

An Interpretive Study of the Narayanhiti Palace Museum (Kathmandu) Nepal

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Abstract: This interpretive study of the Narayanhiti Palace museum explores the palace museum, provides brief knowledge about museum and the oldest museum at Chauneand gives historical background of Narayanhiti Palace Museum .The major objective of this study interprets about the Narayanhiti Palace museum and the available artefacts existing within this museum in brief.The methodology is qualitative approach based on exploration and interpretations. The paper interprets the various rooms used by our Royalties for various occasions, such as, formal meeting, credentials for diplomats, state visits, marriage, dinner parties. etc. This research paper takes the readers through various rooms of the museums. There are yet many rooms left to be opened. Just few years ago, the scepter room and the crown room has been opened under strict surveillance. Note: These are first hand information data collected through personal visits and self-observation.

Keywords: Narayanhiti, Museum, Palace, Royalties.

Introduction - The Nepali terms “Sangrha” means collections and “alaya.” means place. So, a place where old, historical, and cultural artefacts and art objects are gathered and presented is “Sangrhaalaya” .In English it is known as the museum. The Latin term, “museums” (or, less frequently, “musea”), is whence the English word “museum” gets its etymology. The word “museum” originates from the Greek word “Mouseion,” which signifies a place or temple dedicated to the “Muses,” the patron divinities in Greek mythology of the arts and knowledge. It is believed that Plato’s library was the first museum. Pausanias, however, mentions another location that he calls the “Museum,” which is a little hill in Classical Athens that faces the Akropolis. The hill was given the name “Mouseion” in honour of Mousaios, a man who used to sing there before passing away from old age and being buried there. The problem of study is that there are very few books related to study of Narayanhiti Palace Museum. In fact, there are no articles written related to it. This research in synopsis tries to explore and interpret and thereby fill that gap in knowledge. The major objective of this study interprets about the Narayanhiti Palace museum and the available artefacts existing within this museum in brief. The methodology is qualitative approach based on exploration and interpretations. primary data through museum observation and interviews and secondary through book of Buddhi Gurung for photographs related to the museum.

In London’s Oxford University, the world’s first scientifically equipped modern museum opened its doors

in 1683 A.D. The National Museum, now considered as the first museum in Nepal, was established at Chhauni. Referred to as the “Shilkhana” during the Rana Regime, this location housed and exhibited war weaponry. By the year 1938, this very “Shilkhana” was referred to as the National Museum in Chhauni.



Fig 1.: National Museum Chauni. (Source: National Museum website)

Numerous items belonging to the stone-age are kept in the National Museum at Chhauni, including paintings, manuscripts, fossil remnants, numismatics, potsherds, and metal, wood, and terracotta images. Dolls representing various cultures, lifestyles, attire, and accessories are gathered from all around the world including dolls and also ethnic museum section. It also stores other historically significant objects and has artillery that were used by the Nepal Army can be seen here.

The Department of Archaeology was established in 1952 A.D. It encompasses the entire collection of ancient,

historical wooden, and bronze artistic artefacts as well as the National Achieves from the National Museum of Chhauni, the Kathmandu Museum at Hanumandhoka, the Patan Museum at Patan, and the Bhaktapur Museum at Bhaktapur.

Why is museum important?

1. Museum is important for people of all genders, classes, races, and creeds, museums are vital. It serves as a location for entertainment, relaxation, and education.
2. The national governments of the various nations own their museums. Therefore, the museum is quite significant from several angles.
3. The primary sources of historical evidence are artefacts that hold significant historical, cultural, and archaeological value. History would be incomplete without it.
4. The creation of the nation's history is facilitated by the study of these antiquated collected artefacts, objects, inscriptions, manuscripts, paintings, sculptures, and other historically significant artefacts from various periods. Therefore, museums are crucial to the process of creating the nation's true history.
5. A museum is very significant from a cultural perspective. Nepal is home to many different ethnic groups, geographical locations, climates, and cultures in Nepal. when their materialistic artistic cultures, as well as their way of life as represented by their clothing, jewellery, and musical instruments, are conserved and presented. It will aid in the public's knowledge and comprehension of the cultures of many communities.
6. The museums also store, protect, and exhibit old religious manuscripts known as grantha, as well as pictures and paintings of numerous gods from diverse eras and religions. One can learn about the state of religion during that time by looking at and analyzing these artefacts. Hence, it is important from religious point of view.
7. The museum aids in advancing tourism. In addition to generating income and creating jobs, it aids in the preservation of rare, priceless, historical, and ancient objects that otherwise could disappear. Considering all of these factors, museums play crucial role in preserving, conserving and promoting ancient historical materials of all kinds.

