CHAPTER: 9

Conclusion
It is true that internal feelings of a human being may be expressed in the form of fine arts, particularly the visual art, provided the essential conditions like encouragement and facilities, and is given to the artisan at the proper time. Nevertheless, the metal craftsmen in the state of Himachal Pradesh have contributed towards the promotion of art in the state, despite the lack of patronage and requisite facilities. While many favorable and unfavorable conditions and few unnoticed facts the metal arts in Himachal Pradesh is surviving till date. These facts are very important to discuss and highlights, these are as follows:

- The richness of art in metal sculptures, as per the Vedic iconography, is declining in Himachal Pradesh, now a days. The metal artisans are making the craft, sculptures-icons, Mohras, for surviving only. The new generation is not pursuing the traditional & hereditary hand skill of metal craft because of the present economic compulsions and moving out of their age old parental profession.

- On the consumer side, only few art lovers, depending on the affordability, prefer to keep such articles for decorating homes. A layperson, struggling for his livelihood, cannot afford such an expensive luxury of having metal art.

- Artisans are left with making the replicas of the icons, Mohras and antique items, which are not as aesthetically rich as the original was. However, these items are made for decorative purposes.

- The antique pieces of icons having artistic value are placed in the temples but are mostly hidden behind the clothes. Priests like to make those icons covered out of the devotion that the Lord should put on the beautiful clothes as we do, forgetting that the original icon is already having built-in clothes, in casting.

- Another reason of not displaying the deity to public is that whenever some scholar publishes a research paper containing that beautiful image, it attracts the attention of wide community upto the international level, and thus becomes the target of theft by the scrupulous elements in the society. This phenomenon is true whether these images are Vedic or Buddhist.

- Some salesmen from outside the state of Himachal Pradesh or the country, come in search of small Vedic/Buddhist icons and metal art, settle the deal for more than what is asked for. As a result, the antiquity of the metal art from the state/country is sold by the selfish motive of uncultured elements.
Further, there are some Buddhist metallic domestic vessels having pet beautiful patterns and aesthetic value. The interesting real story is that these sales persons, very desperate to buy old metal domestic vessels, take them, test them overnight with the rice. If the rice sticks to the bottom of the vessel, it shows the uniqueness of the metal of the vessel, which they try to grab at whatever cost is demanded. This piece is later sold at a much higher cost. Nobody knows who is so much interested in these items and where these items are going.

- The Buddhist icons and other metal objects used in rituals are imported from Nepal, Tibet, China and other places for Buddhist monasteries in Himachal Pradesh. Because it is considered that artisans from these countries are more skilled than the Himachal artist. Nevertheless, interesting to note is that Buddhist artisans are maintaining the tempo of creating icons upto the standards of iconography that are rich in aesthetics.

- In Himachal Pradesh, the musical Instruments are saved because they are related with devatas. Their music is heard only in village fairs and traditional ceremonies. Because of the modernization Himachal People and new generation like to hear and dance on the beats of modern music. Even the music CDs, suitable to the taste of modern generation have come up in the market that are in great demand. It seems that musical instruments also will be seen only in the museums after 50 years.

- Like this, people have become least interested in traditional hand made jewelry that seems to have become antiques. It takes more hard work for making it and comes out to be expensive. However, the people prefer to go for the latest and cheap duplicate with the latest fashion. The laypersons from the villages prefer to sell it to goldsmiths in the market. But, while purchasing these smiths charge more than ten times price from foreigners who take it as antique.

- The domestic metallic articles are being replaced by steel ware/ china ware or plastic ware which may be light and cheap.

- Old conventional articles with lots of decoration were retained and kept mainly by Rajput royal families who preferred to keep unique items reflecting their status. The expensive metalwork remains beyond the reach of the common man. Here four figures of antique and decorative items have been presented. The first one is the collection of the Kullu king in his palace Fig.1, This collection contains different types and difernt shape of ritual lamps, flower pots, Natraj, musical instruments,
dancing statuette, water pots. They have become antiques in the palace, attracting public attention to the aesthetic nature of the objects. The second silver figure of a loin is supposed to belong to a chair of Kullu king Fig. 2. This piece is now has been separated from the chair and placed as an antique piece from the palace. Earlier, in royal tradition, the main court chair was known as 'Singhasan' because it was supported by at least four or five loins. The loin is supposed to be king of the forest due to its power and its smartest manoeuvring while awake. It is also the ride of

Fig.1: Metal Antique Collection, Courtesy - Kullu King Palace

Goddess Durga with all the attributes. This combination is able to wipe out the enemies of humanity.

