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Contributions of Bangladesh National Museum in Preservation of Ethno-cultural Diversity of Bengal

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ABSTRACT

Museums hold a significant role in ethnographic research and shaping the people's perception regarding the cultural heritage of a nation. The Department of Ethnography & Decorative Art of Bangladesh National Museum is holding a crucial position in ensuring the preservation of our ethno-cultural diversity and keeping people connected to their origins. This study aims to assess the role and contributions of the Ethnography and Decorative Art Department of Bangladesh National Museum in the context of acquisition and preservation of history and heritage of Bengal through analysis of gathered artifacts and input from diverse sources, including general visitors, civil society, field experts, and researchers. Additionally, this research seeks to identify potential avenues of future growth and development within the department. These recommendations offer avenues for the museum to further excel and contribute to the preservation of our cultural heritage. Firstly, the matter of expanding gallery space and separating the department may be taken into consideration. Secondly, as the research findings suggest, there are yet unexplored avenues in terms of representing every aspect of Bangladeshi lives. There are scopes for extensive representation of the ethnic minority groups and every social class of ancient Bengal. To that end, thematic galleries and dioramas can be taken into consideration for a better representation. Thirdly, research requires higher priority. Lastly, documentation of the Intangible Cultural heritage (ICH) inventory is a hallmark achievement for the Department of Ethnography & Decorative Art as no other institution has yet undertaken such a large scale initiative. It is of paramount importance to make this flagship project one of the regular responsibilities of the department and exert continued effort to ensure preservation of our intangible cultural heritages.

Keywords: Ethnography, Decorative Art, Cultural, Heritage, Intangible, Museology, and Artifacts.

INTRODUCTION:

The Department of Ethnography & Decorative Art of Bangladesh National Museum was founded precisely for the purpose of conducting greater ethnographic research and conserving the national cultural heritage

alongside the intangible cultural heritage. The vast repository of artifacts in the department's collection sheds further light on the department's role in upholding its responsibility to the museum in preserving the ethnographic knowledge of the region, and safeguarding

ding the region's intangible cultural heritage. As a national museum representing the non-western world of museology, Bangladesh National Museum serves as an example of how in the post-colonial context, cultural consciousness has flourished in the non-western world and how museums are effectively employing ethnographic methodology to ensure conservation and appropriate representation of their history, culture and heritage.

Established in 1975, the Department of Ethnography & Decorative Art of Bangladesh National Museum is committed to collecting and conserving traditional artifacts that hold both folk and classical significance. These artifacts serve as valuable representations of the cultural heritage and way of life of the people of the Bangladesh. The department houses a vast collection of resources depicting lifestyles, traditions, festivals, beliefs and rituals of Bangladeshi people as well as those from different ethnic groups under the ethnography section. The Decorative Art section boasts an enriched repository of Bangladesh's very own ornamental handicrafts, jewelries, metal work, weapons and armors, embroidered quilts, potteries, ivory-work, woodwork, ceramics, glasswork, clothes, furniture and other items essential for daily life. The most renowned objects of interest housed in this department include the internationally acclaimed textile Muslin, mat made of ivory, sword of the Nawab Sirajuddaulah & Tipu Sultan, different type of cannons, decorated woodwork, filigree work, *Jamdani*, *Sotronji* among others. This curatorial department is in charge of the management of 16 galleries, where these artifacts capturing the essence of our cultural heritage and the intricate craftsmanship of Decorative Art are displayed. This department is entrusted with the responsibility of collecting artifacts and information from the field level and arranging seminars and special exhibitions based on the collection. The department also has its own research-based publication.

This department, as part of its ethnographic responsibilities, is actively engaged in creating ICH (Intangible Cultural Heritage) inventory. In the year 2017, the "traditional art of *Shital Pati* weaving of Sylhet" was enlisted in the UNESCO's Representative list from UNESCO-ICH (Intangible cultural heritage). The Department of Ethnography & Decorative Art played UniversePG | www.universepg.com

the pioneering role in providing necessary support for the enlistment. The department has also taken the initiative to complete procedures for the nominating the "Nakshi kantha embroidery" as the UNESCO-ICH (Intangible cultural heritage).

Review of Literature

Understanding the Ethnography and the Museum's Significance

Denzin, (1997:1) defines the concept of ethnography as "a form of inquiry and writing that produces descriptions and accounts about the ways of life of the writer and those written about (Denzin, 1997:1). Maa-nen, (1995:3) likens ethnography to a "storytelling institution", one whose stories are endorsed by the prominent scientific and educational institutions of the era. As the definitions suggest, the ethnography is a discursive & interpretive methodology of researching social & cultural groups. It is also a form of qualitative research (Wolcott, 1995). Although distinctly attributed to anthropological discipline, art plays a pivotal role in the substantiating ethnographic practices. As Allison and Ossman, (2014:1) writes-

Through collaborative research design and creative process, artists, activists, and the researchers often seek to give voice to underrepresented communities, to gain a better mutual understanding of common experiences or to call attention to issues of public interest. Artists and ethnographers work together to probe topics of common concern or to devise projects that bring people together to stage events or the develop community artworks (Allison and Ossman, 2014:1)

James Clifford, (1988:12) argues that ethnography can be seen as a form of cultural critique that shares radical perspectives with art movements like dada and surrealism. Instead of accepting the separation between avant-garde artistic experimentation & disciplinary scientific approaches, Clifford (1988:12) suggests that modern division between art and ethnography as separate fields of study has limited the analytical prowess of art & the subversive potential of ethnography. As Clifford, (1988:12) points out, inclusive collections of objects related to "Mankind" have become increasingly institutionalized in the academic disciplines like anthropology, as well as in museums focused on art or ethnology since 1900. As a result, a

restrictive art-culture system has come to dominate the value and significance of groups or objects and determine which of them represent a fading human past, and which are active agents shaping a common destiny of humanity. Museums and anthropological disciplines essentially forming a kind of overarching historical narrative in this manner is what Clifford, (1988:13) has come to the term as a metahistory. As Clifford's, (1988) argument reveals, art and museums are equally vital to ethnographic research much like scientific anthropological inquiry in determining the course of a nation's history. Shelton, (2006:79) similarly compares a museum to a microcosm of the wider society where inter-ethnic relations manifest through contests over the interpretation & control of cultural resources.

Bal, (2001:122) labels the museum setting as one designed with the expectation of a structured walking tour, the dictating the sequence in which dioramas, exhibits, and panels are observed and read. As such, the central observer's perception is shaped by the tour, which also affects the narrative of acquired knowledge. According to Bal, (2001:122), displays serve as a system of signs that serves as both visual and verbal mode of information as well as persuasion, which ultimately influences the tourist's experience and perception. Sturge, (2007:129) likens the ethnographic role of museum to a translator in terms of representing the culture of a social or ethnic group. According to Sturge, (2007:129), ethnographic museums serve as the 'public face' of academic anthropology, garnering greater public attention and interest in the process compared to its academic counterpart. While both written ethnography and ethnographic museums share the same role of making intelligible cultural practices, Sturge, (2007:129) points out that ethnographic museums are equipped with versatile medium to achieve that objective, serving as a framework to present the lives of the people within its institutional capacity. Similarly, Schneider, (2008) stresses the importance and limitless potential of visual ethnographic ventures in contrast to the writing culture. Schneider, (2008) suggests that ethnographic researchers can devise innovative approaches to visual representation and research, which would allow them to tap into the unexplored potential for visual experimentation that underlies the critique of writing culture.

Ethnographic antiquities hold significant importance for museums, as they contribute substantially to the understanding the cultural history of a nation. From the 19th to the 20th century, a growing interest in rural cultures arose among intellectuals and artists in nearly every European country. This interest subsequently led to the establishment of ethnographic museums across the continent (see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2005). Owing to the constructive role museums may play in the ethnographic ventures, Bernier and Viau-Courville, (2017) highlights the significance of performing arts as a key instrument in the translating ethnographic constructions. Use of digital technologies, interactive media, intricate sound and light installations can set a museum up as the most lucrative theatre for performing arts. Bernier and Viau-Courville, (2017) suggest a new methodological dimension for museums to preserve and interpret heritage, which is through the treating the 'experience' of visitors as a fundamental element in understanding heritage. In this regard, performing art is an important element for any museum engaged in ethnographic projects.