In order to fulfill the research objective, it interprets about the Naryanhiti Palace museum and the available artefacts existing within this museum in brief.:

The Narayanhiti Palace Museum: The Narayanhiti Palace Museum is classified as a "Governmental Museum Category" between governmental and private museums. It was once the palace of Rana's and Shah rulers of Nepal. The Royals left the palace grounds in 2006–2007 A.D. as a result of political unrest and change, and as a result, the palace was converted into a museum. The Shah Dynasty's history is highlighted by this museum.

The Narayanhiti Palace Museum is home to a variety of artefacts that were once owned by the King, Queen, and other members of the Royal family. These include ceramics, clothing, books, various rooms within the palace premises, the Royal throne, the Royal crown, the Sceptre, medals, priceless paintings, images from different eras, ancient Thankas, decorative pieces, chandeliers, animal heads and skins, stables, cowsheds, worship rooms, helipads, and the palaces that were constructed within the grounds of the Palace Museum.

Several valuable and uncommon archaeological items from various eras used by the Royalties may be found in the Narayanhiti Palace Museum. This museum contain numerous closed parts that contain priceless items that are currently considered valueless.



Fig 2:Narayanhiti Palace Museum . Source: BuddhiGurung.

Earlier this palace was made in Neo-Classical architecture. It was after the 1934 great earthquake it was badly damaged. The early palace of Shah rulers was at Hanumandhoka. While Narayanhiti was the actual palace of Shri Tin Maharaja RanouddipNarsingh Rana



Fig 3: Narayanhiti Palace earlier before 1934 great Earthquake b.)Shri Tin Ranouddip N Rana

To safeguard the Shah Prince SurendraVikram Shah from his step mother, he was brought to the palace of Shri Tin Ranouddip. Later his predessors made Naranhiti their home palace.

Following the assassination of Shree Tin Ranodeep Singh Rana in 1885 A.D., BirShumsher was appointed premier. He promptly destroyed the palace where Shri Tin Ranodeep Singh was killed and, at Joglal's recommendation, rebuilt a new palace.After inhabitance by Shah rulers until 2007 when Kingship changed to New Nepal and new constitution. This palace became a museum.

The Open / Closed Doorways of the Naranhiti Royal Palace Museum:



Fig 4: Gauri Shankar Gatewa. Source: BuddhiGurung

This Narayanhiti Palace Museum has ten main entrances. These gateways, which are located throughout the palace, serve as the entrance on various occasions and times. The names of these Gateways are derived from different Himalayan peaks. Below is a list of the names.

"Gauri Shankar Himal" is the name of this entrance. It can be found in the section marked "Welcome and Royal Program." There are auspicious symbols engraved on its wooden entrances, including depictions of the Elephant God Lord Ganesh who is said to remove obstacles, the Elephant God's brother Kumar symbolizing fearlessness, the Lotus Padma a sign for purity, and the water pot Kalas filled with water is an auspicious sign for welcome. (BuddhiGurung, 2018, Interview). The other gateways and its detail study is open for further research.

The "Three Sections" of the Palace Museum can be reached via the one-way pathway that leads to the Narayanhiti Palace Museum. Only 19 of the Narayanhiti Palace's rooms are currently available for exhibition. Many of the rooms at the Palace museum are currently closed since they are not a part of this "one-way route," which makes it impossible for visitors to visit.

This research paper visits the nineteen rooms and in synopsis interprets the findings. Majority are self-observation and few are via content study:

The Welcome and Royal Program Rooms.

The Royalties welcomed foreign dignitaries and others who came for state visits in these rooms. Such rooms were termed as "Baithaks" today "Drawing-room"

The Kaski Baithak (Drawing-room)



Fig 5 'The Kaski Drawin-room. Source: BuddhiGurung)
 Among the exhibited 19 rooms , this KaskiBaithak, is the

first room visited by those who come to see the museum. This room is named after 'Kaski District' of Nepal. It is an important room where His Majesty's welcomed numerous foreign dignitaries who came for 'State Visit'. Since the time of His Majesty's it was known as the "Welcome Room". Here 'Oath Taking Ceremony' and giving credentials to the diplomats were conducted. Besides this 'State Dinners' 'Birthday celebrations were conducted here. In fact, His Majesty King Gyanendra Shah called the last 'Press-Conference' here before he left the Narayanhiti Palace.

Myagdi Baithak (Drawing -room)



Fig 6: Myagdi Baithak (Drawing room) Source: Buddhi Gurung

This drawing room has the name of the Nepali district of Myagdi. Following the reception of the Head of State and the foreign diplomats' presentation of credentials to HM the King, they were escorted to the Myagdi Drawing Room for tea and coffee. The "Tea Room" was another name for this Myagdi drawing room. The oldest Royal family member interacted with other family members while seated in the Myagdi drawing room during feasts. "Photo Frames" of foreign heads of state have been used to embellish the drawing room's left and right walls.