The third figure is in the form of decorative wall hanging Fig. 3. It is showing a beautifully carved and designed metallic plate having depiction of Dashavatargas. On both sides of this plate are two musical instruments placed symmetrically enhancing the grandeur of the placing. Below it there is another attractive wall hanging of framed rectangular plate containing nineforms of goddess Durga. Both these pieces shows the taste of the artists or the rulers of those times, in respect of the religious attitude supported with the musical flavor. At the same time it is also representing the preservation of cultural heritage of the royal tradition in the state of Himachal Pradesh.
The photographs of these wall hangings/ art pieces were obtained as a courtesy of Shri Rajesh Sahgal, the technical assistant in the Chamba museum. The photographs of these wall hangings/ art pieces were obtained as a courtesy of Shri Rajesh Sahgal, the technical assistant in the Chamba museum.

- This statue appears to be of Shiva Fig. 4, typically without the third eye, with the sacred thread of snake, armlets, beads necklace, ear rings of flower shape, a flower is attached to the diadem just above the ear on both sides, with a beautiful diadem of Kashmiri style containing crescent moon. He is also decorated with three linings of Conch, on the neck indicating his nature of Neelkantha. The eyes are inlaid with silver. Facial features are excellent. Hair are up to the shoulder. This beautiful ashtadhatu, metallic statue, though limbs damaged, was discovered from a household in Bharmaur, Chamba recently. It appears to be a piece from ancient India, the exact date is yet to be confirmed after its analysis. However, the facial features compel us to fix a date in 9th-10th century.
The main reasons behind it may be stated as: the craftsmanship is gradually vanishing here in Himachal Pradesh because of no encouragement, no opportunities of upgrading the skill, no marketing opportunities, dis-interest of public. Non-availability of the raw material and its expensive proposition made it very difficult for the craftsmen to make improvements with dexterity.

**Encouragement to metal craftsmen:** The Department of Industry and Handloom & Handicraft Department of the state of Himachal Pradesh hold exhibition-cum-competition every year in the state for Rs. 10,000 prize. Some places are reserved by Himachal Government for exhibiting all the crafts of the state, at the national level, like Connaught Place and Himachal Hat in the capital of India. This is not enough for encouraging the metal craftsmen of the state. For which the following steps should be taken:

- Exhibition should be arranged for each group of the people so that new generation becomes aware of their culture & traditions and have more interest in it.
- There should be a provision of imparting training to upgrade the skill of metal art.
- They should be exposed to modern technology to improve their skills.
- The raw material should be made available at reasonable rates to the craftsmen.
- Marketing potential should be explored for them outside their place of work, at the district, state, outside the state, national and international levels.

- It may, however, be mentioned that in Art metal ware, there are at least 19 training centres functioning in the country to impart training (one year program) in different processes of the metal craft production like moulding, casting, sheet metal fabrication, scrapping, polishing, welding, engraving and icon making etc. Out of these 19 centres, thirteen centres are functioning in Uttar Pradesh, three in Andhra Pradesh and one each in Haryana, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. Thousands of trainees have been trained. A majority of the trained persons are gainfully employed in their respective crafts. The Metal Handicrafts Service Centre set up at Moradabad with UNDP assistance provides facilities for Silver Plating, Powder Coating, Lacquering, Research and Development, Testing of Metal and training of Artisans in the higher skills. There are various programs to upgrade the skills in metal art, started by the Government of India, but it seems that they may not be accessible to the persons interested in it due to one reason or the other.
• The artistic dexterity of metal art in Himachal Pradesh or the country can be accomplished only through the skilled craftsmen. Essentially, it is a rural based small-scale industry, the basic economic unit of Gandhian principle.

• These traditions of creativity in metal art should be encouraged by the society and the Government by providing the necessary facilities. Such a strategy would not only generate employment for the artisans but also create employment opportunities in the service sector.

• For any further research work on Metal Art, one has to depend on temples, museums/ galleries.

![Fig. 5: A Historical Big Bell](image)

• The cultural and religious tourism is another area emerging with potential demand and danger for a variety of artifacts. In this context, the instances of theft and smuggling of the antiquities has reached an alarming proportion which has further been aggravated in the guise of “Commercial tourism” leading to serious consequences. There is an urgent need of bringing an effective code of conduct for the tourists, and its strict compliance for stopping these thefts and smuggling.
• This **bell** is a special item Fig. no. 5 which used to be installed in the IIAS, Shimla, and has been stolen in mid 2010. This bell was donated by king of Nepal. Similar bells were also donated to the temples at Chamunda, Chamba, and another to a church at Chamba. The metal work is unique artistically and aesthetically. Such a big bell having more than one metre diameter, increased the grandeur of the Vice regal lodge at that time. Such bells used to serve multipurpose, in rituals, in declaration etc. Most of the art lovers and tourists caught the attention to this artistic piece. May be that is why it has disappeared from the site.

**The work presented in this thesis may be summed up as below:**

• At the outset the importance of one’s expression, fine art and metallic art in various civilizations all over the world were discussed. Some common features about the worship of Sun god and nature worship were identified which was supposed to have a definite linkages with that of the Indian civilization. The most developed Indus-Saraswati civilization, for the present historians, became the starting point of ancient India’s initial activity in respective fields. Interestingly, they cleverly avoided the question (?) about the period of the source that became the basis for the developed technology of this civilization, including those in coinage, Fine Art and Metal Art.

