PREFACE

The concept of museums has undergone a major change in the post war era throughout the world. The modern museum is viewed not merely as a repository of antiquities and works of cultural significance. It is now considered to be a centre of enlightenment, interpretation of the collection, entertainment as well as audiovisual education. In fact, the concept of a museum today is a social institution that disseminates knowledge to members of the society irrespective of their socio-economic status, religion, caste or creed.

However, in India, one faces a vital problem which is the dissemination of knowledge to the grass root level of the society. Although formal educational institutions exist under the different boards of education, these are not able to reach out to every member of the society especially those who are lacking in social and economic privileges. This section of the population which can be termed under privileged either hail from remote areas where there are hardly any formal educational institutions or even if there are, it is impossible for these under privileged section of the population to avail this facility. This is because it is difficult for them to make ends meet and education is considered a luxury. Here museums can play a vital role in providing informal educational by direct experience.

A sizeable portion of the underprivileged people in India lives in West Bengal. West Bengal marked the genesis of the museum movement in India and has a large number of museums both in the cities as well as the suburban towns and rural areas. It is essential that these museums come forward to play a significant role in the lives of the people who otherwise think that the museum has nothing to do with their lives.

Museums are the one of the best methods that can be employed to battle illiteracy by means of visual education. This is because mere display of exhibits in a museum is not enough to attract unlettered and underprivileged visitors.
To make the museums meaningful for the underprivileged it is necessary to include programmes that are interactive, participatory and also provides wholesome entertainment. This research work entitled ‘Museum Education for the Underprivileged Museum Goers of West Bengal’ is an effort to purpose educational programmes suitable for the underprivileged visitors both children as well as adults.

The rich cultural heritage of West Bengal may be suitably portrayed through the museums of the state with suitable additions and alterations in the programmes. Thus, museums can be fruitfully used for non-formal visual education by the museum authorities for visitors of the lowest strata of the society both by means of programmes within as well as beyond its four walls.