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Museum offers a peek into tribal life

Monday October 31 2005 10:10 IST

BHUBANESWAR: You need not travel to far-off places and trek the treacherous terrains, forests and mountains to have a glimpse of the rich tribal culture of Orissa that has been home to 62 tribes.

The Museum of Tribal Arts in the heart of the Capital City is here to satiate your interest in their culture. It has all the ingredients to be included in the tourism map of the State as a favourite destination for travellers and researchers as well.

Barely a furlong from the N.H.5 near CRPF Square, the museum stands on the 12-acre sprawling and serene campus of the State-owned Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI). Aesthetically designed by architect Sarat Mohapatra, the five-year-old institution houses nearly 1900 tribal artefacts representing 30 tribes in five halls. Besides, there are five typical tribal huts around the museum and several shrine crafts giving glimpses of their religious rituals.

What attracts the visitors most to the museum is its collection of ornaments of 17 tribes apart from the traditional costumes of eight tribes. "For the past three years, I have been visiting this unique museum. Its collection has helped me a lot to develop my skill and vision. It has also enabled me to work for tribal craft conservation programmes in Jharkhand," acknowledged Pankaja Sethi, an alumni of the Delhi-based National Institute of Fashion Technology.

The collection includes a large variety of dhokra, household

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articles, musical instruments and agricultural implements of the primitive tribal groups that educate a visitor about the changing face of the tribal tradition, culture and lifestyle over the years. The arts and photographs section also tell volumes on their artistic attitudes.

The shrine craft of Saora and Dongaria Kondh displayed on its premises explain the religious rituals being undertaken by the communities. An added attraction of the museum is its models of tribal huts of Santal, Juanga, Gadaba, Saora and Kondh tribes.

During September to March, considered as the tourism season in the State, the museum receives a large number of travellers from abroad who are brought here by the city-based tour operators, informed curator Kabita Patnaik, an anthropologist who guides the visitors. However, it rarely gets domestic and local visitors except researchers, she added.

Efforts are on to give a new look to the museum to promote it as a tourists' destination soon, said SCSTRTI director Gopinath Mohanty.

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