CHAPTER-1

MUSEUM EDUCATION –

ITS SCOPE AS AN AGENCY OF INFORMAL EDUCATION:

Museums elate, edify and educate. There are three principal instruments of education – the spoken word, the written word and the visible world. It is through this visible world that the museum becomes a source of education in a civilized society. While the spoken and written words contribute to formal education, the museums offer services towards what may be called a non formal education. The concept of a modern museum is that it is not only a repository of objects of significance since time immemorial but age old tradition, history, art and culture of different regions of the world. It is the centre of enlightenment, research, analysis, interpretation, entertainment and audio visual education.

The words from which the modern museum gets its name such as Mouseion (Greek), Mousa (French) refer to connotations – one being inspiration and the other being a place where man’s mind would attain a mood of aloofness above everyday affairs. Museums signify man’s utilization of surroundings through exhibitions for understanding by mankind. Like the Muses in Greece, in ancient India Goddess Saraswati was considered as the goddess of learning. She was considered as a celestial river that had descended from the sky and in the Vedic age, she was regarded as Vag “the Goddess of Speech.” In Western India the libraries that preserved books, manuscripts, paintings, and sculptures were known as Saraswati Bhandars. These were library cum museums and usually situated very close to each other. Maths (monastery) and temples in India thus played the functions of cultural, social, religious and educational institutions. Hence they may be called the precursors of the modern museums of temple – museums. Reference may be made of the Rajaraja Museum in the Brahadisvara Temple at Tanjore, which had a renewal, as the Thanjavur Art Gallery, the museums of the Srirangan Temple (known as Sriranganathaswami Devasthanam Museum) Tamil Nadu (1935) Sri Meenakshi Sundareshwar Temple in Madurai (1966), Sri Chitrapur Math and Art Gallery (1973) at Shivali in Uttara Kanara Karnataka are all temple museums in
India. Sri Venkateswara Museum at Tirupati has been named after the famous Venkateswara temple from where it has originated.

In ancient India, collection houses of paintings were termed as ‘Chitrashalas’ which were of three types: Chitrashalas attached to private houses called private chitrashalas, Chitrashalas attached to the palace termed as palace chitrashalas, and Chitrashalas attached to public art galleries called public chitrashalas. Besides these, there were chitrashalas on wheels which may be taken as the prototypes of modern mobile museums on the museo-bus. Such travelling art galleries were open to the public in the evenings only for recreation. Other exquisite art objects and sculptures were displayed in chitrashalas. The well arranged gallery was known as *Vithi alekhya-griha*. Vithi was used to denote a spacious hall or gallery. Here the public had a chance to view the treasures of culture. Thus, we see that the museums or museum-like institutions in ancient India were inseparable from the idea of education along with entertainment.

That entertainment also was an intricately involved aspect of the early museums of ancient India is clear from the terms used to designate them. The museums in early India were variously known as *Vishwakarmagriha* (house of Vishwakarma the God of Architecture), *Kowtukghar* (house of fun), *Devakul* (temple house of God), and *pratima mandir* (temple status signified museums). The Kowtukghar was used to designate museums in the 19th century Bengal. It was a house which inspired spirit of curiosity and research. Apart from these other terms such as *Jadughar* (house of magic) and *ajayabghar* (house of wonders) were common. Zoological gardens were known as *chiriyakhana* (house of animals and birds) while *murdaghar* signified the house where skeletons of dead animals were preserved. The early museums thus were treasure houses of traditions and culture of man along with his handicrafts and nature that taught them about the cultural legacy of their forefathers.

Before going further into the question of museum education one needs to elaborate on the concept of education in the proper sense and its history in India. Education has a wide connotation and as such there is a great wide connotation and as such there is a great controversy in regard to its meaning. According to John Dewey, “Education
is the development of those capacities in an individual which help to control his environment and fulfill his possibilities.\textsuperscript{11}

Education does not mean ideas obtained by merely reading a few textbooks. Education implies natural development of the various faculties and organs of the body and mind. Even as early as 428B.C. Plato, the great Greek Sophist, was of view that knowledge is natural not acquired. He suggested that knowledge is imbibed through beliefs and therefore internal as well as external. Plato believed that knowledge is not a new experience for the soul but a rejuvenation of ideas latent in the soul even before association with the body. Plato had classified the aims of education into the following:-

1. Inculcating the idea of good virtues and citizenship
2. Development of body as well as soul.
4. Inculcating the feeling of appreciation of beauty. Plato advocated early education during infancy by means of music and physical training. Such methods of teaching takes into account the natural interest of human beings.

Historical survey reveals that early India probably had no systematic state education. Nothing much is known about the educational system of the Indus Valley Civilization. However, during the beginning of the Rig Vedic Age the family was perhaps the only agency that imparted education. The head of the family transmitted the knowledge of the Vedas to his children. With the passage of time the concept of gurukulas developed. The gurus were professional teachers and their homes served as centres of informal education. The gurus were learned Brahmins and gradually took complete control over the act of imparting education. Education began with the \textit{Upanayana} ceremony of a boy by which, he became a \textit{brahmachari} and was initiated by the preceptor. The brahmachari had to lead a disciplined life. He stayed at the home of the guru and in exchange for free boarding and lodging, served the teacher. Gradually the caste system became rigid in the later Vedic period. Only the three higher castes \textit{viz. Brahmin, Kshatriya} and \textit{Vaishya} were taught at the gurukulas. The lowest caste (\textit{Sudra}) was considered unfit for receiving education and subjected to menial work.
The curriculum included the study of vedic literature. The aims of education were inculcation of sraddha (faith in God), medha (retention of knowledge acquired), praja (having progeny), dhana (wealth), ayuh (longevity) and amaratva (immortality). The life and activities of the gurukulas were designed to meet the harmonious development of the pupils. The duties that they performed for their guru such as begging for food, fetching firewood, caring of cattle, cleaning of house, gardening etc. helped in all round development of the pupils by learning from their immediate environment. Museums today too follow the same philosophy, that of educating about the culture and environment from the immediate surroundings. In ancient India, the teaching and learning processes were primarily oral. The pupils learnt by repeating the words taught by the gurus.

Demonstration was also a method of education during the Vedic age. The guru demonstrated different types of religious rituals to be performed in the different types of ceremonies. During the growth of Buddhism in India around 600 B.C. monasteries developed as the new agencies of education. Originally meant to educate monks and nuns only, the facilities were later thrown open to children of all castes unlike the gurukulas system of the Vedic Aryans that excluded the Sudra. Teaching was in Pali, the language of the masses and not Sanskrit which the language of the Brahmmins and upper caste (in which the education was imparted in Gurukulas). In the Islamic period education was imparted in the Makhtabs. Thus, while discussing education one gets to see that informal education was the only form of education in ancient India and a systematic formal education came into being only with the coming of the British.

The significant feature of this form of informal education is that it was solely for children and youth and males. There was no provision for the education for women or elderly people. However, the education aimed at all round development of the pupils. Such views were also held by the great Indian thinkers such as Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore. Indian philosopher, educationist and literature Rabindranath Tagore conceived the idea that education needs to take place in freedom without imposition of any kind of restriction be it academic or otherwise. He was convinced that education enables the mind to find out the ultimate truth and therefore needs to be carried out in touch with nature. In the opinion of Tagore
education unleashed self expression and led to the development of creative tendencies.

He therefore conceived the idea of Shantiniketan where the pupils were constantly amidst nature and therefore constantly in touch with it. For children he started Pathabhavan where classes took place in open air. Since Tagore believed in all round development and giving way to creative tendencies by means of education, students (both children as well as youth) were taught various kinds of activities. These included performing arts such as music, dance, drama, drawing as well as practical aspects such as carpentry, pottery, crafts, bookbinding. Consciousness about the environment was brought about by nature study.

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation had revolutionary opinions regarding education. This was called Nai Talim. In the opinion of Gandhi, the curriculum and pedagogic ideas which formed the fabric of modern education were imported from Oxford and Cambridge, Edinburgh and London. However, they are essentially foreign and till they are repudiated, there can never be national education. He opined that India with its elaborate and established civilization had once the advantage of an educational system of her own; the only thing entitled to be called ‘national’. However, it was different from the Anglo Indian type and from the pseudo-national type that is its descendant.

