day was concluded by briefly visiting the Heliodorus pillar near Bhopal. Dr Burdhan told the students how locals create names for monuments and landmarks, and the pillar we visited is known as Khambh Baba by locals. The pillar is named after a Greek ambassador to the ruler Bhagabhadra. It is one of the earliest inscriptions that mentions Vasudeva Krishna. Dr Burdhan explained to students that this pillar bears testimony to foreigners' acceptance of Indian culture and is the earliest evidence of a person of non-Indic origin embracing Vaishnavism.

Day 3 - 14th March 2024

The last day of the trip was dedicated to exploring museums of Bhopal. The day began with a visit to the Bhopal State Museum, located on Shyamala Hills. Upon arrival, the group was greeted by Dr O. P. Mishra, an officer at ASI Bhopal Circle and adviser to the Ministry of Culture who is closely associated with Bhopal State Museum and other curators. They were presented with a copy of "Dharohar", the School of Heritage Research and Management magazine. Dr Burdhan began the lecture by tracing the history of museums. Previously known as Ajabghar, the State Museum houses rare art pieces and antiquities in over 17 thematically arranged galleries. Students were taken through galleries of coins, sculptures, ancient inscriptions, excavations, and Bagh cave paintings. The students learned the museum holds one of the country's most important collections of sculptures. Dr Burdhan explained the iconography and art historical importance of many sculptures, such as Raashimandal, Garudarudavishnu, varahi,

Students were taught about distinctions between different schools of sculptural art, the richness of archaeological evidence in Narmada Valley, the importance of cultural geography in the context of art, historical evidence acquired through coins, the significance of 'Ajantism' in art stretching to China and Sri Lanka, an inter-dialogic relationship is initiated by paintings in Indian art and identification of many more artistic details in the museum collection.

The second museum of the day was the Tribal Museum Bhopal. Ashoka Mishra, a noted literary figure and adviser to the Ministry of Culture, shared his experience as project coordinator for the museum. He discussed how often the word tribal or 'Adivasi' is associated with backwardness and how popular understanding of the word is flawed in a post-colonial world. He asserted that tribal aesthetics and professional skills are perfectly adaptable to modern lifestyles. The components of their lifestyle are both environmentally and culturally sustainable.

Various tribes of Madhya Pradesh, such as Gonds, Bhils, Bharias, Sahariya, Korku, Kol, Baiga, etc have their traditional art, craft and culture, which was depicted in various galleries. Besides showcasing traditional tribal houses, wedding practices, games played by children, agricultural tools, earthenware, myths and beliefs of various communities, the museum was equipped with the latest technology. It featured coloured lighting, a digital kiosk for detailed information and an audio-visual experience about the creation of various exhibits and a unique sensory experience created by coolness in the atmosphere, which imitates the internal environment of traditional tribal homes. The group was treated to a unique culinary experience in the Tribal Museum canteen, where they tasted the ethnic flavours through various delicacies.

The third museum of the day was the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS), also known as the National Museum of Humankind. The largest ethnographic museum in India, it is spread across 200 acres on Shyamala Hills. The museum has both indoor galleries and outdoor exhibitions. Led by Dr. Burdhan, the students were given a tour, beginning with Human-Bio cultural evolution. It was a remarkable learning experience for students as they witnessed models of pre-historic burial systems worldwide and learned Neanderthals were the first of humankind to think about the disposition of the dead. Dr Burdhan further lead the group to ethnic art, ethno-musical, masks, the culture of Northeast India, and folk art traditions galleries.

Students were intrigued by the unique collection of thangka, pattachitra, other textile paintings, rare musical instruments and masks. Latter art has earned a GI Tag, ensuring its recognition as an important heritage.

The last destination of the educational tour was the Open Air Exhibitions of the ‘Traditional Technology Park’. It depicts the story of mankind through time and space. It has significantly contributed to generating a new movement in museology in India. Along with its practices of community curatorship and use of authentic traditional methods and materials to maintain its open displays, IGRMS has made sincere efforts to document and highlight indigenous methods of cultural conservation and revitalising cultural traditions. Shri Amitabh Pande, Director of IGRMS, greeted students and gave them an account of the intangible heritage of India manifested through objects and an open-air exhibit. These eco-friendly technologies are examples of the creative genius of human society and have sustained human society for centuries. Shri S. K. Pande, the curator of IGRMS, took students to the life-sized dwellings of the people of Nagaland, which the tribal people built. He also told the students how a sense of community ownership is instilled within northeastern tribes. He still receives letters and messages from tribal people asking for updates about the maintenance of their model houses at IGRMS. Students of SHRM gave their feedback and had an enriching interaction with the curator about the politics of display and the development of museological pedagogy.

