

Exploring the Craft Traditions of India

Field Study and Application
in Heritage Crafts
for Classes XI and XII

विद्यया ऽ मृतमश्नुते



एन सी ई आर टी
NCERT

राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
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FOREWORD

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005, recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of bookish learning which continues to shape our system and causes a gap between the school, home and community. The syllabi and textbooks developed on the basis of NCF signify an attempt to implement this idea. They also attempt to discourage rote learning and the maintenance of sharp boundaries between different subject areas. We hope these measures will take us significantly further in the direction of a child-centred system of education outlined in the National Policy on Education (1986).

One of the key recommendations of the NCF is to increase the number of options available at the senior secondary level. Following this recommendation, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has decided to introduce certain new areas highlighted in the NCF for their potential for encouraging creativity and interdisciplinary understanding. India's heritage crafts constitute one such area which provides a unique space for the pursuit of aesthetic and productive learning in the context of crafts and the present textbook attempts to provide a new pedagogic approach to the specialised study of India's living craft traditions. This approach focuses on combining background knowledge with field study and the experience of engagement with artisans and their crafts.

This initiative can succeed only if school principals, parents and teachers recognise that given space, time and freedom, children generate new knowledge by engaging with the information passed on to them by adults. Treating the prescribed textbook as the sole basis of examination is one of the key reasons why other resources and sites of learning are ignored. Inculcating creativity and initiative is possible if we perceive and treat children as participants in learning, not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge.

These aims imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the required number of



teaching days is actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective this textbook proves for making children's life at school a happy experience, rather than a source of stress or boredom. Syllabus designers have tried to address the problem of curricular burden by restructuring and reorienting knowledge at different stages with greater consideration for child psychology and the time available for teaching. The textbook attempts to enhance this endeavour by giving higher priority and space to opportunities for contemplation and wondering, discussion in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

NCERT appreciates the hard work done by the syllabus and textbook development committees. The work for developing this interactive textbook for exploring and documenting of craft traditions for students of Classes XI and XII was challenging and the painstaking efforts of its Chief Advisor, Dr Shobita Punja is praiseworthy. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, materials and personnel. We are especially grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, under the Chairpersonship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G.P. Deshpande, for their valuable time and contribution. As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinement.

Director

New Delhi
November 2008

National Council of Educational
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ABOUT THIS BOOK

The syllabus for Heritage Crafts for Classes XI and XII consists of three interrelated units: theory, field study, and applied crafts. The textbook comprising the first unit (theory) has been prepared separately for both the classes. The present book, *Exploring the Craft Traditions of India*, focuses on activities and the practical aspects, the second and third units of the syllabus for this course, and is intended for Classes XI and XII. Unit II of the syllabus comprises the documentation work which the students need to do for their practical activities and submit in the form of two small and one big assignments in both the classes whereas Unit III of the syllabus suggests that children and teachers apply what has been learnt and observed by them to improve the school and the home environments. This book is not prescriptive but suggestive—teachers and students are encouraged to take inspiration from it and design their own innovative projects. In both the classes (XI and XII) you have to do two short assignments and one long assignment or documentation-based project and for conducting these, guidelines have been given in all the ten chapters of this book. It offers a wide choice of projects for short and long assignments.

This book has been divided into three parts.

Part I: Preparation for Field Study

This part, consisting of five chapters, focuses on elementary home and classroom activities while preparing the students for hands-on experience. Beginning with crafts at home and their study to formulating a documentation format to study the local art and architecture, heritage and the market, these chapters prepare students for the long assignments. Students should be educated to look and learn, to discover and find out and become generators of their own understanding and knowledge. Such skills are necessary whatever profession the student seeks to pursue in later life. The activity-based learning suggested in this part is inter-disciplinary in approach. The study of crafts spans an understanding of sociology, economics, environmental issues, and aesthetics. The skills learnt



here will be of value in all aspects of the student's life—thinking independently, learning to analyse ideas and experiences, developing critical judgment and many other important aspects.

Part II: Field Study

Comprising three chapters about preparation for field study, conducting field work and presenting the data this part is devoted to the documentation of crafts. Before going into the field and interacting with craftpersons, students need a lot of preparation on different aspects of a craft including conducting research on that particular craft, the community that is involved in the making of that craft, the social issues such as gender involvement, child labour, acceptability of the community and economic and ecological issues etc. Students should be sensitised to gender, religious and caste issues, and to the plight and needs of the most creative section of our society. Field work projects in Classes XI and XII need to be designed in such a way as to help students develop values of tolerance, and respect for the contributions made by different sections of our society. We hope that real-life experiences through interaction with the world outside the classroom will be invaluable in making learning a joyful, lifelong process.

Two Short Assignments

To help students start work on the short assignments, they must first read the chapters in Part I of this book and complete the given exercises. Before they begin their journey of exploration they would need to do some exercises to prepare themselves for field study. The topics for the short assignments all relate to looking and learning to see as an essential part of the process of field work. The activities and exercises will help students acquire the skills of questioning, conducting research and formulating a questionnaire whether they are looking at a household object, an object in a museum or a house and its construction details.

In this part of the course, students of Classes XI and XII are required to do two short assignments each year.

Students will study their immediate environment and learn about local crafts. They will prepare a short assignment on crafts found at home, in their town/village, artisans and crafts communities who live

in their locality. The assignment can have drawings, illustrations, photographs, maps etc.

The students may choose any two topics from the following for their short assignments.

- Crafts at home — design and function
- Local heritage and architecture in museums, monuments, religious and secular structures
- Understanding market forces

The teachers may discuss the topics before starting the work. They may also call a craftsperson or someone from the community who feels comfortable talking to the children and at the same time is well-versed in the craft traditions of the region.

Students need to interact with producers and consumers, to find out about different aspects of production and marketing. They will also study crafts and objects used in homes, displayed in museums (sculpture and painting) or expressed in monuments. They may also examine clothes, jewellery, food, rituals, fairs, festivals and other living traditions.

One Long Assignment

Usually every subject area at the senior secondary level is given six to eight hours per week in the school time table. Since the very nature of this subject requires sufficient time to carry out different activities, schools should provide block periods weekly instead of single periods daily. On Saturdays, schools could keep half a day for field study/workshop/practical or the applied part of the course.

The long assignment for each student of Classes XI and XII will necessarily be a scientific, methodical documentation of a particular craft tradition prevalent in the region. Thus each class will contribute to the school library an ever-increasing fund of information on crafts of the region.

Group Study

When more than one question or discussion point is given under a topic, the class can be divided into small groups and each group assigned a question to answer and present to the class. This way students can share what they learn and discuss their ideas with others to attain a better understanding of each aspect of a larger question and idea.



Part III: Applied Crafts

This part has two chapters which give an opportunity to the students to apply what they have learnt in planning how to enrich and enhance their own school and home environment, makes learning more meaningful and relevant. Also, students will be provoked to examine their environment, seeking sustainable measures and finding creative alternatives to improve and advance their cultural and social life. This can be achieved by trying to introduce innovation in and experimentation with different materials, their alternatives and their sustainability, designing, packaging and display methods.

Students need to explore their region, visit crafts communities and learn to appreciate that every city, town and village in India has some extraordinary people with creative talents, skills and experience who add to the richness of our daily lives. Where expertise is not available in the school, assistance should be sought from the local community, parents and artists. There is nothing more inspiring than watching a true artist at work or seeing a potter throw clay on the wheel. Learning by doing and inspired learning will lead to better results in the long run.

This book is also an invitation to look and learn, to think and question and to discover individually and in a group. Remember, students are the creators and generators of their knowledge in this programme.

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