Museum: A Western Construct in a Non-Western World

Mathur and Singh, (2015:4), in their discussion on the colonial backstory of museum's inception in South Asia, spoke of the concept of "new museology", a field of scholarship that provides a critical examination of museums as institutions that reflect and serve the dominant culture. Although the origins of modern museums is attributed to the inauguration of British Museum in London in 1753 and the opening of the Louvre's collections in Paris during the French Revolution in 1793, Mathur and Singh, (2015:4) assert that the development of museums in former colonies played out differently from those in European metropolises. While European museums were influenced by democratic and historical processes, colonial museums were shaped by colonial patronage and the acquisition of material objects for imperial knowledge projects (Mathur and Singh, 2015:4). As such, they were often seen as lesser counterparts to the exemplary European institutional paradigm, a sentiment that persists to the present day. In the same vein, in her case study of the Lahore Museum, Bhatti, (2010:51) argues that the colonial India's exhibition practices were primarily

shaped by the colonizer's perspectives and methods of representation. As a result, visual displays were the influenced by the pervasive goals and ambitions of the British during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in India.

Kreps, (2003:16) refuted the common conception that non-western people are less concerned with the care and preservation of their material cultural heritage, which western portrayal of culture often seem to the assert. Instead, she portrays museological behavior as a cross-cultural phenomenon where the non-western have their own unique method of preserving their distinct cultural heritage. Though Kreps, (2003:20) acknowledges that the extensive literature on museum being an invention of European modernity is grounded in historical fact, it is also necessary to acknowledge that this has served as a foundation for exporting the concept of museum across the globe.

Museums and Ethnography in Preservation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

The term Intangible Cultural Heritage was formally codified in the "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage," also the known as UNESCO 2003 convention, where the concept of ICH was defined as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage" ("UNESCO - Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage" n.d.). Despite being a very recent concept, concerns regarding the preservation of the oral traditions and folk cultures have always persisted for the museums (Alivizatou, 2012:18). As Alivizatou, (2012:18) points out, in the post-Industrial Revolution phase of the European context, lifestyles of old were at the risk of being lost to oblivion, hence newer institutions were formed in a bid to preserve the memory of the past. Public museums throughout the nineteenth-century Europe and North America, were therefore, attempts at what Alivizatou, (2012) identifies at the preserving intangible cultural heritage.

As per UNESCO 2003 convention ("UNESCO - Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intan-

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gible Cultural Heritage" n.d.), state parties are obliged to create one or more inventories of the intangible cultural heritage within their territory.

These inventories should be tailored to the specific circumstances of the state and should be kept up-to-date. Additionally, when submitting periodic reports to the Committee, as outlined in Article 29, each State Party should include pertinent information about these inventories. Martinet, (2020) highlights how a national level ICH inventory is a prerequisite to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage by comparing the performances of several state parties in this regard, in particular, Italy was given a special mention integrating the inventory into the system known as the "General Catalogue of Cultural Objects." Alivizatou, (2012:22) contends that of all methodologies employed for the purpose of preserving intangible cultural heritage, ethnographic methods such as interviews and participant observation are employed the most in order to inspect aspects of intangible cultural heritage. The purpose of UNESCO is not only to protect, but to safeguard, as Yap, (2021) puts it, ICH which indicates not only protection from threats, but also promoting their development and ensuring their survival.

The Bangladesh National Museum's Ethnographic Ventures

In the context of Bangladesh, as Islam, (2002: 39-40) puts it, it is imperative for museums to curate and present facets of human life history, traditions, socio-cultural evolution, and various forms of the cultural expressions such as folk traditions, folklore, folk art, music, handicrafts, and textile work. This process involves rigorous research, scholarly publication, and thoughtfully curated exhibitions. In that regard, Bangladesh National Museum employs a rigorous application of museological principles in the scientific presentation of folk artifacts, a practice of great significance to its visitors. This meticulous curation, as advocated by Ferdousi, (2013) facilitates a comprehensive understanding of our folk culture for museum patrons. Since its establishment, the department has successfully conserved a total of 12,793 antiquities, of which 1,906 are presently exhibited across 16 distinct galleries, as reported in 2023. In 2017, UNESCO recognized the traditional art of *Shital pati* weaving in Sylhet and inscribed it on the representative list of

Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO, 2017). This nomination was initiated by the Ethnography & Decorative Art Department, acting on behalf of the Ministry of the Cultural Affairs. Additionally, another traditional art form, namely embroidery work on *Nakshi kantha*, had its nomination file prepared for potential application as a world heritage site to UNESCO. Moreover, this the department is actively engaged in the compilation of a cultural heritage inventory encompassing Intangible Cultural Heritage, Tangible Heritage, and Natural Heritage. To further this objective, on September 30, 2023, Bangladesh National Museum inaugurated an open access online national inventory platform for the documentation & preservation of our cultural heritage. Known as the “Heritage Hub Bangladesh”, the inventory catalogues more than a hundred ICH contents as part of the commitment to safeguard ICH.

Banu, (2005) in her work on the Bangladesh National Museum’s collection of Filigree works, discusses how Dhaka had garnered reputation for its filigree craftsmanship during the seventeenth century. During the Mughal era, with the scarcity of gold and silver, the patronage of this art form shifted towards silver filigree work, a form of art that particularly flourished in the nineteenth century under the patronage of the regional landlords (Banu, 2005). Although vestiges of this tradition persist in selective areas of Dhaka and Cumilla, Banu, (2005) asserts that modern iterations of this art often lack the refined intricacy of their predecessors. Following the establishment of the Department of Ethnography and Decorative Art in 1972, Bangladesh National Museum began undertaking the project of collecting and preserving filigree work. In another one of her work Banu, (2016) praises the artistic heritage of Bangladesh’s woodcraft and the immense cultural significance they hold. According to Banu (2016), Bangladesh National Museum boasts the most extensive collection of woodwork artifacts, widely regarded as a representative showcase of the continent’s wood craftsmanship (Banu, 2005).

Ahmed, (2013) discusses how Bangladesh is home to over 75 ethnic minorities, one of which is the Garo ethnic group, known for their distinctive ornamentation. The Ethnography & Decorative Art Department of Bangladesh National Museum houses a diverse

collection of ornaments, along with costumes, musical instruments, and everyday artifacts. Some ornaments are exclusively worn by Garo women, while others are worn by both men and women. These include items like *bibbok*, *silriding*, *thangkasara*, *rikgidak*, and the various rings. The museum’s efforts in expanding its collection of artifacts, encompassing ornaments from not only the Garo, but also all ethnic groups within the nation, and organizing exhibitions, demonstrate its commitment to the preserving the cultural heritage of Bangladesh (see Ahmed, 2013).

Pottery, a distinctive creation of human civilization, ranks among the oldest art forms known to humanity. Alam, (2014) highlights in his book ‘Pottery of the World’ that pottery dating back approximately 5000 years has been unearthed in the Indus civilizations of Harappa & Mohenjo-Daro. This comprehensive work encompasses pottery traditions from various countries, including Bangladesh and India. Additionally, Alam notes that the earliest use of clay dates back to approximately 20,000 years ago in the Scotland (Alam, 2014:14). This crucial aspect of Bangladesh’s ancient heritage is represented in the 2/1 puppet exhibits in Gallery No. 15 of Bangladesh National Museum (see Alam, 2014; Fairooz *et al.*, 2023).

Shahriar, (2022:11-12) discusses a different & distinctive aspect of Bangladesh’s cultural heritage, which is puppetry. Puppet-making holds significant cultural importance in the folk traditions of rural Bengal. The term “Puppet” originates from the Latin word pupa, which essentially means doll. Shahriar, (2022:11-12) defines puppets as small-scale figures with movable limbs, operated externally. While a puppet is life-sized, it is considerably smaller compared to a human or puppeteer. In essence, this doll-like figure traces its origins back to the hands of primitive cave dwellers. According to Shahriar, (2022: 11-12), clay dolls represent the earliest form of puppets in the Bangladesh. Although the exact origins and development of clay doll-making are not well-documented, but potters in this region began crafting dolls using locally available clay. The artisans primarily descended from clans like Pala and Malakar, who specialized in creating clay puppets. For centuries, these skilled potters have been bringing joy and meeting the artistic needs of people through the creation of the quintessential folk art of

Bangladesh, known as Putul. Clay dolls can be found in various regions across Bangladesh, with terracotta dolls being particularly prevalent in areas such as Dhaka, Rajshahi, Faridpur, Khulna, Rajbari, Chittagong, Tangail, Jamalpur, Rangpur, and the Barisal. Collections of such locally crafted dolls are being exhibited in the Bangladesh National Museum (see Shahriar, 2022).

The Ethnography & Decorative Art Department of Bangladesh National Museum holds a significant role in the acquisition and preservation of textiles. In his book *A Descriptive Catalog of Textile Objects in Bangladesh National Museum Zaman, (2017)* delves into 500 textile artifacts from this department’s collection. The book categorizes textile exhibits into 10 distinct groups, with the notable examples including embroidery, Jamdani, muslin, sharees, shawls, and ethnic clothing. These textile exhibits, curated by Bangladesh National Museum, serve as a repository of the cultural heritage of the country. However, this section has amassed only 1045 kanthas to date (see Zaman, 2017). Muslin, renowned for its delicate and fine texture, stands as the quintessential fabric of Bangladesh. The legacy of Bengal’s textile industry dates back to ancient times, with Bengali textiles being traded as far as China and Rome. The Great Exhibition in London in 1851 brought muslin to international attention, with the remarkable claim that a muslin sari could fit inside a matchbox. In his book ‘Muslin: Our Story’, Islam, (2016:141-142) provides an extensive exploration of muslin, presenting various versions including Dhaka muslin, the European muslin, and American muslin. Muslin started being marketed in

Europe around 1664 and in America around 1784. Despite its status as the traditional fabric of Bangladesh, the collection of muslin at Bangladesh National Museum is currently quite limited. Nevertheless, the museum does have in its collection a piece of traditional muslin (see Islam, 2016: 141-142). Jamdani, a traditional garment of Bengal, is a distinctive cultural treasure of Bangladesh deeply rooted in the weaving heritage of ancient Bengal. The Department of Ethnography & Decorative Art at the Bangladesh National Museum houses numerous specimens of Jamdani sharees. Various scholars delved into the Jamdani weaving process, presenting design samples, diagrams, and their contemporary variations. Ghaznavi, (2018: 25) traces the origin of the term to the French word Jamdar, meaning vase, emphasizing its notable feature of handcrafted design, and its Persian roots. Additionally, Saha, (2018:45), categorizes Jamdani as a form of designer muslin.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to assess the role and contributions of the Ethnography and Decorative Art Department of Bangladesh National Museum in the context of the acquisition and preservation of history and heritage of Bengal through analysis of gathered artifacts and input from diverse sources, including general visitors, civil society, field experts, and researchers. Additionally, this research seeks to identify potential avenues of future growth and development within the department. The findings of this study will offer valuable insights to the general public, civil society, experts, and researchers, and contribute to the enhancement of the department's activities.

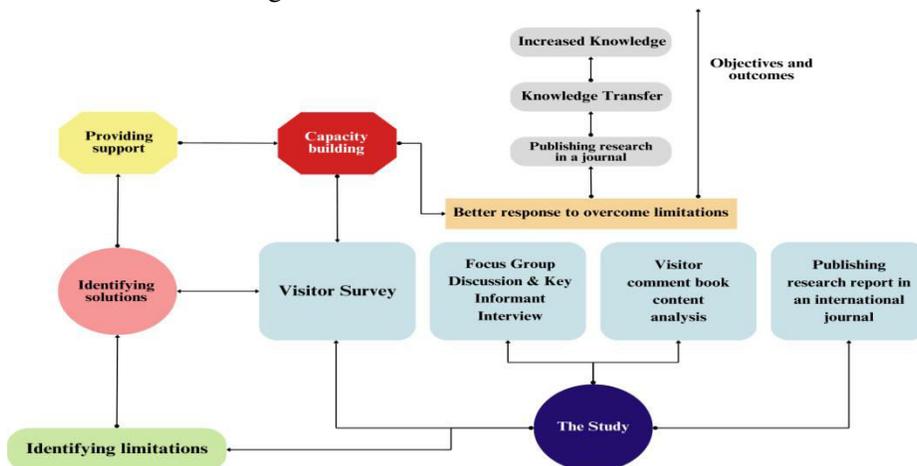


Fig. 1: Expected outcome of the study.

METHODOLOGY:

This study adopts a comprehensive analytical approach, employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods to delve into the underlying meanings and concepts associated with the main issues. The primary data sources include interviews with museum visitors, focus group discussions involving visitors and stakeholders, and key informant interviews with experts and

specialists. Secondary data sources consist of museum visitors’ comment books, previous stakeholders’ opinions, and comment books from mobile exhibitions. An inductive thematic approach was employed to analyze the data and derive research outcomes. Additionally, quantitative data were analyzed using the statistics software SPSS. The data collection methodology has been outlined in the following map.

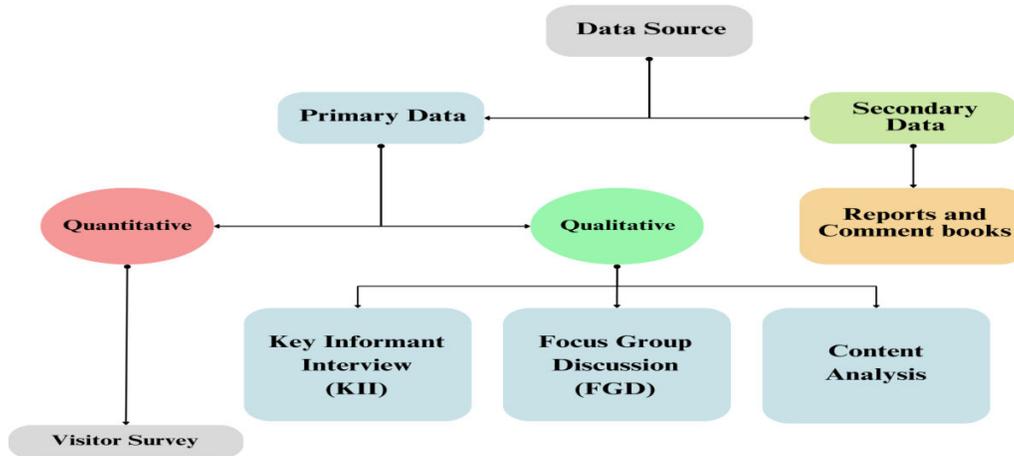


Fig. 2: Data collection methodologies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Adequate Representation of Ancient and Rural Folk Objects

Based on the study findings, it is evident that a substantial proportion, 43% of the respondents, hold the belief that Gallery 11: Life in the Bangladesh effectively showcases all the ancient and rural folk artifacts. Conversely, a smaller segment, comprising 12% of the respondents, perceive the representation to be only partially accomplished. Another section of participants, accounting for 19%, expresses the view-point

that there are certain inadequacies in the portrayal of these artifacts. Notably, 26% of the respondents highlight that not all regional exhibits were adequately represented in the Gallery 11: Life in Bangladesh. The statistics suggest a mixed opinion among the respondents regarding the adequacy of the representation in Gallery 11: Life in Bangladesh. It is crucial to acknowledge that individual perceptions of the presentation may vary considerably. Nonetheless, a significant majority of the visitors shared the sentiment that there are rooms for improvement.

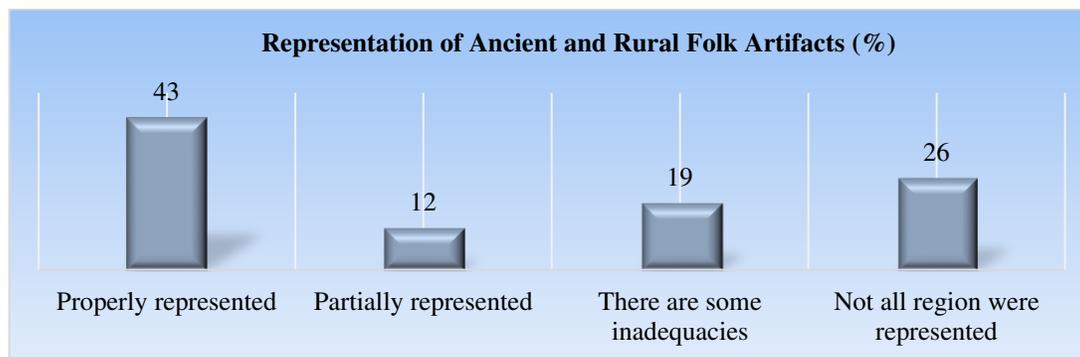


Fig. 3: Representation of ancient and rural folk artifacts (%).

The study findings reveal that among the respondents, 44% hold the belief that Gallery 12: Boats of Bangla- UniversePG | www.universepg.com

desh adequately showcases a sufficient number of the boats. However, 14% of the visitors noted that boats

from all regions have not yet been included in the collection. Additionally, 20% of the respondents express the view that there is a shortage of boats with-in the gallery. 12% of the participants emphasize the need for the inclusion of the sea-going boats from Chattogram. Furthermore, 10% of the respondents express the desire for more boats from the southern region to be incorporated. These findings suggest that

the existing collection should encompass boats that are closely associated with coastal and southern regions. While a considerable number of respondents find the presentation of boats to be adequate, it is worth noting that a notable proportion of participants have expressed a desire for further additions to the gallery based on their expectations.

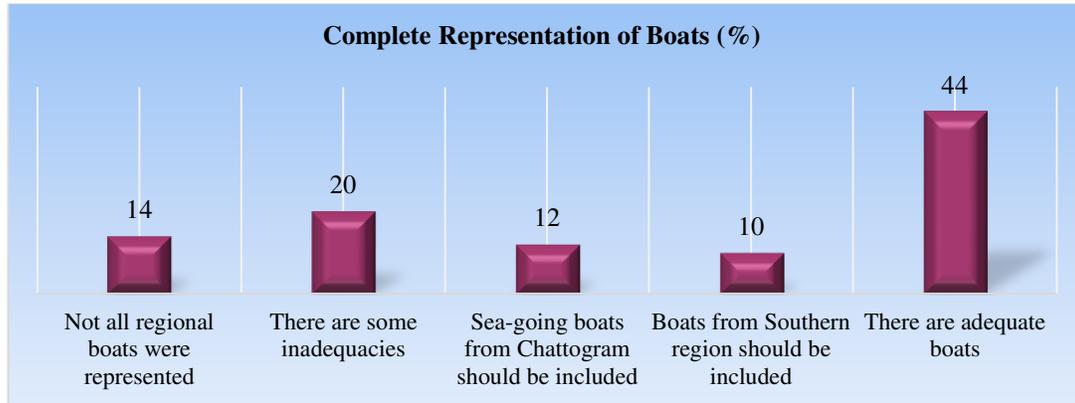


Fig. 4: Complete representation of boats (%).

Representation of All Minority Ethnic Groups

Based on the responses to a multiple choice question, it is evident that 52% of the respondents believe that Gallery 13: Tribes of Bangladesh-1 and Gallery 14: Tribes of Bangladesh-2 adequately represent the minority ethnic groups. However, a substantial portion, that is, 48% of the participants, express the view that the galleries fail to accurately represent the full spectrum of ethnic groups in Bangladesh. 60% of the respondents feel that the representation is inadequate when it comes to the ethnic groups residing in hilly regions, whereas 40% believe otherwise. On the other hand, a vast majority of respondents, that is, 89% of the res-

pondents believe that the galleries do not effectively portray the ethnic groups from the plains, highlighting a failure to capture the diverse ethnic makeup from the plains of Bangladesh. Only 11% believe that galleries to be adequate in portraying the tribes from the plains. It is worth noting that 6% of the respondents share the sentiment that the galleries fall short in accurately representing all ethnic groups in Bangladesh, whereas a vast majority of 94% believe them to be sufficient. The statistics indicate a widespread perception that the galleries lack a comprehensive coverage of the ethnic diversity present in the country, given the comparatively high negative ratings.

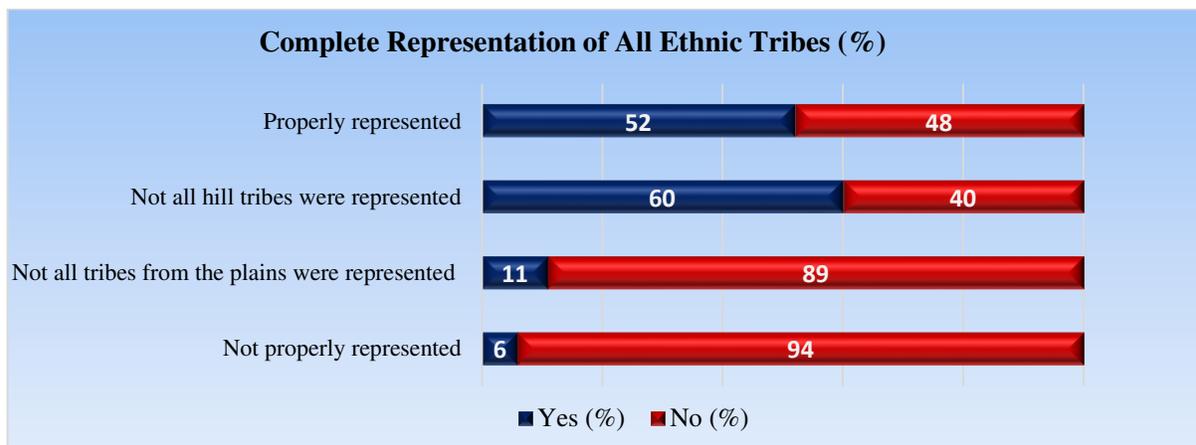


Fig. 5: Complete representation of all ethnic tribes (%).

Popularity of the Potteries and Puppet

Based on the study findings, the largest proportion of respondents, comprising 37%, rated Gallery 15: Potteries as the average. On the other hand, 32% of the participants rated the gallery as very good, while 30% rated it as good. Only 1% of the respondents gave the

gallery a negative rating, deeming it as not good. The statistics indicate that the overall sentiment among the majority of the participants leans towards a neutral to positive perception of Gallery 15: Potteries, with a significant portion finding it average or very good in terms of quality and appeal.

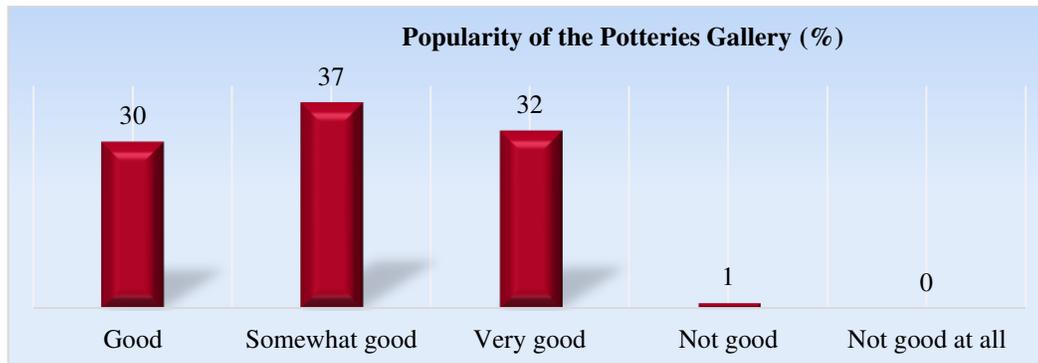


Fig. 6: Popularity of the potteries gallery (%).

Based on the study findings, it is apparent that 41% respondents strongly believe that a separate puppet gallery is an essential requirement. In contrast, a smaller group of 17% of respondents express the view that a separate puppet gallery is not necessary. Additionally, the 34% of the participants emphasize the importance of presenting puppets from all regions, indicating the need for comprehensive representation.

Conversely, 8% respondents assert that the current representation of puppets is sufficient. The decision regarding this matter should encompass a range of factors, including available space, resources, curatorial considerations, and visitor demands. By taking into account all of these elements and the opinions expressed by the respondents, the appropriate steps can be taken by the authority to address this issue effectively.

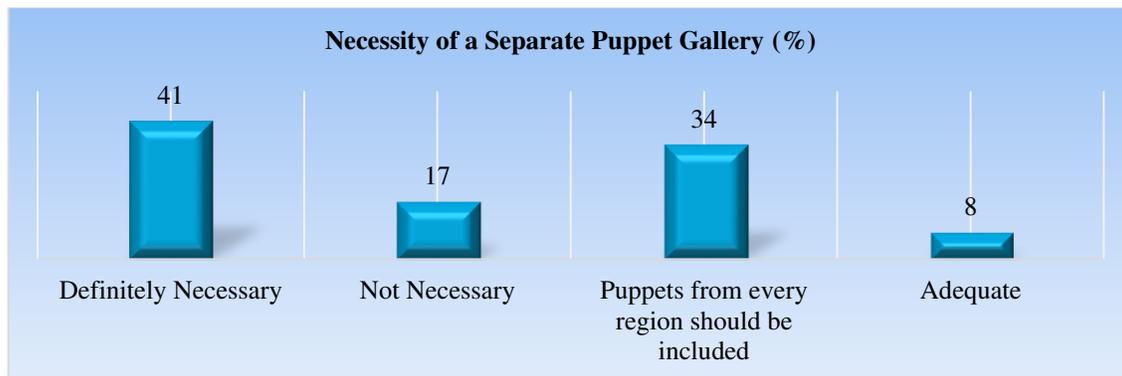


Fig. 7: Necessity of a separate puppet gallery (%).