To conclude, the trip was a remarkable and once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for students and their teachers, especially Dr Burdhan, who provided invaluable learning experience to students by his detailed lectures on every site and accentuated cultural literacy in them. Students were grateful for this trip and look forward to SHRM organising more such enriching opportunities in the future.

Testimonials

The trip was full of new experiences and explorations. I through my personal trip to the similar circle saw these places before , but this time a new lense was traveling with me. The sites seemed talking to us , through the interpretations we heard and understood standing infront of the monuments. The best part was understanding the chapter which we understood through texts , now visually stood infront of us. Seeing the theoretical knowledge practically infront of us was the best experience

-Tannistha Ghosh, MCPHM

Historical trips are not always boring. One could never have thought that a trip could give as much knowledge as fun. Academics: absolute yes; Fun: super yes. The most memorable one, definitely!

- Brishti Mitra, MAHM

Heritage is best understood through practical experience. The trip has not only broadened our horizons but has reignited our interests in our chosen subjects. Heartfelt gratitude to teachers for sharing their insights and nurturing our passion !!

- Abhayaachiti Pandey, MCPHM

The experience of this field trip turned out to be a great learning opportunity, which was filled with fun and loving memories. Witnessing sites of great significance immensely added to my perspective of understanding the geographical, artistic, historical and archeological background of sites like Bhimbetka, Ashapuri, Udaygiri etc. The thrill of witnessing the wonder of temples like Bhojpur and Ashapuri was unmatched. From the question of representation of intangible Heritage at Tribal Museum and Manav Sangrahalaya to viewing a prehistoric rock art site as great as Bhimbetka, the trip enabled us to think about several dimensions.

- Tripti Soni, MCPHM



*Students and faculty at the UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE OF BHIMBETKA ROCK
SHELTERS*



Dr. Burdhan explains importance of overhanging cliffs at Bhimbetka Rock Shelters.



Students were taught how anastolysis or reconstruction of a temple is performed in architectural conservation



Ornamental spouts for the release of water offered at Shivling at Bhojeshwar Temple



Architectural plans carved on rocks of Bhojeshwar Temple



Students near Torana or gateway of Sanchi Stupa



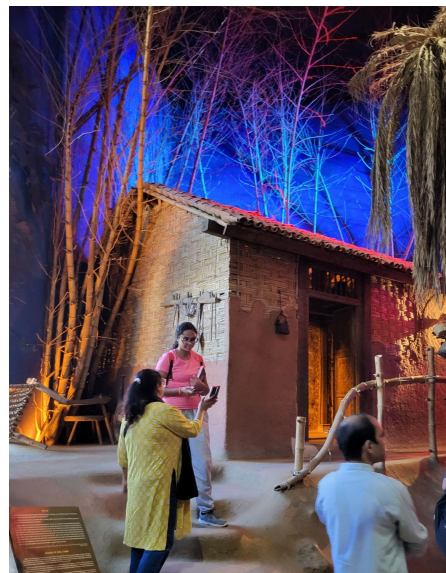
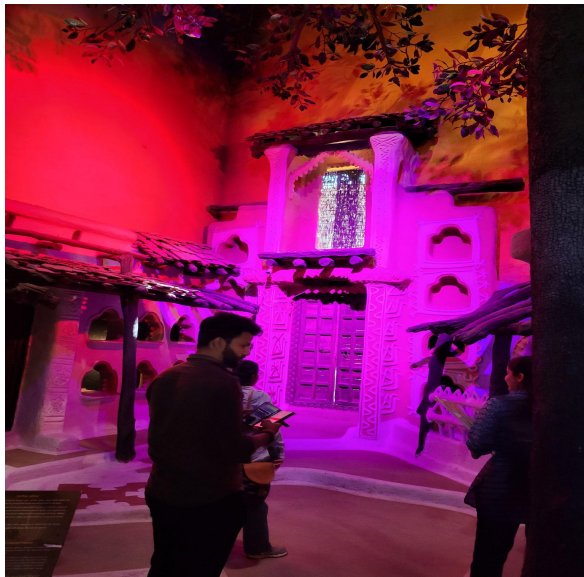
Students looking at abacus of a pillar at one of the earliest temples of India at Sanchi



Students were shown one of the earliest Jain caves on top of Udaygiri



Samples of various pigments used in paint in ancient India at Bhopal State Museum



Students experiencing tribal aesthetics and cultural diversity at Tribal Museum, Bhopal



Students discussing the intangible culinary heritage of tribal communities at Tribal Museum Canteen, Bhopal



Students and faculty at Open-Air Display of a traditional tribal dwelling at Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya