

Status Of Naga Indigenous Knowledge of Crafts and Arts and Its Relevance in Education

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Abstract

Art and crafts have always been a part of Naga culture which have been a strong pillar to the tribal society, not only as a part of culture but also a way of sustaining their living in many ways. The skills and work are inherited from the forefathers from generations to generations of skilled craftsmen. The richness of raw materials and the inherent skills of the tribal craftsman has played an important role in creating and sustaining a rich cultural heritage of the Naga culture, where art and craft is a big part of it. With the start of formal education and schooling, the importance of learning the skills of craft and arts from the elders decreased. At present, very few young people know the art of crafts, weaving, basket making, pottery etc. though it has always been part and parcel of the Naga society. The study aims to examine the present-day relevance of art and craft in education with reference to the Naga society. The research method for the study is based on the secondary sources, where the researchers consulted various resources from books, articles, research papers and newspapers. The revival of art and craft in recent times has not only instilled in the people the importance and value of craft and arts but also allowed the tribal craftsman and artist to revive their work and also earn as he produces. NEP 2020 talks about art-integration as a pedagogical approach that utilizes various aspects and forms of art and culture as the basis for learning of concepts across subjects. Art-integrated approach will strengthen the linkages between education and culture. (4.7, NEP 2020).

Keywords: Art, Craft, Naga, NEP 2020, Indigenous

Introduction

Since the beginning of the Naga history, Nagas have always been self-sufficient in their living. Art and crafts have always been a part of Naga culture which have been a strong pillar to the tribal society, not only as a part of culture but also a way of sustaining their living in many ways. In the early days when Morungs were a part of the Naga culture, it was the tribals who, skilled in arts and crafts, carved and design the Morungs according to their traditions. In the villages, the skilled craftsmen-built houses and designed the village gates. They were always self-sufficient in that they sustain themselves with making their own clothes by weaving, making baskets and pottery for their daily use. They could use the natural resources available at their disposal in the forest. The skills and work are inherited from the forefathers from generations to generations of skilled craftsmen. The many crafts and art that were identified to the early Nagas and are still practiced today though it has decreased as compared to the earlier days. “Whereas textile designs and music (very narrowly) survived the onslaught of Christianity and modernization, Naga woodcarving has been relegated to museum exhibits, antiques

markets and private collections. ...The government commissioned woodcarvings like those found in the Nagaland Handloom and Handicrafts stores lack variety and quality. But more important, they lack the authenticity and the cultural meanings that were reflected and reinforced in the traditional woodcarvings. The present woodcarvings lack symbolisms and the basic values of the cultures that gave rise to them. Stripped of the spiritual and cultural elements they look empty.” (Lotha, 2005).

The richness of raw materials and the inherent skills of the tribal craftsperson has played an important role in creating and sustaining a rich cultural heritage of the Naga culture, where craft and art is a big part of it. Art and craft still find its place in the daily life of the Nagas mainly used as furniture, traditional kitchenware and tableware such as mugs, serving spoons, ladles, plates, platters etc. Among women folk weaving occupies a dominant place where they design beautiful, colorful and attractive pieces of cloth displaying their unique artistic skills which they have inherited from their forefathers. The nagas menfolk produces excellent pieces of woodwork where they carve exquisite designs. The nagas have also mastered the art

of making baskets of different shapes and sizes where they use it in variety of ways. Nagas who has deep love for ornaments have also learned the art of making traditional ornaments from metals, beads, threads, woods and various animals' hairs, teeth, bones, etc., and wear these handmade heavy jewelries on special occasions. Nagas is also known for producing excellent pots made of mud which is used as cooking utensils and for storing water. The rich crafts and arts of Nagaland reveals the local craftsman artistic ability and creative imagination. Some of the craft and art of Nagas which are passed down from forefathers and are still relevant in today's context are mentioned below

1. **Basketry:** Basket, in different forms is a part in every Naga household. It is used for various purposes. The basket is used for agriculture use and also for carrying firewood and resources from the forest. It is made from different types of bamboo. The craftsperson is known for their art and intricate design in making the basket for different uses. Nagas is also known for making varieties of usable baskets which has multiple purpose. Almost all Nagas both men and women knew the art of making baskets reflecting their rich mythical history and folk culture of state.