• An overview of Himachal Pradesh situated in the N-W ranges of Himalaya, has been presented with its geographical, historical and cultural background. Geographical background includes the climate and the main rivers from the outer **Shivalik range** covering Mandi, Kangra, Dharmashala, Palampur, Chamba, Hamirpur, Una, Solan and Sirmaur. The **Central range** implies upper areas of Shima district including Cis-Satluj region i.e. Rampur Bushahar and Kullu, The **Greater Himalayan range** covers Lahaul- Spiti, Pangi valley of Kinnaur. The rivers decided the trade routes along which the movement of culture through the populace took place. Historically, the past of the area of Himachal Pradesh was traced back to Mahabharat, Indus valley civilization, Panini, Budhha, Maurya, Gupta, Harshvardhan and Pratihaar periods, from Kandhar, Taxila, Mathura, Nalanda to East India affecting the development of metallic art. The phenomena of invasion by the foreign forces drifted the classical emphasis in culture, architecture and fine arts from North India towards South India, including the art of metal sculpture, music and music instruments. Whereas, a hybridization of various cultures got reflected in the architecture and fine arts in Northern India.
It has been emphasized that the most of the famous metallic art of Himachal Pradesh are mainly found in museums, temples and monasteries of the state. Almost every village has at least one temple and there are several famous temples in all the districts of Himachal Pradesh. However, Monasteries are located at a few places in eight districts, the maximum density of which is in Kinnaur and Lahaul & Spiti. Further, the typical items of metal reflecting the culture of Himachal Pradesh are also found in rural areas, like musical instruments, jewelry, mohras, sculptures, coins and interesting domestic and decorative items. Before undertaking the aesthetic analysis, the ‘sculpture’ has been defined and understood in proper perspective.

Going further, the basic concepts/elements of aesthetics are described from the point of view of western angle and Indian vision, within the framework of the latter the aesthetic analysis of various metal art objects has been carried out in later chapters. Interestingly, aesthetic views of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore are found to summarize the Indian visualization in this regard. As planned, we carried out the analysis of metal sculptures, mohras, musical instruments, decorative-domestic and ritual items, and not of the other metallic articles like inscriptions, coinage, jewelry, earlier weaponry/fire arms.

Some of the famous artistic sculptures in Vedic and Buddhist tradition including Mohras, were described in Chapter 4. Different bronze styles including that of Himachal Pradesh were described which had a big Kashmiri influence in style. After that these sculptures were analyzed aesthetically which came mainly from the linkages with natural forces. After all, most of the ideas/knowledge/wisdom of synthesis and analysis came from the mother Nature. The humankind, through their expression in different forms always wanted to pay homage to those natural forces in one form or the other. The wisdom of aesthetic analysis was used to understand various classical Vedic and Buddhist sculptures including Mohras given in this chapter. However, the most trivial folk images having not much aesthetic features, have been excluded from the discussion, with due respect to all of those bronze images.

In Chapter 5, the antiquity of the musical instruments has been traced from the ancient period and ancient civilization in India. A transparent classification from Vedic to Panini period, has been presented of most of the musical instruments used in Himachal Pradesh, in four categories namely string, air blown, percussion (drum-
type) and self-percussion instruments. The important metallic musical instruments used in rituals or related with deities, of the state of Himachal Pradesh have been analyzed from aesthetic point of view.

- The domestic, decorative and ritual metallic articles from both the dominant traditions (Vedic and Buddhist) of the state, have been analyzed from aesthetic point of view.

- The methods and techniques of fabricating these metal art objects i.e. images, mohras, domestic, ritual & decorative items, are described in Chapter 7. A thorough description has been presented in respect of the well-known and very ancient Indian techniques namely Lost-wax casting method (solid and hollow casting), Sand casting, Repousse & Chasing techniques and Carving & Engraving techniques.

- Chapter 8 deals with a very sensitive and important aspect of metal art, namely the skilled craftsmen. They are supposed to, as in the past, bring laurels for the state and the country, with or without the protection of the rulers, simply as a matter of commitment, for the sake of art only. The only encouragement to them has been from the increased awareness among the masses. A survey and interaction with the skilled artists/ craftsmen reveal the lifestyle, the difficulties faced by them in procuring the raw material, requisite facilities, marketing the end products and the opportunities of updating the skill using modern technology.

- Conclusions are given in the last chapter with a significant and mindboggling query about how to preserve the cultural heritage of the state and of the country, against all odds in favor of the materialism of the west, forgetting about our great past as a byproduct of the present Indian education system, increasing thefts by the corrupt social elements, illegal sale of antiques without any action on the part of the society or the government. Some suggestions have also been made in this direction.

1 http://texmin.nic.in/annualrep/ar00_c09.htm