The purely literary education, according to Gandhiji, with English as the medium of instruction, which the British introduced in India, was calculated to provide clerks for the government, but not to stimulate initiative or skill in production. Gandhiji saw that such education not only isolated the educated from the masses, but what was worse, made their education of no practical use whatsoever to the people. He puts forward the view, “With the destruction by the British of ancient village organization and the dumping on the village of goods abroad, the people of the village were disorganized, lost their occupation, felt helpless and paralyzed, and were sinking steadily in poverty, unemployment and despair. The educated looked upon their education as a mere means to their own advancement even at the cost of the poor”¹². Gandhi saw that the only way of saving the nation at that juncture was to revive village economic life and to relate education to it. Education accordingly,
he held, was to be based on village occupations. The child was to be a producer. Instead of education in a foreign tongue which was unconnected with life, it was to be purposive, in the person’s mother tongue and connected to his or her social and cultural environment. He advocated education through vocational training. According to him the system of education that was introduced by the British has broken the continuity of existence. All sound education was meant to keep up the life of community without breach or disaster. The ancient educational system in India, according to Gandhiji maintained the long tradition of the cultural legacy of the country. The system of education introduced in colonial India served to make generations completely out of touch with the culture of his predecessors.

The British period witnessed the passing of various Acts in different phases such as the Character Act (1813), the Government of India Act 1919 etc. In 1937 an all India Educational Conference was organized at Wardha, under the Presidentship of Mahatma Gandhi. It was here that Gandhiji elaborated his ideas of Basic Education which was popularly called the Wardha Scheme. A report of the Wardha Scheme was prepared by Zakir Hussain that contained the different recommendations of Gandhiji’s ideas such as free and compulsory Basic education for all children from 7 to 14 years and teaching of basic crafts and general Science.

In the primitive and tribal societies the people are provided with an immediate environment which helps in absorption of life activities as a major part with actual interaction with the immediate environment. These people learn to identify plants and animals by observing them minutely. For instance animals are identified from their calls, footmarks, track routes etc. They are also taught practical experience of everyday life in making houses, boats, toys utensils, baskets, fishing rods and nets, mats, rearing of cattle and poultry, food gathering, hunting, fishing etc. Thus, the education of the tribal and primitive societies is self – acquired and for the benefit of the community. It is essentially informal and practical in nature. There were also the different dormitories of the tribal societies which also served as informal centres of all round development and character building.
In 1938 and 1940 the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) appointed two committees under the Chairmanship of B.C.Kher to give their views on the Scheme of Basic Education. Among the recommendations of these two committees were the impositions of new educational strategies thereby emphasizing non-formal and part time education so that education was available to children who resided in the remote rural areas. The Kothari Education Commission (1964-1966) stressed on actual work experience. It recommended the teaching of subjects such as Science and Social studies in an integrated form namely environment studies. Education essentially aimed at forming a solid foundation for future life. The proposed curriculum recommended dealing with social and environmental aspects like health, sanitation etc.

The facts stated above imply that from the very ancient times till the present day education was conceived as a natural process of self-expression and self-development. Education in all forms enables people not only to exercise their vote but to participate in and contribute meaningfully to the socio-political, cultural, scientific and technological advancement of the country.

The formal system of education is expensive both in terms of money and time and hence it caters mostly to the well to do class, while a large segment of population in rural and urban areas who are socio-economically underprivileged are left oft. These groups have neither time nor money to spare their children who are working in their farms and homes for the fear of loosing the additional income gained through. This is especially true for India where 27% of the population still lies below the poverty line. In West Bengal the figure varies between 27-28%.\textsuperscript{13} In such circumstances even if admitted into primary schools there is no other option but to draw them out after a year or two. This leaves many children remain illiterates thus adding to adult illiteracy.

The world of education in India today is a scene of tremendous progress and change. The Government of India has been trying to strictly enforce universal primary education, to bring about reforms in secondary schools programmes by vocationalising and enriching the curriculum. Programmes include the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2009, National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary
Level (NPEGEL), Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme (KGBVS) and the Right to Education Act passed in the Indian Parliament in 2009 and came into force from 1st April 2010. Both NPEGEL and KGBVS focus on the primary education of girls belonging to the SC/ST minority categories through model schools being built with greater community participation under NPEGEL. Also earnest efforts have been taken to eradicate illiteracy among adult population by launching mass literacy programmes. However, such privileges offered to the masses through the government are still pretty low. All these point out the thrust needed for providing education to the means. S.P. Mistry (1998) holds the opinion “That means formal education has to be supplemented and supplanted, if necessary, by appropriate educational programmes through non-formal and informal approaches.”