Baskets made by Nagas have varied shape and sizes which is typically used for keeping cloths, vegetables and crops.

2. **Spinning and Weaving:** Naga clothes were originally made of entirely local materials, though in recent years they are made of fine thread imported from other regions. Spinning, like dyeing and weaving is performed by women and every Naga woman is supposed to weave the clothes of her family. (Ao, Amemchiba M, 1968). Colourful shawls, Mekhlas (wrap around), bags are a big part of the Naga culture. Naga women are brilliant weavers.

There are lot of intricacies that goes on in designing and weaving different shawls, mekhlals and bags. Each tribe has different colours and different designs and are based on stories and folklores of the Naga tribes. In the early days, the different colours of yarn were extracted from roots and barks of plants. They include beads, shells and goats' hair to weave in the clothes they weave. Each shawl has a significance and story to it. A profession primarily done by women folks since inception which they have inherited from their forefathers where they weave beautiful and intricate patterns reflecting their rich artistic skills and creative

imagination. This has strengthened the state economy. As per social customs of ancient times, if the husband goes for hunting the wife was not allowed to weave but with passage of time such customs have been relaxed so that women can earn their livelihood.

3. **Woodcarving:** Woodcarving is yet another art that Nagas is good at. Using the basic tools such as Naga dao, chisel and hammer at hand, they can carve different items from the wood from a scratch. Various items like wooden plate, stool, different decorative items in various designs can be found in the Naga household. A great deal of Naga wood carvings of the Nagas is associated with religious beliefs and practices and is natural that when such beliefs and practices weaken under the influence of modern civilization and introduction of Christianity. (Ao, Amemchiba M, 1968).

4. **Pottery:** Pottery is yet another craft where the early Nagas have been practicing the art. The pots were generally made for daily use. The Nagas makes earthen pots by hand without the use of a wheel. They used their fingers to shape the pots, while working, the left hand is kept inside and the right hand outside. With both the hands, an upward

scraping motion and a curricular motion is given around the pot till a rough shape of the finished pot is done and is then left to dry in the sun. Pottery is one craft which makes Nagas unique and is considered to be one of the most celebrated crafts. Although no designs and details were highlighted in the pots yet their utility cannot be ignored. Pottery in Naga ancestral times was mostly confined to women folks and men were exempted from making potteries but with passage of time such rigid practices are relaxed. As of today, Naga earthen pots are very widespread and are exported nationally and even internationally boosting the economy of the country.

5. **Metal work:** Nagas is also good in different metal works. Iron and brass were used to make weapons as well as ornaments. Naga daos, spears, ornaments and other household items were some of the items of metal work. Jewellery and beadwork were popular among the tribal craftsmen.

6. **Traditional ornaments:** Nagas are known for their love in weapons made of metals. Metalwork which consists of ornaments, weapons like spade, machete, spade, hoe, gun etc. are made by local Naga smiths which they have learned from their

forefathers. They have not learned it through formal schooling yet their passion and profession in this area cannot be doubted.

7. **Bamboo works:** With availability of bamboos in the forest of Nagaland, bamboos are used by Nagas to make variety of products such as weapons (Eg: cross bow mostly used by Chang nagas), musical instruments (Eg: Tati, malen, etc), ceremonial headgear mostly used by Naga menfolk, fish traps and fish baskets, domestic products, tribal custom accessories.

Craft and art have always been a part of Naga culture and tradition which gradually evolved into profession. At one point of time its significance faded and with passage of time its significance gradually diminished as many educated Nagas were not very fascinated in learning the skills from their elders because of better job prospect and education opportunities but in today's context, with sharp rise in unemployment among the youths, the revival of craft and art in recent times especially with regard to education has noticeably reached its zenith. It has not only instilled in the people the impact of craft and arts but also allowed every member of the society realise the value and sustainability of craft and art in their day-to-day life. The

relevance of craft and art in education has also been highlighted in NEP 2020.