Then the visitors can go to :

Parbat Room



Fig 7: Parbat Room . Source :BuddhiGurung

This room is named after Nepal's Parbat area. This was the room where visiting foreign guests were required to sign the 'Visitors' Book. When royal banquets were held in the

Kashki drawing room, the younger members of the royal family danced and enjoyed themselves in this Parbat Room. This chamber contains gifts that Heads of State and National Leaders of other countries have given to their Majestys on their birthdays. This room also has gifts that "Their Majesty" had received on Royal Visits to other countries.



Fig 8: Gifts displayed in this Parbat Room. Source: BuddhiGurung

Then the visitors can visit :**Rukum Drawing Room**



Fig 9: Rukum Drawing Room. Source: BuddhiGurung

The Rukum district inspired the name of this drawing room. The ADCs of the foreign head of state are housed in this chamber. The visiting foreign head of state is greeted by high ranking government officials in this "Rukum drawing room" when they schedule a meeting with him.

When the Royalties hosted their "Family Dinners" at the "Kaski drawing room," the younger members of the family gather in the "Rukum drawing room." A portrait of His Majesty King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya, created by a Chinese artist using real hair, is displayed on the drawing room's left wall. Alongside this is a variety of books and more ornamental items. can be seen



Fig 10: Photo of his Majesty made with human hair by Chinese Artist

Rolpa Drawing Room



Fig 11a,b:Rolpa Drawing room .Source: BuddhiGurung

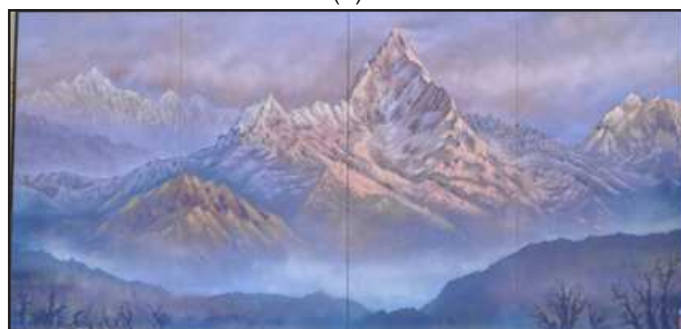
The Head of State, high post officials, key guests, and both domestic and foreign visitors gathered in this drawing room, which was named after the Rolpa district of Nepal, for discussions and meetings.

There are paintings in this room depicting various birds that can be found in Nepal. A picture of the Taj Mahal, which GirijaPrashadKoirala gave to HM King BirendraBir Bikram Shah on his 54th birthday, is also on display in this area.

Additionally, Japanese artist Shun Komi Yama gave HM King Birendra a picture of Mount Machhapuchhre Himal painted by him.



(a)



(b)

Dailekh Room



Fig 12: Dailekh Room (Source BuddhiGurung)
 The Dailekh district of Nepal is honoured in the name of this room. The Head of State or other notable visitors who were in town for a state or royal visit used this Dailekh Room as their bedroom.

Baitadi Room



Fig 13: Baitadi Room. Source: BuddhiGurung
 This chamber bears the name of the Nepalese district Baitadi. This room is significant on its own. When the head of state was visiting His Majesty, his spouse accompanied him and used it. In the event that a lady was the honorary guest of His Majesty, her female attendants would have used the Baitadi Room.

Then the visitors can go to Achham Room

Achham Room



Fig 14: Achham Room. Source: BuddhiGurung
 This chamber is named after the Achham district in Nepal. This room was used as a bedroom for the children and family accompanying the Head of State on the Royal Visit. Then tour takes us to

Bajura Dining Room



Fig 15: Bajura Dining Room. Source BuddhiGurung
 This chamber bears the name of the Nepalese district of Bajur. This was the dining room used for the foreign head of state's visit. When the head of state paid a long visit, he had the opportunity to invite the queen and king to sample the national dish before they all ate supper together. In addition, It was here Princess Shruti and His Majesty's son-

in-law's Gorakh Shumsher at their wedding, sampled 84 different traditional cuisine. (Rituals of "CHAURASIBYAN GAN")



Fig 17: The Royal family organizing the 84 variety of food for the groom to taste (Nepali custom) Source BuddhiGurung.

Then the visitors can visit the next room used by his Majesty's.

Jumla Drawing Room



Fig 18: Jumla Drawing room. Source: BuddhiGurung

The foreign head of state who was visiting used this room as a place to rest both before and after their lunch. Additionally, this space was used for program planning and scheduling verification.