Museums can offer a range of opportunities for formal and informal learning, active participation or observation, structured long-term courses or single memorable occasions. They can be of help by arousing the interest of all sections of visitor including even those who are underprivileged or unlettered by using interesting aids that help in actual interaction with the museum collections. Mere sequential display of objects with labels is not enough. The use of audio-visual aids is also necessary to supplement the displays in order to make it more interesting. The use of audio-visual aids as a medium of popular education in the form of display of *patas* (scroll paintings) with songs to narrate the stories of Puranas and Epics. Such displays can still be arranged in museums by arranging for the scroll painters to come to the museums and perform their art. These days the scroll painters also use their paintings to spread awareness about social or current political issues. So they can be used to educate the unlettered people who are more attracted to performing arts.

If the visitors cannot be given the rare objects to handle arrangements can be made to allow them to touch and feel duplicates or fabrications of the objects.

Prof. D.P.Ghosh had rightly pointed out “I am afraid, until and unless the prevailing system of education in India, is suitably changed to the needs of the hour, to give it a distinct audio-visual bias, the museums here will fail, as it has been failing, all these years to properly fulfill their purpose as instruments of national education. In the West, millions flock to the museum, both for pleasure and profit in measures
unimaginable. People there, grow up with museums from their very infancy and later on it becomes a part of their life. No amount of endeavour, either on the state or central level, will be effective in increasing the popularity of museums in India among the masses and making them live apparatus for dissemination of knowledge unless the basic storey of our educational structure is altered.\textsuperscript{15}

In West Bengal, where nearly half of the visitors are simple rural folk, one should not expect them to come forward to establish a cordial relationship with the museum personnel. It is for the other party to step down from their individual ‘pedestals’ and join in the crusade of conquering the visitors.

Museums have the potential to be ideal learning environments across the age-range. They are perfectly placed to play an important role in life-long learning. UNESCO is also greatly inspired by the paradigm of ‘Life Long Education’ (LLE). It is true that the phrase ‘Life Long Education’ (LLE) appears to be puzzling and sounds rather vague. It has not yet really fired the imagination of the people at large, especially those not engaged in learning beyond educational institutions at work, in the community, in their homes and family and in their leisure and recreational lives. To some people the notion Life Long Learning may even sound like a penal sentence or endurance test than an invitation to pleasure achievement and progress.

Life-long learning insists that people learn throughout their lives and not until they attain a certain or rather young age. Life long learning is seen to occur in many different situations and not just institutions of formal learning. Learning throughout life occurs according to personal desire and opportunity and is paced according to the needs of the learner. Museums can prove to be one of the ideal places for life-long learning. Education is the process of development and thus includes every section of the society from the cradle to the grave if education is taken to be life-long learning. West Bengal has a significant section of the population for whom the process of lifelong learning would definitely prove to be a better option. Such people might include rural folks, elderly people especially senior citizens, daily labourers, housewives, etc. In the words of Graham Black “The growing demands of the scholarly and elitist audience of the past have now been joined by those who previously felt excluded from what museums and heritage sites have to offer.”\textsuperscript{16}
Such visitors who form a huge section of the potential audience may have a number of expectations that might include:-

- The visit would be enjoyable, interesting and even fun providing wholesome family entertainment with activities that can be done together by families. Visitors today are no longer willing to be passive recipients of wisdom from high but want to participate to interact to question to receive a high standard of service as would be offered at any other type of leisure site.

- The visit would provide an opportunity to learn something starting from familiar concepts and moving to the unfamiliar.

- The museum would cater for ranges of prior knowledge ability and age.

- The museum would provide good quality facilities and a high standard of service.

- The displays would require minimal reading.

- There would be sufficient installations to avoid ques.

Museums need to reach out such people who are not always privileged to visit them often or at times not even able to visit the museums in person. Dioramas on different topics such as ecology, zoology and ethnography, slide shows, dolls and toys, storytelling sessions, workshops on handicrafts, performance on different art forms can prove to be a source of stimulation for such visitors. Such visitors who are not always so called ‘traditionally educated’ in educational institutions.