The survey responses reveal that 35% of the respondents strongly believe that puppet dances or shows should definitely be incorporated into a puppet gallery. 24% of the participants share a positive view and express their support for the inclusion of puppet dances or shows in such a gallery. On the other hand, 30% of the respondents suggest that it would be preferable to have puppet dances or shows, while 11% feel that puppet dances or shows are not a necessary

component. The statistics indicate that the majority of respondents hold a positive view the regarding the inclusion of puppet dances or shows, suggesting that the authority should consider this additional expectation from the audience. Taking into account the visitors' interest, the authority can assess the feasibility and potential benefits of incorporating puppet dances or shows in a puppet gallery.

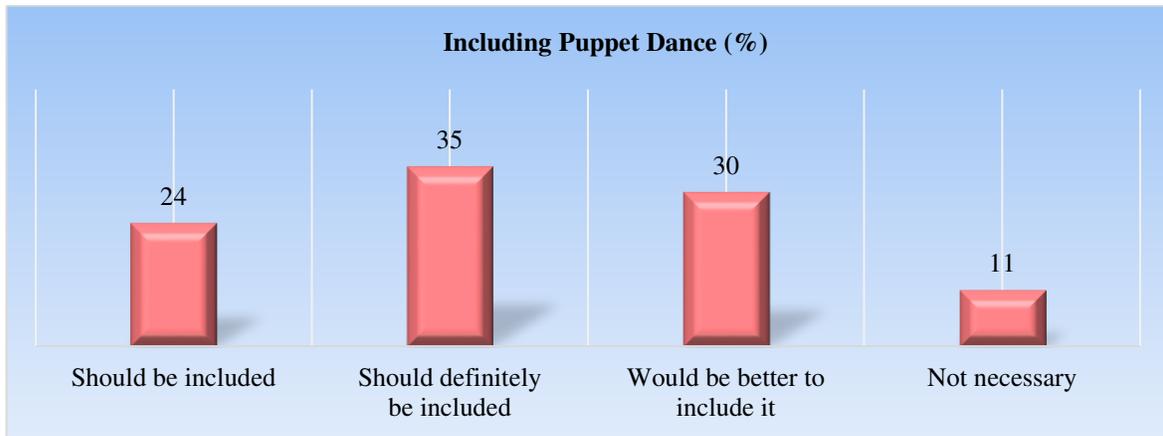


Fig. 8: Opinion on including puppet dance (%).

Representation of Ornaments and Weapons

Based on the responses to a multiple choice question, it is revealed that only 28% of respondents believe that every type of ornaments is properly represented in Gallery 21: Ornaments. However, 72% of the respondents believe otherwise. This suggests that a large number of respondents feel that certain aspects are lacking or could be improved upon. Furthermore, 23% of the respondents feel that the representation of every type of ornaments is only partially successful, whereas 77% feel otherwise, implying they found the gallery’s collection to be either sufficient or far more inadequate. Similarly, 38% of respondents believe that there are some inadequacies in the presentation of ornaments. This suggests that they feel that there are shortcomings or areas where improvements can be made in terms of the display, arrangement, or contextual information of the ornaments in the gallery.

The remaining 62% disagree, indicating they found the gallery’s collection to be either sufficient or far more inadequate. 17% of the respondents share the opinion that not all regional ornaments were properly represented. However, a vast majority, comprising 83% of the respondents, do not find regional ornaments to be underrepresented, indicating a sufficient representation of the regional ornaments. Additionally, 12% of the respondents found a lacking in gold ornaments among the display. However, almost a majority, that is, 88% of the visitors disagreed with the notion, indicating there are sufficient representations of gold ornaments. The overall statistics indicate that, although the gallery appears to be successful in the including sufficient regional and gold ornaments, there are some perceived inadequacies in representing the full spectrum of the ornaments which could be improved.

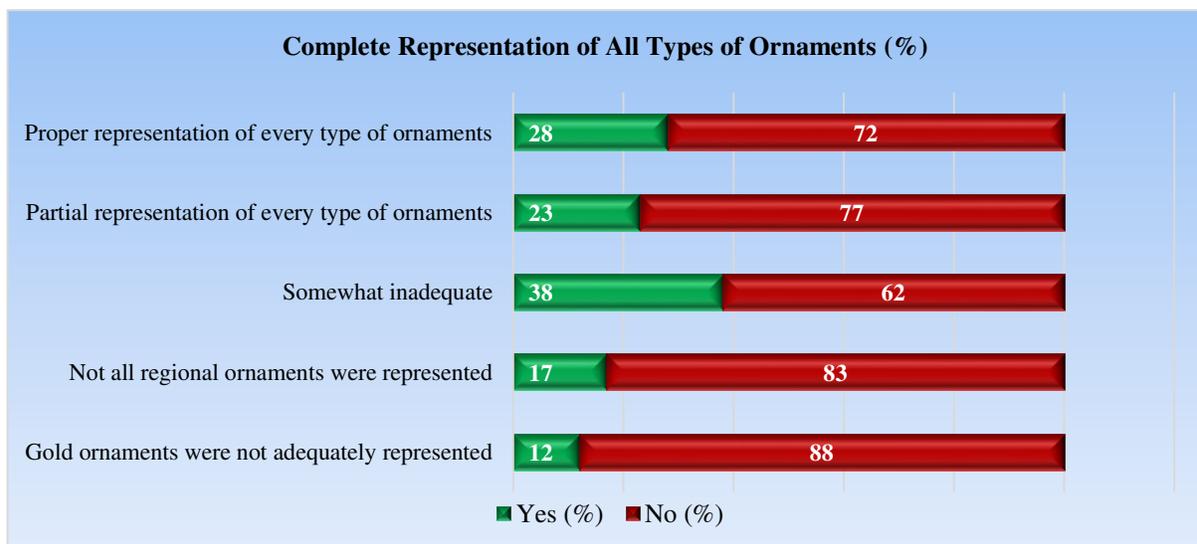


Fig. 9: Complete representation of all types of ornaments (%).

The survey responses reveal that 37% of the respondents strongly support the idea that a separate ornament gallery is absolutely essential. In contrast, a smaller group of 17% of the participants express the view that a separate ornament gallery is not necessary. On the other hand, 18% of the respondents are satisfied with the current representation of ornaments, considering it to be sufficient. 28% of the participants, however, stress the importance of including ornaments from every region. The views among the respondents regarding the need for a separate ornament gallery are

mixed. Some believe that a dedicated gallery would enhance the cultural, artistic, and historical significance of ornaments. However, there are also respondents who do not find the idea of a separate gallery to be very essential. Additionally, some respondents express the desire for specific ornaments from different regions to be prominently featured. Considering and incorporating these varied perspectives can lead to a more inclusive & comprehensive representation of ornaments, catering to the preferences and expectations of a wider audience.

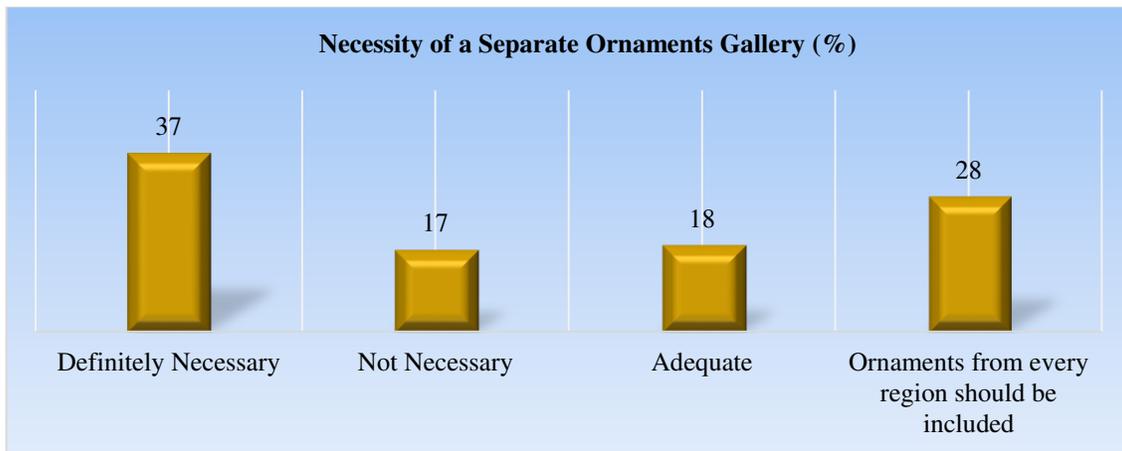


Fig. 10: Necessity of a separate ornaments gallery (%).