The "one way route," which is now open for public inspection, does not include the upper floor, which houses the Visitors and Guest Section. Other rooms have names corresponding to the districts in which they are located. 1. The Humla Room. 2. The Dharchula Room

Some of these rooms are yet to be opened for public viewing, as they do not fall into the one-way path corridor. The other rooms visitors can view are:

Dolpa Drawing room



Fig 19: Dolpa Drawing-room. Source: B.Guring.

In honour of the Dolpa district of Nepal, this drawing

room has that name. It is known as the “Welcome & Royal Programme Section” . Royal family members who were unable to visit the Gorkha Drawing Room for special Royal Programmes, they watched it from the Dolpa Drawing Room. A unique black one-sided viewing mirror in the middle of the Dolpa and Tanahu Drawing Room allows viewers to clearly observe the programs offered in the Gorkha and Tanahu Drawing Room, but they are unable to see anything from that room on the opposite side.



Fig 20 : One sided dark mirror between Dolpa & Tanahu
Beside this now crown and scepter room has been opened for public.



Fig 21 a) Scepter Fig 21 b) The Royal Crown (Shripech)
Now the visiting tourist can see this too under strict surveillance



Fig 22. Royal Dining Room used during State Visits.
The visitors can see this area as they walk pass the one way path corridor.

There exist lower floor guest sections that comprise of various rooms . (Self observation)

The rooms used by the members of the Royal family for the various ceremonies and programs were featured in this section. For the members that travel with the Head of State on formal or royal visits, there is also a bedroom.

There is a bar included as well. The districts of Nepal that each of these rooms is named after are as follows:

1. The drawing room of Surkhet
2. The Rohandehi chamber
3. The drawing room of Kalali
4. The Doti chamber
5. The Chitwan Room
6. The Kapilvastu chamber
7. The Parsa chamber
8. The Bardiya Room
9. The Jajarkot chamber
10. The Sarayan Room

There are also rooms in this part without names corresponding to Nepali districts. These spaces are employed for a variety of tasks, including:

11. Ground level kitchen.
12. Gorgeous Saloon
13. Inside the Doti, a storeroom
14. Storage area close to the Bardiya area
15. Dressing room close to the gateway to Sagarmatha.

None of the rooms listed above are located on the one-way path that is accessible to the public. Therefore, this part has not yet been opened. Upon the public opening of the portion featuring the Royal crown and other historical artefacts, a few chambers within this section will be made accessible for public viewing.

The Dhading Chamber

The Dhading district in Nepal is the inspiration behind the name of The Dhading Room. This is under the Royal Palace's “Private Section” for him. His Majesty changed into new clothes in this room, where he also perused the newspapers and television news and shows. His Majesty slept in this room following his afternoon meal. It is for this reason that this Dhading room is called the “Dressing and Resting Room.”

Dhankuta Assembly Hall (visitors can see this room)

Note: Shri Sadan is the real dwelling place of their Majestys. This area was utilized mostly when foreign delegates, Diplomats and people of State visit came. This small bedroom was utilized only in case, they had to leave for foreign lands on Tuesday and Saturday, (firstly) they avoided it however, if it was planned then, they shifted to this bedroom from Shri Sadan. Then left the palace for their ‘State Visit’ the next day.

The Dhankuta district is the inspiration behind the naming of this room. “Their Majesty” utilised this as their bedroom. This room is smaller than the other rooms of Narayanhiti Royal Palace in order to make it earthquake proof. According to the theory, a tiny space will have a small ceiling, meaning there will be fewer opportunities of it collapsing. Considering this, the Dhankuta room appears diminutive in comparison to the other rooms within the Royal Palace.

There are picture frames in this area featuring members of the Royal family. Additionally, a picture bearing

the following text is presented

“Atamakoparatmasambandharahejahai

“Meana mana timro Archana ma dubirahos,” that is to say The soul is connected to the Almighty, just as May my heart be immersed in your adoration forever, too.

Chandani Shah.(Her Majesty Queen)

Drawing rooms and other rooms that do not fall under the one-way route created by Narayanhiti Palace Museum are located within this “Private Section,” and as such, these rooms have not yet been opened. In near future it will be open.

Thus it can be concluded that this primary research based on self observation and interview has fulfilled the task to interpret about the Narayanhiti Palace Museum and the available artefacts existing within this museum in brief. Thus the objective of this research has been fulfilled. in interpreting about the Narayanhiti Palace Museums and objects and artefacts used by their Majestys.

This research lacks citations because majority data has been collected through self observation and visits to the Narayanhiti Palace Museum however, the source for the photographs are of MrBuddhiGurung. The researcher

has reviewed various Nepali books related to the Royalties and had informally interviewed worker of the palace museum, who worked there since the time of his Majesty's. The outcome is the Bibliography.

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