Museums can arrange for temporary exhibitions based on interesting topics can be made ‘exhibits of the month’. These may be supplemented by interesting photographs, sketches, maps and other visual aids to make them more meaningful to visitors who might be repelled by the monotony of elaborate labels.

If the people are unable to visit the museums in person then it is the duty of the museum to go to them. Mobile exhibitions by means of museo-bus may be arranged for people of the remote and rural areas containing exhibits on art, archaeology,
ethnography, folk art so that those who cannot visit the museums in person too can enjoy the collections.

Puppet shows are very useful method of imparting education in a non-formal manner. Such shows can be arranged in museums for showing different social as well as economic issues.

Folk-lore is also a powerful medium of transmission of human culture. It is in fact the primary medium of transmission of culture in the primitive and tribal society in the form of legends, ballads, folk tales, music, fables etc. The cultural legacy of primitive society is passed on by non-formal, learning methods such as oral traditions. They are sources of knowledge and have didactic intention as well as moral value. Such practical self-based learning needs to be adopted by museums for imparting their education.

In general most of the visitors are attracted to the galleries having natural history specimens. This holds true for all classes of visitors, from children to senior citizens irrespective of their socio-economic and educational background. Stuffed specimens of birds, animals, reptiles if presented in the form of dioramas form a great source of attraction for the visitors even if they are unlettered.

Live animals in zoos also fascinate visitors. These days the definition of museums include museum like institutions such as zoos, libraries, archives, architectural sites also.

People belonging to the slums or those who are less advantaged socio-economically can be brought to museums educated about their immediate environment and its preservation.

Compared to the large proportion of underprivileged people in West Bengal the number of museums taking up educational programmes to meet their requirements is inconspicuous. It is absolutely necessary that more and more museums take up all measures to educate the infrequent visitors. Equally challenging is the task of the museums to make people aware about how the museums are changing slowly in their educational activities. This is because education is a progressive and dynamic process and has changed with the changing times.
The interpretation and communication methods of museums are extremely varied and this is surely one of the great advantages that museums have over many of the other institutions of mass media. A combination of the methods of communication will become a vital concept in future as museums and galleries develop policies and strategies for museum communication for the sections of people who are otherwise deprived in the Indian Society.

Museums are fundamentally educational in character, that is, they offer opportunities to people for increasing reservoirs of knowledge and experience. They are primarily not about entertainment. Entertainment in museums always the ulterior motive of offering something, new, exciting and potentially valuable. Entertainment in museums is used as a method of education because learning is best enjoyed in circumstances of enjoyment. A casual and informal atmosphere acts as a source of, encouragement for the majority of visitors. The visitors who are otherwise deprived, unlettered or semi lettered might find such an approach more suitable as this find such an approach more suitable as this kind of education through museums does not come with compulsion. True education implies bringing out the best aspects in a person. It is a method in which knowledge or skill is passed on to somebody and developed.

However, the scope of education has increased so much that simple transfer of knowledge and information alone cannot be termed as education. Education, in the general sense, is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual. In its technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skill and values from one generation to another.

Education may happen in a haphazard and unplanned way, as well as within specifically designed structures. Education is not memo-dimensional but complex and multilayered. An educational achievement may be as small as the observation of a blade of grass, or as large as understanding the Roman Empire. Every experience is unique and brings a lesson to the learner. Museums are perhaps the only institutions in society that have the potential to satisfy the needs of the learners at all
levels, who are looking for experiences ranging from those with a great deal of overt educational content to those with very little such as people who are unlettered or infrequent visitors to museums due to lack of social, economic or other privileges.

The proceeding discussion shows the educational role of the museums is fulfilled by two main types of communicative methods, namely, mass communication and interpersonal communication. These may be characterized as (a) distance learning and (b) face to face teaching. Distance-learning methods of the museum include exhibitions, displays, publication, loan services and mobile museums.

On the other hand face to face teaching is direct or interpersonal communication. It can enable interpretation through shared experience, modification or development of the message in the light of on-the spot response. In the museum it includes a number of different forms of teaching and many different types of activity, such as working with handling collections, drawing or role play.