The survey responses reveal that, 32% believe that in Gallery 21: Arms & Weapons effectively represents all types of weapons. On the other hand, 37% of respondents express that the gallery is exceptionally well endowed, while 31% feel that the gallery only partially reflects all types of weapons. It is noteworthy that a majority of the respondents hold a highly positive view regarding the exhibition and its portrayal of the

weapons. Overall, there are mixed opinions regarding whether Gallery 21: Arms & Weapons adequately represents all kinds of weaponry. While some respondents perceive the presentation to be comprehensive, others believe that there is room for improvement in terms of encompassing a more thorough collection of exhibited weapons.

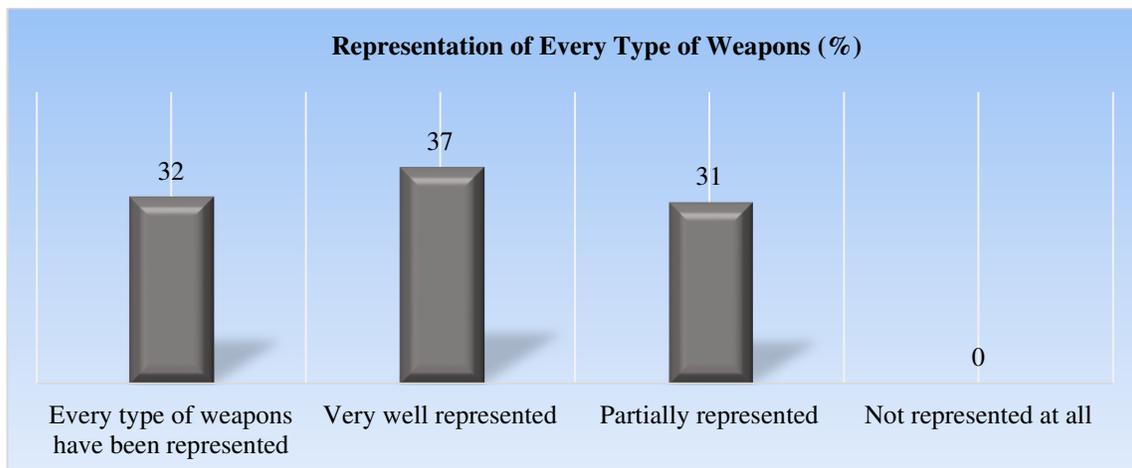


Fig. 11: Representation of every type of weapons (%).

Representation of Musical Instruments

Responses to a multiple choice question from the survey reveal that 34% of the respondents believe that the every type of the instruments have been properly represented in Gallery 28: the Musical Instruments. However, a significant majority of 66% feel that the gallery falls short in properly representing all the instruments of the country. 24% of the respondents feel that instruments from all regions were not adequately included in Gallery 28: Musical Instruments. In contrast, a vast majority of 76% finds the gallery to be sufficiently endowed with the regional representation. Furthermore, 10% of the respondents feel that ancient instruments were not adequately represented in the gallery. However, a vast majority of 90% feel otherwise, indicating a sufficient collection of the ancient

musical instruments. 28% of the respondents feel that further additions are necessary to enhance the quality of Gallery 28: Musical Instruments. However, a substantial portion of the respondents, that is, 72% find the collection sufficient. Additionally, 21% of the respondents express the view that there should be more modern instruments in the gallery. They suggest that alongside traditional instruments, modern instruments should be the included to reflect the evolving musical landscape of the country. However, the remaining majority of 79% found the need to modernize unnecessary. The overall statistics indicate that, a majority of the visitors are very the satisfied with the collection and presentation of Gallery 28 : Musical Instruments, given the high percentage of the positive ratings and comparatively low negative ratings.

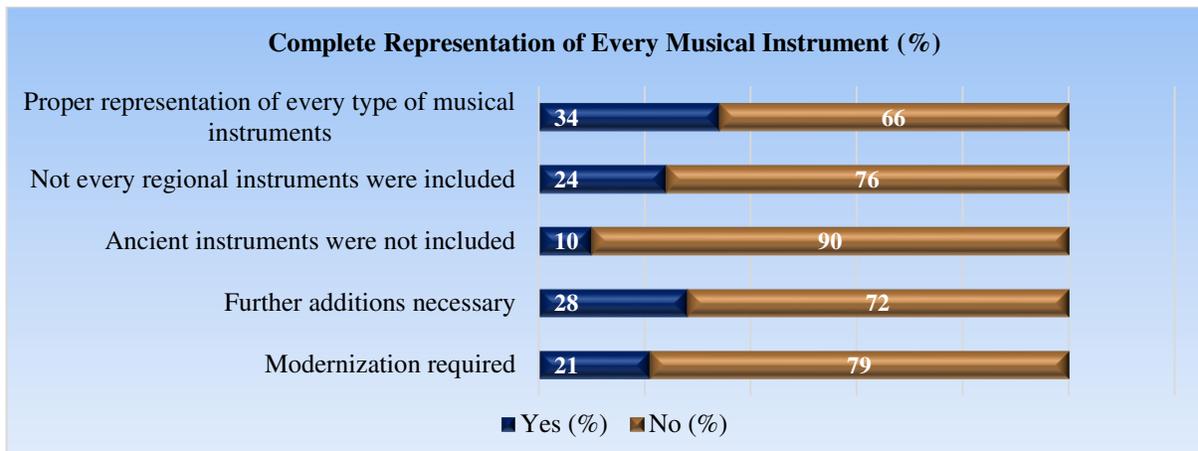


Fig. 12: Complete representation of every musical instrument (%).

Survey responses have provided an insight into the types of additional musical instruments that could be added to the Gallery 28: Musical Instruments. Respondents have brought to the attention various musical instruments that they feel have been left out or the inadequately represented in the gallery. Around 20% respondents mentioned the absence of modern musical instruments. Additionally, 15% of the respondents specifically highlighted instruments such as the dotara, sitar, harmonium, real snake flute, the Jewish religious flute, and the big drums used in weddings that they believe are not adequately represented. Moreover, 15% respondents expressed the opinion that all the necessary instruments are already included in the gallery, while others mention specific instruments that they feel should be the showcased. 5% respondents mentioned the ektara made of gourd and string by

villagers, banjo, sharinda, kanak, sports flute, and the traditional flute from Shathkhira respectively.

Representation of Jamdani Sharee and Traditional Sharee

According to the survey data, it is noted that 43% of the respondents find the representation of traditional Jamdani Sharee in Gallery 29: Textile & Costumes to be satisfactory. Additionally, 26% of the respondents express strong satisfaction, deeming it to be very satisfactory. Another 31% of the respondents view the display to be the somewhat satisfactory. Notably, there have been no negative ratings. The statistics indicate that the respondents hold a positive view of this particular section, indicating the general satisfaction with the presentation of traditional Jamdani Sharee in Gallery 29: Textile & Costumes.

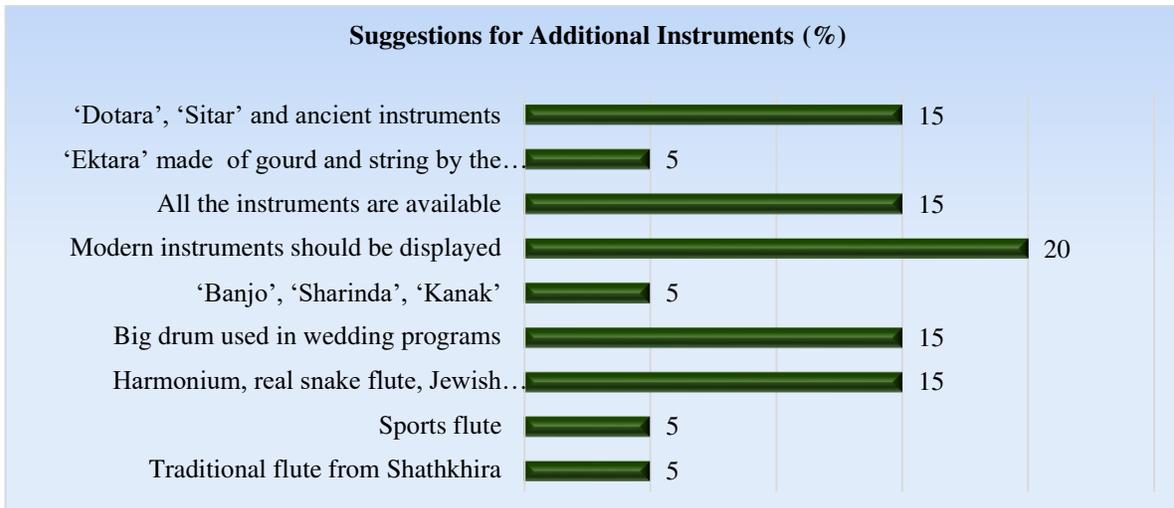


Fig. 13: Suggestions for additional instruments (%).

