

Prof Himanshu Ray provided the spark on 16 Jan 2019 for our first meeting at INSA on 1 Feb 2019 to establish a maritime museum in Mumbai. Here is an article published in Indian Express

<https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/we-have-shown-very-little-interest-in-our-maritime-past-5540454/>

Prof Himanshu Ray invited by Vasant j Foundation for a talk at CSMVS Museum

‘We have shown very little interest in our maritime past’

A former professor of Ancient Indian History at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi, Ray pointed out that a city like Mumbai should have a maritime museum. “We have a huge coastline but how many maritime museums do we have in the country? Shouldn’t Mumbai have at least a major maritime museum?”



Written by **MAYURA JANWALKAR** | Mumbai | Published: January 16, 2019 7:44:17 am



Himanshu Prabha Ray

Former chairperson of the National Monuments Authority, Himanshu Prabha Ray, said the coastal states need to play a more proactive role in conservation of their maritime heritage. Ray, a member of the board of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, Oxford, is in Mumbai to deliver the Vasant J Sheth Memorial Lecture on Wednesday.

A former professor of Ancient Indian History at the [Jawaharlal Nehru University \(JNU\)](#), Delhi, Ray pointed out that a city like Mumbai should have a maritime museum. “We have a huge coastline but how many maritime museums do we have in the country? Shouldn’t Mumbai have at least a major maritime museum? Look around Mumbai. It was islands. Now it’s a city. If you went around Mumbai and asked people, how many would relate to its island location or would even know that it was not what it is now?”

She said people visit the Elephanta Caves for tourism but few may have asked why the images in the caves were carved with great care on an island. “The island had something to do with people moving back and forth across the seas. But do we think about it like that? Do we even relate to the sea in that sense? For some reason, we have shown very little interest in our maritime past.”

Ray will speak on 'India's Forgotten Coastal Monuments: The Case for Kanara' at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya on Wednesday evening.

She said UNESCO is trying hard to develop interest among nations in conserving trans-national heritage. "More than one country comes and applies for heritage and what better than sea routes? India did talk about it in 2014, about Project Mausam, but we need to think deeply of how we want to take it forward."

Project 'Mausam' was a 2014 Ministry of Culture project to be implemented by [Indira Gandhi](#) National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, as the nodal coordinating agency with support from the Archeological Survey of India and National Museum. Focussing on monsoon patterns, cultural routes and maritime landscapes, Project 'Mausam' aimed at understanding how the knowledge and manipulation of the monsoon winds shaped interactions across the Indian Ocean and led to the spread of shared knowledge systems, traditions, technologies and ideas along maritime routes.

Ray said the country must conserve not just monuments but also maritime landscapes. "If we follow the system of protecting not the monuments but landscapes, in one maritime cultural landscape, we would have say 20 monuments or 40 monuments. Why aren't we thinking big? A cultural landscape is not then about a monument. It's about monuments, people, communities, inter-connections between monuments and these cultural landscapes and others across the seas. This is not idle talk because other countries are doing it," she said.

Ray said just like in the case of handicrafts, dying occupations such as boat-building need to be revived and under-water archaeology needs to be tied up to activities like snorkelling that are becoming increasingly popular. "Interest comes from awareness, which comes from what you are taught or exposed to. In terms of what one is taught in school, college or university, maritime history is not the main focus so far. Unless you start there, it is hard to get people interested in something they don't know."