The ‘Cone of Experience’ drawn up by Edgar Dale explains the inter-relationships of various audio-visual experiences and their individual positions in the learning process. The Cone of Experience has the following divisions –

1. Direct purposeful experiences.
2. Contrived experiences (Models, Mockups, Objects, Specimens)
3. Dramatized experiences (Plays, Puppetry, Socio-drama, Role playing)
4. Demonstrations (apparatus, blackboard)
5. Field Trips
6. Exhibits
7. Motion pictures
8. Radio Recordings, Still pictures
10. Verbal symbols.

Each of these divisions represent a stage between the two extremes, between direct experience and distance-learning. From the lowest towards the topmost, one finds an increase in the directness of an experience. All these experiences can be fruitfully
used in a museum to provide rich learning experiences along with non-conventional media like dance, drama, puppet shows, story telling, quiz, games etc.

Attention on any object can be fundamentally of two types – (i) Voluntary attention which keeps attention fully concentrated upon a distasteful subject in spite of more attractive objects, (ii) Non-voluntary attention which is drawn against the will from what is being done.

In the visitor to a museum is unlettered and unable to read the labels then it is difficult for him or her to comprehend the object. In that case the display seems to become dry and meaningless and they concentrate on it for a very limited amount of time. So the aim of a museum must be to develop their displays in a way so that they hold appeal to the visitor in a lucid and comprehensive way thereby stimulating imagination.

In order to implement their educational programmes successfully it is necessary for museums to identify their target group clearly by means of extensive survey. Even if the visitors belong to the lowest socio-economic stratum of the society or are unlettered or semi lettered they cannot be taken for granted by the museums. Among these visitors not all are children but also adults, women as well as senior citizen. These days it is wrong to suppose that being unlettered implies that the visitor would remain passive. These days visitors are no longer willing to be passive recipients of wisdom but want to participate, ask questions and receive quality service offered. It is the sacred duty of the museums to bring within their folds these people who are often not able to afford formal education.

Other than educational programmes for children, devising educational programmes for catering to the needs of adults and women are necessary. A special word is called for in respect of educational programmes for women. It is believed that the educational requirements for women are different from those of men. However without men’s full participation, women’s education alone makes no headway. This is because those issues that are traditionally considered women’s concern such as family – life management, care and nutrition etc. men and women are equally involved with complimentary roles. Further, in India including West Bengal a
significant section of women especially those that belong to the grass root level of the society do not visit museums alone. They generally come with the male members of the family, be it father, brother, son or husband. So in order to attract them to the museum, it is necessary to have something that attracts the entire family. Educational programmes on subjects such as nutrition, health and hygiene, environmental awareness can be taken up by the museums. Though these subjects may not be related to their collections directly, yet such programmes may be taken up as part of outreach programmes so that it involves men, women children and senior citizens also.

Attitudes to museums and the expectations which people have of them are changing globally. There is a growing awareness of the role of museums in preserving the values of the society as a whole. This is especially true where museums have implicitly or explicitly denied opportunities for balanced representations in the past. Society does not merely imply the elite or the privileged class. Thus, museums are also agents of social inclusion. The Guwahati Declaration on New Museology on 28th December, 1988 emphasized that all possible efforts be made to recognize ‘the value of the contribution of New Museology’. The concept of ‘New Museology’ gives a new orientation to the museums and that is, the concept of museums as the institution that serves not only the ones who visit its collection within the four walls but to the total population of a museum’s defined territory. It is thus clear that the emphasis is largely on the community at large.

These days the idea of community and neighbourhood museums, eco museums is gaining ground from this concept of New Museology. Such museums had their initiation in North America with the setting up of the Anacostia Neighbourhood Museum in 1967. This museum served as one of the catalysts for the development of community museums in the United States. It was the first community based museum in North America that served as a cultural centre for the residents of the predominantly black neighbourhood of Anacostia and a model resource centre for similar projects throughout North America and the world. In West Bengal one might cite the example of Bidisha a museum and a resource centre for the uplift of the Lodha community previously branded as a criminal tribe by the administration. It was established by Late Dr. P.K.Bhaumik who was a noted Anthropologist.
The basic ideas behind the concept of these community based museums reflect those of the eco-museum and that is whole hearted community participation in the establishment and day to day running of the museum. It aimed at collecting materials from the local population and preserving them by educating the younger members of the community about the traditional knowledge, skills, beliefs and values of the community. As a result the members of the community work together to bring about changes for the betterment of the community at large.