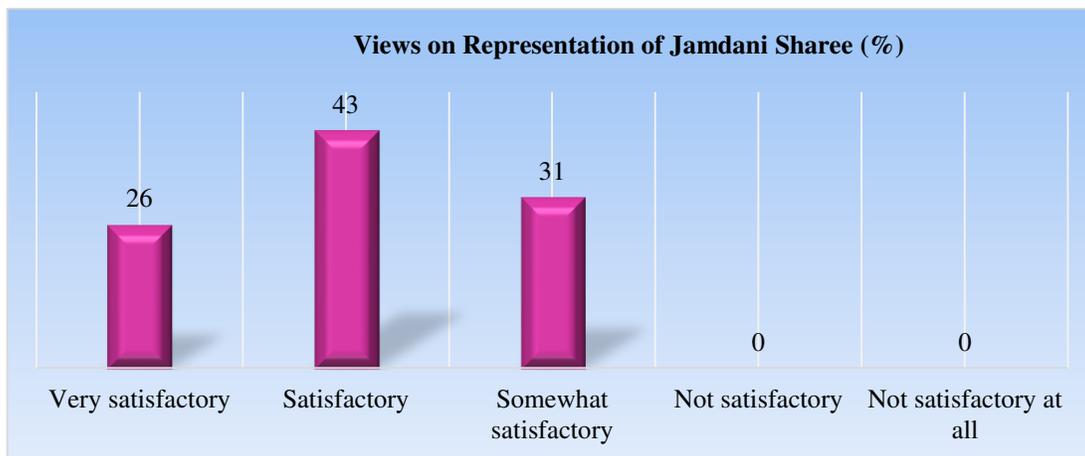


Fig. 14: Views on representation of jamdani sharee (%).

The survey responses reveal that, among the respondents, 28% feel that Gallery 29: Textile & Costumes should have included a greater variety of Jamdani, Muslin, and more loom crafted Sharees. Another 24% of the respondents believe that the gallery should prioritize highlighting the history of the country's weavers. Additionally, 20% of the respondents express the opinion that the gallery should adopt a more modern presentation approach. In contrast, 28% of the respondents mention that the gallery's current presentation is sufficient. The findings suggest that the respondents share a sentiment that the exhibition could have given a stronger presence to Jamdani and Muslin Sharees, recognizing their cultural and the historical significance. Furthermore, there is a call for improvement in presenting the gallery in a more modern and engaging manner, and including the history of the weavers.

Representation of Embroidered Quilts and Wooden Bed

Responses to a multiple choice question from the survey reveal that 46% of the respondents believe that all types of quilt and every regional quilt are included in Gallery 30: Embroidered Quilt. However, a little over half of the respondents, notably 54% of the visitors share the sentiment that the gallery is not representative of every type of quilts or every regional ones. This indicates a disparity in perceptions regarding the comprehensiveness of quilt representation. 10% of the respondents feel that it is necessary to include quilt collections from Chapainawabganj. In contrast, however, a vast majority, comprising 90% of the visitors, found the notion of such inclusion unnecessary. Furthermore, 5% of the respondents feel that it is necessary to include quilt collections from Khulna.

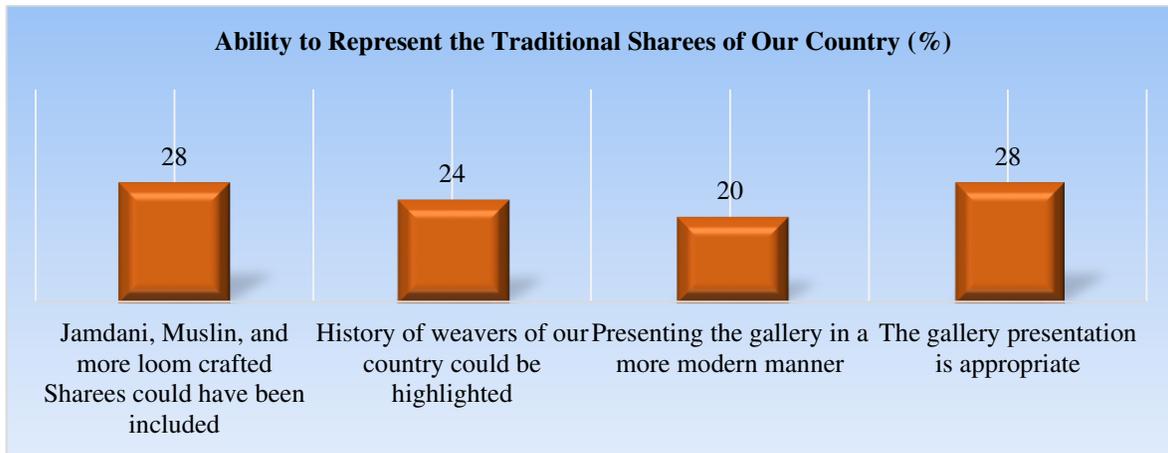


Fig. 15: Ability to represent the traditional sharees of our country (%).

However, almost 95% of the visitors do not find the collection to be lacking. 11% of the respondents feel that it is necessary to include quilt collections from Cumilla to enhance the quality of Gallery 30: Embroidered Quilts. However, a substantial portion of the respondents, that is, 89% of the visitors find the collection to be the sufficient. Additionally, 37% of the respondents express the necessity of modernizing the gallery with digital instruments. In contrast, a significant number, comprising 63% of the participants, find

the idea of further modernization to be unnecessary, indicating they find Gallery 30: Embroidered Quilts to be sufficiently well-equipped. The overall statistics indicate that, a significant portion of the visitors are quite satisfied with the collection and presentation of Gallery 30: Embroidered Quilts. However, many of the visitors still believe the gallery to have fallen short of covering every type and region in its representation, a fact which must be addressed for a more comprehensive and well-rounded exhibition.

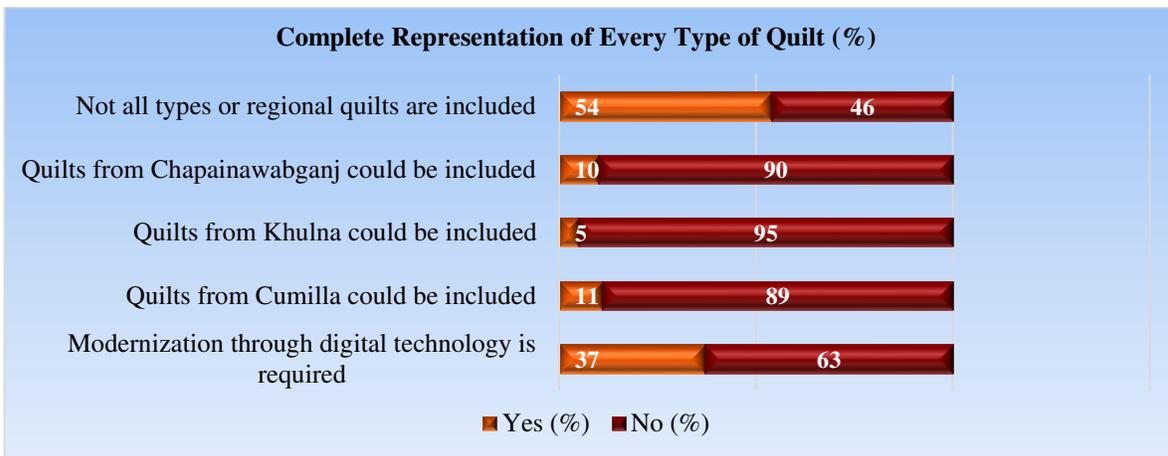


Fig. 16: Complete representation of every type of quilt (%).

The survey responses reveal that 47% of the respondents found the designs of wooden bed displayed in the Wood Carvings Gallery (31-32) to their liking, whereas 34% found the designs to be excellent and greatly appealing to their personal taste. Around 17% respondents found the designs somewhat likeable. Notably only 1% respondents found these designs to be bad or very poor. The statistics indicate that the majority of the respondents found the designs of the UniversePG | www.universepg.com

wooden bed displayed in the Wood Carvings Gallery (31-32) very appealing, given the notably low negative rating.

