ABSTRACT OF THESIS TITLED
MUSEUM EDUCATION FOR THE UNDERPRIVILEGED
MUSEUM GOERS IN WEST BENGAL

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Museums all over the world are undergoing a sea change in terms of techniques as well as concept. In the classical age they were established as private repository houses of the monarchs and aristocrats following the principles of 'God, Gold and Glory.' The doors of these places were open only to the privileged few. The idea was merely to display precious works of art. The common people had little or no access to these collections. However in the past few centuries the idea of public museums has slowly gained ground. These museums mainly acquired, displayed and preserved the natural and cultural heritages of man. The idea of education as a function was a much later development. After the Second World War the idea of the museums as educational institutions were evolving. However the education was primarily for the so called elite and scholarly. At present museums all over the world are realizing the significance of education and social inclusion. They require including within their fold the major section of the population who previously felt excluded from the museums. The museums of West Bengal have slowly woken up to the fact that excluding the rural and unlettered visitors who are deprived from the major privileges of life such as food, shelter, health and education would not serve their primary role of educational institutions. This idea of education is central to the museums today and that education essentially requires being non-formal as it includes a major section of the people who might be unlettered and for whom it is not possible to have benefits of formal education. The idea of museums is that education imparted by them requires to percolate to the grass root level of the society. The thrust group of this research work includes the socio-economically deprived people who visit the museums in West Bengal and form the huge section of potential visitors who are untapped. The research work seeks to find methods for making educational programmes conducive to their requirements and the approach must have a holistic effect on the personality of the individual.

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