With the beginning of the twenty-first century, the greatest challenge facing museums is to recognize that museums are for people and that their future depends on developing and promoting themselves to meet the identified needs of the market. Museums have to engage interest through active involvement with their users and build on it to achieve their objects. Everything that a museum does is educational even when this is not the intention.

Since education in museums is predominantly self-education which is non-formal in nature it is necessary in the words of Timothy Ambrose and Crispin Paine (1993) that, “Museums have to engage interest through active involvement with their users and build on it to achieve their objectives. Museum managers should encourage users to explore and discover the museum’s collections and services for themselves.”

Again in the words of Alma S Wittlin, “A characteristic of museums of whatever content or scope is their flexibility. They allow a gamut of different in the use people make of them. If compared with schools set up to serve specific age groups and directed by law to offer prescribed curricula, museums as a rule open their doors to adults of all ages as well as children; most visitors come voluntarily; they come singly or in groups; they may choose to join a conducted tour or gather impressions by wandering through exhibit halls. They may come at all seasons of the year and stay as long or as briefly as they wish. The tour or gather impressions by wandering through exhibit halls. They may come at all seasons of the year and stay as long or as briefly as they wish. The viewing of a particular hall is not needed as a pre-requisite for entering other halls; no certificate or licence is granted to learners, good
or poor, or is sought by then. Many if not most, visitors to a museum hardly distinguish between learning and recreation.\textsuperscript{18}

Dillon Ripley opines, “The very nature of a museum, its unstructured quality holds out a promise for the future of education. Perhaps universities of the future of education. Perhaps universities of the future will have to design themselves to be little more like museums, a theatre of interrogation, based on a substructure of relevance, the roots naked and exposed to law.”\textsuperscript{19}

These days the museum also forms an important part of leisure industry and faces stiff competition from other forms of leisure activities. Such places include amusement parks, multiplexes, shopping malls, internet, computer game parlour etc. Anthropologist Franz Boas rightly comments “the value of the museum as a resort for popular entertainment must not be underrated where every opportunity that is given to the people to employ their leisure time in healthy and stimulating surroundings that counteracts the influence of the saloon and of the race-track is of great social importance.\textsuperscript{20}

In future the education of museums will be based more on expressions such as songs, dances, drama, live performances, to communicate fruitfully to the laymen who form the vast majority in a society.

In the words of museum educator Elaine Heunmann Gurian, “The museums’ relationship to its collections and to the ownership and care thereof will change, and in some instances already have changed. The distinct edges of differing function among libraries, memorials, social services centres, schools, shopping malls, zoos, performance halls, archives, theatres, public parks, cafes and museums will (and in many cases have already, begun to) blur. On the content side museums will become more comfortable with presentations that contain a multiplicity of viewpoints and with the interweaving of scientific fact and what is considered by some, but not by others, to be ‘myth’. On the interpretive side, museums will rely less on collections to carry the story, and more on other forms of expressions, such as stories, song, speech and the affective dramatic and psychological power that their presentations can contain; and they will be less apologetic about including emotional and
evocative messages. These changes will help museums become more effective storehouses of cultural information.\textsuperscript{21}

For the majority of visitors who might not have a clue as to what significance a museum has in their lives, learning in museums is voluntary and self-directed. It is driven by curiosity, discovery, free exploration and sharing of experiences with companions. There are no grades, no top-down control, no reason to pay attention except for its own sake. Learning is free and is fun. This free, informal, visual and entertaining mode of learning in museums offers untapped potential for communicating social, cultural and scientific information, correcting misconceptions and improves attitudes and cognitive skills.

Since a very significant section of West Bengal is rural so the role of importing non-formal education needs to be encouraged by the rural and suburban museums. Industrial development has brought the rush towards the bigger towns and cities such as Kolkata, Asansol, Durgapur etc. Almost every person in the village whether literate, semi-literate or unlettered is approaching the city for improvement of his or her socio-economic condition adding to the already over grown population and problems of the towns and cities. The towns and cities are not always equipped to handle this explosion. One needs to see the role that the museums can play in changing society to lessen the tensions and to make life more charming.

