CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The Hindus are the progressive group of people with a very rich tradition. The contents of the Hindu faith are built on the fundamental truths of life, existence, soul and god. According to Hindu belief, Lord Śiva is much friendly to his lay devotees and gained popularity, like Lord Viṣṇu in Indian religious system. Saivite sects made their divinity a moral and paternal father in heaven. But it is also the fact that Śiva’s character is ambivalent as he lurks in horrible places, such as cremation grounds, war fields, etc. He is adorned by the garland of human skulls and keeps company with the demons and evil spirits, which indicate evil omen. The god is also a great ascetic. He is continuously wrapped in meditation on the high altitude of the Himalayan Mountain. He is acknowledged as the lord of wisdom and considered as the master of the masters in art and dance. The different icons of Śiva highlight the manifold aspects of the god, which conceived by the devoted admirers.

Saivism is an ancient Indian religious system in the broad sense of the term. It has millions of followers in all strata of the society all over India. It is more than mere theology. It is a philosophy that keenly attracted the attention of ancient and modern sages and thinkers. With faith in Śiva as the ultimate reality, these sages pondered and meditated over Śiva deeply and expressed their speculations about the nature of Śiva. A.L. Bashan communicates his opinion about Saivism in following words—"The divine is a diamond of innumerable facets; two very large and bright facets..."
The supreme spirit, who is acknowledged as one undivided soul, doubtlessly beyond time, space and causation. The changeless, eternal, infinite is beyond the reach of the senses and cannot be limited by form and attributes. Men of very keen intellect cannot keep their mind pitched up for long the thought of the formless Lord of the universe. As a result, votaries make some imagery complexion to acknowledge their homage to the divinity. An image, in the Indian context is a visual symbol of an idea. The image of a god is thus the visual interpretation of the ultimate reality as the synthesis of what can be exposed from the mind of the devotee. From the beginning of human civilization, the artists built the images of gods and goddesses with the help of available material. Various texts related to Art and Iconography informs that both the iconic and aniconic forms of Lord Siva have been made by manifold types of material composition.

The artists of ancient Bengal acquired fame in making all kinds of images. There were few images, which familiar for the rites and rituals in local area. Lepya (clay images), lekhya (painted images), sastrotkima (chiselled images made either of stone or wood) and pakaja (material images) were noteworthy in this respect. Among those types, the stone and terracotta sculptures were made in large number during the Pala–Sena epoch. Prosperity in trade, political stability, availability of stone in the Rajmahal hills and human emotion to religious performance had contributed to enhancement of lithic art work in Bengal. From the ruins of all the ancient township of Bengal, numerous sculptures have been discovered.

Black basalt stone of the Rajmahal hill took a vital role in making iconic art of Pala period. The quarry had not long distance from the historic settlements of Bengal like Pundrabadhana, Kotivarsa, Ramavati, Gouda,

162

are Vishnu and Siva, while the others represent all the gods that were ever worshipped.”

etc. Stone could be transferred from the hills of the Rajmahal to different areas of Bengal through the waterway. Artists who had the patronization of general people and royal family, embossed the piece of stone and shape the divine figures.

A global awareness for preservation of human heritage is increasing presently. Modern generation is much eager to protect cultural heritage of the community. Museums are the best custodian for preservation of the specimens and keeping detailed data about the exhibits. For keeping the detailed information of the objects, different steps of documentation are followed by the museum professionals. The aim of a museum documentation are to preserve all known information about an object and to help satisfactorily the needs of museum personnel, research scholars and members of the public. Initial documentations are the tripartite process, which entangle the comprehensive recording of objects.

Stone sculptures, metal icons and terracotta figures are considered as the important exhibits in the collections of Bengal museums. A number of sculptures are shown in the galleries of the museums for helping the learners. Among those sculptures, excellent pieces of Siva images attract the public attention for their numeral sufficiency. When the researchers need to collect information about those types of specimens, they may take opportunity from the records, kept in the registration sections of the museums. Big museums can accomplish their recording procedure skillfully and do the subsequent revisions from time to time. On the other hand the small museums follow either a simple method for this purpose or not able to take necessary action to record the objects, which they collect. There are so many obstacles, like financial stringencies, scarcity of efficient staff prevent the successful execution of the documentation work. If we proceed to evaluate the position of object registration work in the museums of Bengal, the district wise comparison shows the negligence and slackness of duty in this field. Among the eighteen districts in West Bengal, only the museums, situated in Kolkata metropolitan city are able to follow the
different steps of registration method and few of them maintain a separate unit for object documentation. Position of documentation in museums of West Bengal tells us the story that work of accessioning is done generally to preserve the information. But cataloguing, indexing and digital documentation are not frequently followed in the rural and the local museums, though they have the unique specimens of icono-plastic art. In conclusive remark, it is true to say that even in 21st century's Bengal scenario, documentation process in museums is only a method, followed by curatorial staff for maintaining the security of the objects. Museums of foreign countries consider the object documentation as a part of information management. India including Bengal has to go a long way to reach the summit of ideal level of this work.

John Wolfenden in the foreword to Edward Miller's history of the British Museum represents his view about the museums as follows— "The museum is for many other categories of persons, who occupy place in the spectrum between the world famous scholar at one end and the school child on the other. It is like a post-graduate university, a country house and a funfair". This remark exposes the thought of a museum expert about the characteristics of museum and it's acceptability to fulfill the need of the museum users. In this connection it is right to say that the museum users need successful exhibition for collecting information and acquiring knowledge.