NEP and Craft

“Art-integration is a cross-curricular pedagogical approach that utilizes various aspects and forms of art and culture as the basis for learning of concepts across subjects. As a part of the thrust on experiential learning, art-integrated education will be embedded in classroom transactions not only for creating joyful classrooms, but also for imbibing the Indian ethos through integration of Indian art and culture in the teaching and learning process at every level. This art-integrated approach will strengthen the linkages between education and culture.” (4.7, NEP 2020).

NEP on Empowering students through flexibility in course choices

“Students will be given increased flexibility and choice of subjects to study, particularly in secondary school - including subjects in physical education, the arts and crafts, and vocational skills – so that they can design their own paths of study and life plans. Holistic development and a wide choice of subjects and courses year to year will be the new distinguishing feature of secondary school education. There will be no hard

separation among ‘curricular’, ‘extracurricular’, or ‘co-curricular’, among ‘arts’, ‘humanities’, and ‘sciences’, or between ‘vocational’ or ‘academic’ streams. Subjects such as physical education, the arts and crafts, and vocational skills, in addition to science, humanities, and mathematics, will be incorporated throughout the school curriculum, with a consideration for what is interesting and safe at each age.” (4.9, NEP 2020)

Review of literature

Naga’s art and crafts are related with customs and practices of the Nagas. The creative artistic skill is intrinsic among the tribes of Nagas. Wood carvings and images of art were present in the village gates, Morungs and the village chief’s house. Crafts and other arts based on traditional significance not only have a sense of beauty but also it was a way of self- independence and self-sustenance for the forefathers of the Nagas. Present textiles of Nagas have decline in its relevance to the richness to the weaving that existed in the society in the early days. (Jessymol & Chupuo, 2021). Odyuo,(2013) analysed the different aspect of the Naga art and the different colourful textiles such as

woodcarving, ornaments, weapons etc., and how the rituals in the Naga society are related to art. Everyday life and activities and work relating to agriculture and other means of living was done and observed with taboos and certain traditions. Different crafts were skilfully produced and made in their own traditional style with basic and limited tools. Tough textiles design of the Nagas survived modernization and the arrival of Christianity, the woodcarving of the Nagas has been mostly confined to museum exhibitions, private collections and antique markets. The creativity of arts and woodcarving of the Nagas still exist but the socio-cultural institutions and practices that gives energy and motivation to the craftsperson has diminished. (Lotha,2005). The various forces that play their parts against the traditional crafts and arts are discussed. He also describes the process involved in the crafts and arts practiced by the Naga and the meaning and symbols involved in the crafts. (Ao, 1968)

Objectives of the study

To examine the present-day relevance of craft and art in Education in relation with the indigenous knowledge of Nagas with reference to NEP 2020.

Methodology of the study

The research method for the study is based on secondary sources, where the researchers consulted various resources from books, articles, journals, research papers and newspapers.

Relevance of craft and art of Nagas in Education

Crafts and art in education involves hands-on experience learning. Incorporating crafts in education is empowering and transformative for the learners, it not only enables them to develop the skill but also provides a way to earn from their craft and arts. The skill of craft and art help the learners to not only develop fine motor skills but also foster creative thinking skills. Craft and art in Naga society has passed on from generation to generation as a way to preserve the cultural and heritage of the Nagas. It has also sustained their living all throughout especially among the forefathers and elders in the society. This comes in line with the Gandhiji's ideas on Experiential Learning. Work according to Gandhi is a curricular activity as knowledge is created through practice of productive work. working with their hands give the learners the place and scope to experiment, disseminate and

demonstrate the art of learning. It not only gives them a place and time to develop their skills but also develops in them the values and dignity of labour at the same time could become a means of livelihood.

Indigenous crafts and art deeply rooted in the Naga culture is not only a way of living and sustainable craft for Nagas but it has also educational values in various terms. Arts and crafts help develops fine motor skills and encourage creativity. It gives a sense of confidence and boosts their self-esteem. Projects on arts and crafts as a part of school projects can help students develop planning, creativity, problem solving, communication skills, team work, collaboration, cooperation spirit. it also develops in the students a sense of empathy and patience. Indigenous Craft and art can be used as a way to teach and integrate traditions and cultural education, helping the students to learn their roots and appreciate and preserve their rich cultural heritage.