Presentation Quality and Digitization of Gallery

The study findings the shed light on the underlying reasons behind the respondents’ dissatisfaction with the presentation quality of the galleries, 38% of the respondents expressed that they would have preferred

a more modernized gallery, while an equal percentage of respondents mentioned the potential use of digital technology to enhance the experience. Additionally,

nearly 8% of the respondents voiced their dissatisfaction with the display presentation, an equal number finding the presentation unappealing.

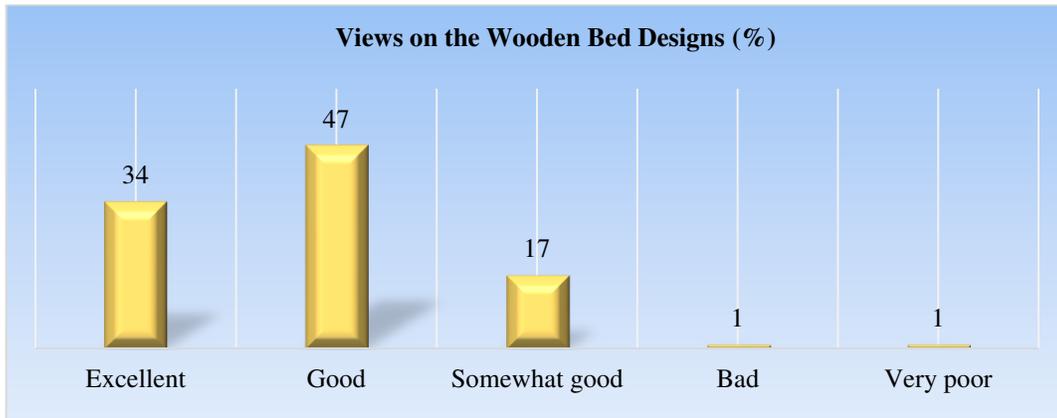


Fig. 17: Views on the wooden bed designs (%).

A smaller group of 6% expressed their dissatisfaction with factors such as lighting, ventilation, and cleanliness. The survey responses reveal that 48% of the respondents strongly believe in the necessity of showcasing the process of crafting sharee, dolls, wood carvings and boats through digital technology. 42% of the respondents express that such processes can indeed

be displayed. 8% of the respondents suggests that such exhibits are not required. Only a mere 2% of the respondents find the galleries to be satisfactory as is. Collectively, these percentages indicate that a majority of the respondents are in favor of the displaying the crafting processes of sharees, dolls, wooden artifacts, and boats by utilizing digital technology.

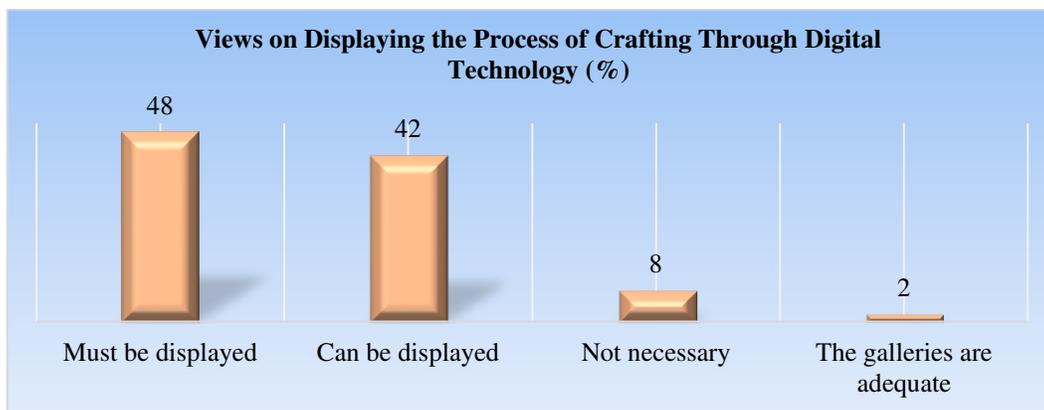


Fig. 18: Views on displaying the process of crafting through digital technology (%).

Based on the study findings, around 20% of respondents found the information presented in the galleries of Ethnography Department to be highly satisfactory. Additionally, 33% of the respondents believe that the information provided is accurate, while a majority comprising of 41% feel that the information could benefit from refinement. A small minority of 6% expressed dissatisfaction with the information provided. While a significant number of respondents hold a positive view of the given information, it is note-

worthy that a considerable portion also expressed the necessity for improvement. Therefore, to align with the expectations of the respondents, there are scopes to improve in this particular section.

Rating the Galleries

The survey includes a segment dedicated to evaluating the visitors’ opinion on each of the gallery managed by the Department of Ethnography & Decorative Art. The ratings reflect the appeal of each gallery to the visitors, the general perception pertaining to the arti-

facts displayed within, the facilities, and the overall impression as well as any dissatisfaction a visitor might have after their visits to these galleries. The ratings have been provided in the form of a Likert scale consisting of the 5 grades; 1 (strongly disagree),

2 (disagree), 3 (neither/uncertain), 4 (agree), and the 5 (strongly agree). The scale indicate the overall level of satisfaction of the visitors. A comprehensive summary of the ratings provided by the participants of the survey has been presented below.

Table 1: Rating of the Galleries of Department of Ethnography and Decorative Art.

Gallery Information		Rating (Rounded %)					Weighted Avg.
Gallery Number	Name of Galleries	5	4	3	2	1	
11	Life in Bangladesh	19	37	41	1	2	3.7
12	Boats of Bangladesh	24	44	27	3	2	3.85
13	Tribes of Bangladesh-1	19	46	29	6	0	3.78
14	Tribes of Bangladesh-2	18	41	35	6	0	3.71
15	Potteries	22	40	30	7	1	3.74
21	Coins, Medals & Ornaments	27	48	19	6	0	4.06
22	Ivory Works	31	36	32	1	0	4.07
23	Arms & Weapons	30	44	23	3	0	3.01
24	Metal Works	20	47	27	4	2	3.79
25	Porcelain Works	26	43	24	7	0	3.88
27	Glassware	23	45	28	3	1	3.86
28	Musical Instruments	18	43	32	5	2	3.70
29	Textiles & Costumes	22	40	27	8	3	3.70
30	Embroidered Quilts	29	43	19	7	2	3.80
31	Wood Carvings-1	31	42	19	6	2	3.94
32	Wood Carvings-2	36	39	20	4	1	4.03

Based on a weighted average calculation of the ratings for each gallery, Gallery 22: Ivory Works has the highest weighted average, indicating its high popularity among the visitors, closely followed by Gallery 21: Coins, Medals & Ornaments. Gallery 32: Wood Carvings-2 is also the significantly popular. In contrast, Gallery 23: Arms & Weapons appears to be the least popular among the 16 galleries under the Department of Ethnography & Decorative Art, with the lowest weighted average rating.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Department of Ethnography & Decorative Art is holding a crucial position in ensuring the preservation of our ethno-cultural diversity and the keeping people connected to their origins. Keeping future development in mind, the following proposals can be taken into consideration for the Department of Ethnography & Decorative Art to reach greater heights in its role. These recommendations offer avenues for the museum to further excel and contribute to the preservation of our cultural heritage. Firstly, the matter of expanding gallery space and separating the department may be

taken into the consideration. Secondly, as the research findings suggest, there are yet unexplored avenues in terms of representing every aspect of Bangladeshi lives. There are scopes for extensive representation of the ethnic minority groups and every social class of ancient Bengal. To that end, thematic galleries and dioramas can be taken into consideration for a better representation. Thirdly, research requires higher priority. As suggested by many of the participants. The museum is equipped with adequate workforce for the conducting research projects. Training the departmental officers and providing adequate budget as well as incentives to actively engage in research work would not only enhance the museum’s reputation but also enrich the museum as an institution. Additionally, the matter of storage management is of utmost importance. Many priceless artifacts may be harmed after being exposed to elements or due to improper storage management. It is necessary to better equip the storage with relevant technology and training conservation officers in managing them. There have also been thematic suggestions for the prospective new

gallery. Lastly, documentation of the Intangible Cultural heritage (ICH) inventory is a hallmark achievement for the Department of Ethnography & Decorative Art as no other institution has yet undertaken such a large scale initiative. It is of paramount importance to make this flagship project one of the regular responsibilities of the department and exert continued effort to ensure preservation of our intangible cultural heritages.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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