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Craft Traditions of India

Past, Present and Future

Textbook in Heritage Crafts
for Class XII

विद्यया ऽ मृतमश्नुते



एन सी ई आर टी
NCERT

राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
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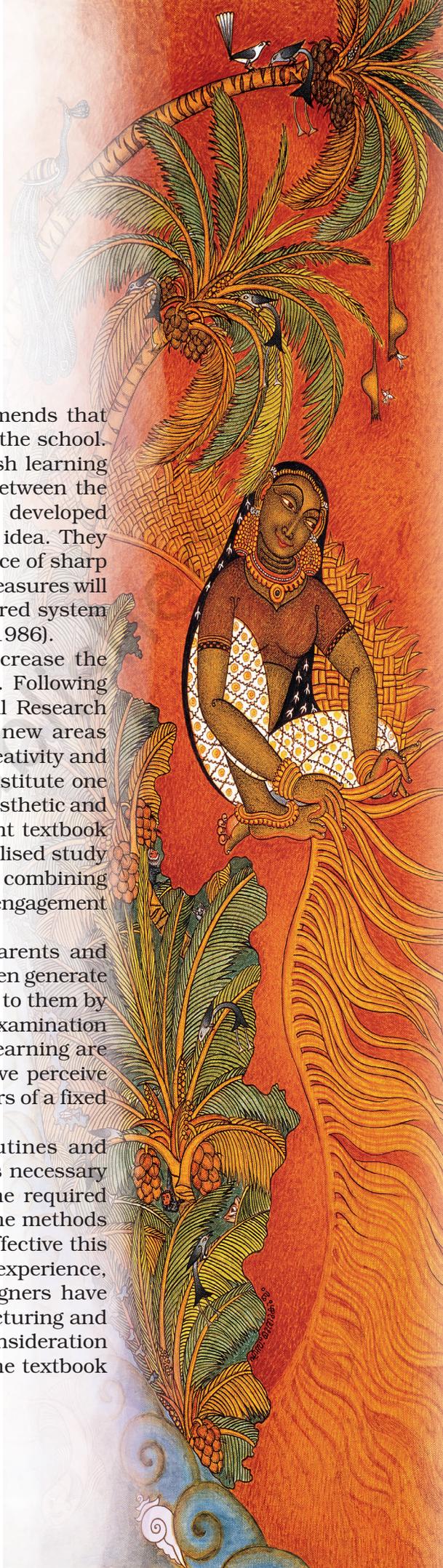
FOREWORD

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 of developing this interactive textbook for exploring and documenting of craft traditions for students of Class 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.

New Delhi
May 2010

Director
National Council of Educational
Research and Training



INTRODUCTION

Handicrafts are still today a vibrant aspect of Indian culture and society. Crafts have been interwoven with the culture of the people in India from the beginning of human history. Crafts have been an integral part of daily life in villages, towns, courts and religious establishments. The variety of crafts and craft skills available in India and their continuous development throughout the centuries make India a unique country, unlike any other in the world. Ours is one of the few countries in the world where crafts are practised throughout the land and by many people.

The crafts sector provides livelihood to a large number of people and makes an enormous contribution to India's export and foreign exchange earnings. With the carpet industry, the gem and jewellery industry, handicrafts accounts for one-fifth of India's total exports. It is estimated that today there are over 12 million artisans and craftspersons working in the crafts sector. A recent data of the Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts in 2005 shows an increase of 53 per cent in five years in the exports of metalware, woodcrafts, hand-printed textiles and scarves, shawls, jewellery and other crafts. However, India today only occupies two per cent of the world trade in handicrafts despite there being over 30 million artisans and weavers in this crafts sector which has a huge potential. With government support, today China has over 17 per cent of the world trade in the same sector.

Recognising the importance of the crafts sector the government policy in India has been to

- enhance opportunities for employment and income from crafts;
- sustain craft as an economic activity by enhancing its market, both domestic and international;
- preserve the traditional beauty and skills of crafts, threatened by extinction, and make them once again an integral part of daily life in India.

The biggest threat to the crafts sector in India are from industrial manufacturers, in India and abroad, who produce cheap products in large quantities and are quick to diversify to meet changing trends and fashions. Today globalisation and liberalisation of trade policies have meant that quality handmade products from all other countries can enter and compete with the existing crafts industry in India. Within the country the crafts industry has to compete with large multinationals and corporates as young people buy branded clothing and lifestyle products. Good marketing strategies and expensive advertising campaigns by these large corporates have put the Indian crafts community at an extreme