Museum gallery based permanent exhibition on sculptural art is more common event in West Bengal. In permanent exhibition, most of the specimens are placed on the gallery of art and archaeology. They are seldom transferred to any other museums for travelling or mobile exhibition. Interested visitors get facilities from the travelling exhibitions, which designed by the efforts of museums. Both big and small museums, despite of their limitations try their best possible for the implementation of

permanent exhibition, but do not acquire huge success in case of travelling, temporary or thematic exhibition.

Any type of art is defined as an attempt to create pleasing form, which satisfy human sense of beauty. For the reason, most of the stone images either small or big in size need useful presentation to the visitors. Successful exhibition can give pleasure the people and evoke their aesthetic feelings. For giving the facilities to the visitors and learners, the following points should be kept in the mind of exhibition officer.

(1) Effort to make a programme of exhibition minimum once in a year in different types of museums either big or small.

(2) Maintenance of a wall chart on which the duration of exhibition can be marked.

(3) Determine the scope and plan of the lay out of the exhibition well in advance.

(4) To keep close touch with local societies or firms, who will either sponsor or help for the implementation of exhibition.

(5) On the basis of the importance of exhibition, determine the publication of a catalogue is worth while.

(6) Ensure the adequate publicity for exhibition. Museums must send message to the local press to visit the exhibition.

(7) Various types of modern display aids must be utilized in exhibition, so that the theme of exhibition will be able to create a meaningful representation to the visitors.

Sculptural art is mostly related to a particular god or goddess, who receives the respect of his or her devotees. There are many sacred places, where the Lord Siva is to be offered homage from his votaries. Those places are honoured with the magnanimity of the Lord Siva. A large number of devotees come and perform their religious works. For satisfying the devoted people, the temple trustees may organize different types of exhibitions with the collaboration of museums. The theme of display must be determined on the basis of glorification of Siva.
Mention may be made that during the whole year, various religious festivals are celebrated in different holy places of Saivite adoration and rural areas of Bengal. Mass populations are gathered in those occasions and enjoy the ceremony according to their preference. Museums with the help of mobile exhibition unit may reach to that type of community. By the representation of casts and replicas of the images, the museum trained personnel or curator can execute the programme of mobile exhibition. But it is rememberable that those must be programmed discreetly. The opinion may be stated that mobile exhibition at a holy place or in a rural area due to the special occasion or festival is very powerful instrument in the hands of museum for enjoyment of general people.

Brahmanical faith is generally expanded on the basis of divine excellence of a particular god and classified into various cults, like Saiva, Sakti, Saura, Vaishnava, Ganapatya, etc. Among the aforesaid, Saiva took an important part for propagating religious revolution in Bengal. 'Nityanander Vamsavistar', narrated by Vrindabandhas bears the testimony of prevalence of various cults in North Bengal:103

\[\text{Uttaradeser lôke anek prakar} \]
\[\text{Saiva, sakti, karma, yogi vibhinna achar}.\]

The cult of Siva had a large number of followers in Bengal. But very painful to mention that the Turkish invasion of the early thirteenth century broke the wall of Brahmanical domination in the socio religious life of Bengal. The shrines of Siva, situated in a major part of Bengal were completely destroyed. The unique images, which considered as the main deity of those temples, were thrown into ponds and rivers for protection from the evil intention of the iconoclasts. At present day we have many

evidences of Siva images, which are unearthed from the ponds, adjacent to historical spot or archaeological site. Most of the image representations are kept and preserved in the custody of different museums. Therefore both archaeological and multipurpose museums of Bengal may be special catalyst for the people of this field. Those institutions must be careful to make their visitors or researchers resourceful in this particular field. It will be successfully implemented, if those museums can promote the positive approach through scientific method of collection, different types of display and activities concern to recording of detailed data of museum objects. Besides the formerly mentioned approaches, the museum organization is enable to communicate their message with the help of seminars, workshops, etc. It doubtlessly provides a wider forum for the exchange of ideas. The exchange of Idea can have to create a deep impression on the mind of the community, which is valuable from the academic point of view.

Dadu, the Indian Sufi poet of 16th century wrote a quatrains, where the significance of museum exhibits and the philosophy of their presentation were narrated metaphorically. The stanza describes—“Gayeb ko rup de/ maun ko bhas de/ de de prakash de/ vani de prakash de.” In English rendering it is as follows. “Restore it’s form which is lost, help to change It’s muteness in eloquence, focus light on the darkness, make expressiveness and it’s ardor.” Originally a stone image is mute like a doll or a toy. But in fact the deep devotion of the people makes the images of gods as the symbols of the divine power. Consequently, icons of the gods and goddesses have a lot of inner meanings. Before representation of a good display, any type of images including icons of Siva need restoration to prevent the distortion of their original shape. On the basis of information, collected from research work the mute objects may be changed in the eloquent pieces of art. With the help of manifold types of audio-visual aids, interpretative media and other electronic equipments, the museums can

167 Chakravarty, Shyamalkanti, Destination Museum, 2008, p. 3.
highlight the objects thoroughly and exhibiting those they make a pivotal role to enrich the member of the society. After all, keeping records of the collection museums can create expressiveness among their visitors, both for modern and future generations. The appraisal, previously done speaks that Dadu's quatrains are very significant to the museum personnel and the registration officers, who design the arrangement of exhibition and edit the documentation process of various types of collected specimens including iconic art, consisting the culture of Bengal.