As most of the population in West Bengal lives in the rural areas it is high time the museum authorities realized the importance of opening more and more rural museums to preserve the cultural legacy includes especially those art traditions that are fast dying out due to lack of practice in are fast dying out due to lack of practice in the present generation. Different forms of tangible and intangible heritage which are fast falling into disuse such as the art of Kantha, different types of marriage songs, food and savouries such as \textit{pithe} (a type of sweetmeat) or \textit{goynabori} need to be highlighted by museums. There can be workshops, demonstrations, life performances by which the present generation of rural folk come to know about the rich cultural tradition of their forefathers and take pride in preserving them and further educating their successors.
Similarly, education by means of the museum can generate awareness regarding health hygiene and environmental issues. Something as simple as a museum of toilets can highlight the use of latrines in the modern days rather than open-air defaecation. Education in the non-formal manner can put the simple rural folks at ease in the museums. They can hope to learn about important issues without any kind of pressure about academic performance.

Though the use of science and technology is definitely advocated in the museums, yet it is not always possible in museums in India including West Bengal due to financial constraints. However, every sincere effort needs to be undertaken to see that the education becomes attractive for the visitors who are otherwise reluctant visitors.

In order that the visitors feel at home in the museums it is necessary that their amenities and comforts be looked into. Provision for rest rooms, drinking water, seating arrangements in galleries (if possible), eye-level display, pleasant gallery attendants can go a long way in making the museum more comfortable and easy going for visitors of all kinds.

Finally, if the museum wishes to become a successful institution for imparting education to the less privileged it needs to stress on the factor of its fee structure. The thrust group highlighted in this research work is the vast majority of rural folk of West Bengal for whom it is often next to impossible to visit the museums owing to economic reasons. Even if they enter them often becomes difficult due to the cost of tickets. The price of tickets, even if it is as low as rupees five, is at times impossible for such visitors to shell out. So it has an effect of repulsion. Efforts can be undertaken on the part of the museums to keep at least one day free in the entire week or allow free entry on certain occasions such as Independence Day or Republic Day. Few museums do exist where entry is free but that is not possible for all museums in this age of consumerism. Museums like other organizations too have to think about their profit and ways to generate fund. However, at least concession of fees or free entry in a few instances might serve to be the much required push for encouraging the lesser privileged to visit museums.
A museum is an institution for the visitor and by the museum personnel. It is therefore desirable that there is a co-ordination between these two factors in a museum is absolutely necessary. Due to lack of co-ordination not only does the museum lose substantial portion of its visitors, who after a trip through the different galleries, return with a feeling of dissatisfaction, but hopelessly fails in its role as an educational institution. The visitors lose interest in the museum and grow an indifferent attitude towards the exhibits. As a result, the museum is deprived of the criticisms and suggestions from the interested public which are already welcomed as leading factor for betterment of the museum.

The museum personnel directly in contact with the visitors are the curators, gallery assistants, guide lecturers, booking clerks and the persons behind the publication counter. It is the joint responsibility of these persons to join in the crusade for conquering the visitors. It is their prerogative to help the visitors to understand and see what the museum has to offer. This something beyond the sphere of their respective duties allotted to them, such as to guide, to sell publications, to arrange the exhibits, to look after comforts of the visitors and occasionally to supply information when approached. These might be their individual duties allotted to them in black and white. However, as soon as a person joins the service of a museum, he or she automatically accepts the responsibility of helping the museum to achieve its goal, i.e. to take an important role in the social and cultural life of the country.

Apart from their duty in seeing to the proper dissemination of knowledge to the visitors by means of the educational programmes, they have yet another duty. A very important aspect is the behavior of the museum personnel with the visitors especially those who are unlettered. These people are generally simple rural folk who are most often ignorant of rules and regulations imposed by the museum authority. Many of them come to the big city for the first time and back the so called civic senses. One often find them having lunch in the museum corridors and leaving the remains of food etc. scattered all over the place. The putting of vermillion on the stone sculptures, burning candles or offering flowers are not an unusual sight inside the gallery. It is of course true that even some of the so called educated visitors
throw cigarette butts and empty packets and sit on the wooden pedestals, thereby
destroying their polish and leave ugly stains.

In such cases it is the duty of the gallery attendants to interfere. However, this needs
to be done firmly but not rudely, replacing harsh words by gentle requests and
explanations. Such words are meant to appeal to the better senses of the visitors in
order to make them aware of the significance of the preservation of the collection of
the museum. This awareness can be taken to be the first step towards the education
that museum has to offer.
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