It also makes the learning more engaging and interdisciplinary.

Nagas rich tradition in craft and art sync with their lifestyle have been the pillar of their livelihood boosting their economy. Their passion, skill and talent in art and craft goes

beyond their livelihood. The relevance of art and craft in education among the Nagas cannot be overlooked. With emphasis on indigenous knowledge by the latest education policy NEP 2020, its prominence has been augmented and has reached its zenith. From celebrating cultural day by various institutions to preserve the rich tradition to wearing traditional outfits/attires at least once a week for both students and teachers, the relevance of art and craft in education among Nagas cannot go unnoticed.

While celebrating days of cultural importance by various educational institutions the students are made to participate in various activities like weaving, cooking, sports using traditional equipment's so that they can appreciate the beauty and authenticity of Naga heritage and also continue the legacy of their forefathers. This can teach the students about Nagas's origin and history, hard work and perseverance of their forefathers. Not only that they can also upskill their indigenous knowledge and skill in order to become self-reliant which is one of the visions of New India envisaged by the Honourable Prime minister Shri Narendra Modi.

Students are also encouraged to take part in weaving, spinning and knitting during cultural day celebration so that they learn by doing which leads to holistic development of the students. Incorporating such activities in education which are hands-on fulfil the objectives of Nai Talim which was highly emphasized by Mahatma Gandhi. It will eventually help the students become independent in the future. Now a days, Students and teachers in most of the institutions in Nagaland are made to wear at least one traditional attire at least once a week and the main motive behind this concept is to appreciate the culture and beauty of their rich tradition. This will also allow them to learn the many aspects and prospects of their unique and rich culture. Suggestions for implementing indigenous Craft and Art in the education system in Nagaland

Though craft and art of the Nagas is still present among the Naga society, it is not broadly spread among the present young Nagas as compared to the earlier days where the skill was passed on from generations to generations by the forefathers. Skills based education like handicraft, woodcarving, spinning, weaving, embroidery works, stitching, sieving, etc. were taught from

Morung but with the introduction of modern education system the relevance of Morung among the nagas became irrelevant and therefore the modern education system needs to practice these skills in order to solve unemployment problems among the nagas. The rich culture and tradition of Nagas have been decaying because of modernization (Chupo,2021).

The following are some suggestions for implementing indigenous crafts and art in education system in Nagaland

1. Indigenous craft and art should be integrated in the education system because it is very important to link the education being provided in the schools to the skills and work market.
2. More vocational courses should be introduced in every institution with recruitment of trained teachers for each specialized course.
3. Institutions should involve the community in the learning of the children. Elder members of the community should be invited to teach the young generation students the indigenous craft and art to pass on the knowledge and skills.
4. Awareness programs for parents and community members should be conducted

highlighting the importance of indigenous craft and art.

5. Parents should encourage and give freedom to the children to choose their subject of interest and not necessarily impose them towards academic excellence all the time.

Conclusion

With the advent of formal education system along with the arrival of the Christian missionaries, the informal system of education where the traditions and cultural heritage of the Naga culture slowly declined. With time, the Morung institution gradually diminished and with it, the importance of passing on the skills to the youngsters was lost. With the start of formal education and schooling, the importance of learning the skills of craft and arts from the elders decreased. Although Nagas had rich knowledge and skills on crafts and arts, with the passage of time its significance diminished as the present educated Nagas are not very fascinated in learning those skills from their elders because of better job prospect and education opportunities (Stirn & Ham,2003). At present, very few young people know the art of crafts, weaving, basket making, pottery etc. though it has always

been part and part of the Naga society. With the emphasis of crafts and art by the NEP 2020, it is very much necessary to revive the importance of Naga indigenous arts and crafts, not only as a trade to learn and preserve the culture through it but also as an important vocation where it can also sustain the livelihood.

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