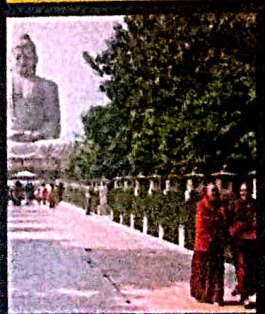
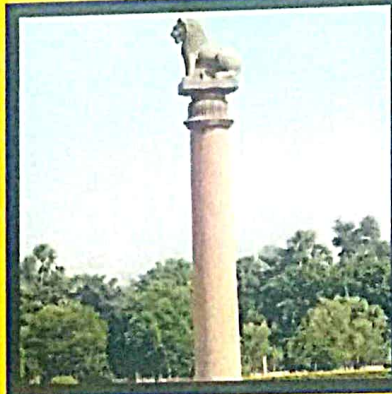
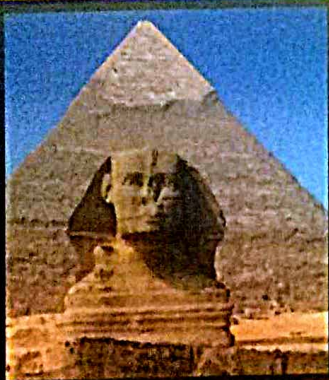


History and Historiography

From Ancient to Modern World

Editors

Ashu J Nair & Srotoswini Borah



CHAPTER - TWELVE

Archaeology and Museums: Rethinking Sense of Identity in India

Rajeev Kumar

Introduction

Indian history was obscure, till the 18th century, with certain doubts and discrepancies regarding the data, dates and developments through ages. Chronology for a certain epoch in the Indian past could hardly be fixed with conviction. Whatever record was there was solely based upon the textual tradition which could not go beyond the 2nd millennium BC. The turnaround, which made this question of uncertainty answerable to an extent, came with the discovery of the methodology of archaeology in India. Though this was the unintended result of the British subjugation, it helped in bringing accuracy of description and documentation of the material remains and their visual and textual record for deriving objective knowledge about the past.

Early interest in natural history initiated the interest in museums. From their beginnings, archaeological museums have reflected a complex and dynamic balance between the demands of developing, documenting, and preserving objects on the one hand and sharing knowledge, access, and control on the other¹. In India they were, however, results of private collections. In the 20th century (post-independence) the archaeological museums became significant and the government museums started collecting