

Heritage Education: Need of the Hour

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Abstract

The general notion of the term 'heritage' is associated with monuments and relics with historical value and is often limited to (passive) visits to monuments or museums. Since the 1970s care for heritage has played an increasingly important role in some societies and the phenomenon of heritage has extended by including non-material heritage such as folk tales or traditions, and landscapes. Through new pedagogical approaches, such as cross-curricular collaboration and project work, several western countries have been successful in implementing heritage education in their schools but in spite of its mention in all Indian curriculum frameworks for schools until recently a general introduction to heritage education in an Indian context was missing. CBSE recently launched several programmes to promote heritage education in schools but still there is a long way to go. This article talks about what heritage is, its place in the school curriculum, meaning and importance of heritage education in our schools and some exemplary activities to promote heritage education in schools, etc.

What is Heritage?

Heritage is often defined as a legacy that we receive from our ancestors and have to pass on to future generations. If you look in a dictionary, you will find that heritage means something that has been inherited. Here are some of the definitions from dictionaries:

Heritage

1. That which has been or may be inherited. . . .

2. The fact of inheriting; hereditary succession. . . .

3. Anything given or received to be a proper possession. . . .

4. An inherited lot or portion. . . .

Somebody may prefer to think of heritage as those places and objects he/she wishes to keep. We value these places and objects because they come from our ancestors, are beautiful and irreplaceable examples and sources of

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life and inspiration. This heritage often survives today only because of specific efforts to preserve it.

Heritage may broadly be classified as natural and cultural. Natural heritage includes natural features, like mountains, forests, deserts, lakes, rivers, seas, climate, flora and fauna.

Cultural heritage is the creation of human beings by the use of their intelligence, skill and artistic ability. Cultural heritage can be broadly divided into two categories:

- a. Tangible (material/built/archaeological) heritage can be physically touched such as historic buildings, gardens, secular and religious buildings, streets and towns. It helps us understand how people in earlier times lived and interacted with each other.
- b. Intangible (non-material/living) heritage such as music, dance, literature, theatre, languages, and religious ceremonies, traditions of crafts, culinary and medical knowledge, folk-tales and rituals are all part of a heritage that continues to be practised.

Tangible heritage can be further divided into the movable (it can easily be moved from one place to another, i.e. objects) and immovable heritage (it cannot be removed from its place of origin, i.e. buildings).

Why Heritage is Important?

As UNESCO ICCROM points out heritage is important for everybody because it:

- **communicates various historical, artistic, aesthetic, political, religious, social, spiritual, scientific, natural messages and values that ultimately contribute to give a meaning to people's life**

Archaeological sites and other material remains tell us how men lived in the past so they carry a historical message. For example the Genbaku Dome at Hiroshima (Japan) bears witness to the tragic effects of the atomic bomb and is a warning against war. Similarly temples, mosques, and churches are important not only for their religious significance, but also for their artistic and architectural

<i>Tangible</i>		<i>Intangible</i>
(Immovable)	(Movable)	
Examples: historic sites, historic cities, monuments, windmills, landscapes, canals...	Examples: paintings, statues, jewellery, relics, coins, stamps, furniture, tapestries, books, photographs, films, musical instruments, literature, documents...	Examples: handicrafts, technical skills, rituals, stories, customs, recipes, languages, rites, beliefs, songs, dance performance, sports and games.....

virtue. Heritage can communicate more than one message or value.

- **represents the identity of a society**

People identify themselves through their heritage. You will often find a country identified with a particular monument or site: India with the Taj Mahal; Italy with the Tower of Pisa; Egypt with the Pyramids, and Turkey with Istanbul, just to give a few examples. Sometimes specific monuments or cultural sites are purposely attacked with the aim of destroying the symbol of a people's identity; this happened with statue of Buddha in Bamiyan (Afghanistan).

- **symbolizes a medium for understanding the diversity of people and developing a policy for peace and mutual comprehension**

Heritage is a way of understanding cultural diversity and recognizing the links that exist between peoples. We must not forget that every person has both given something to and taken something from another culture.

- **is a source of economic development**

Heritage has always been one of the main attractions for tourists. In recent years it has increased immensely and has become an important economic resource for many countries. If it is well managed, it provides jobs, attracts foreign currency, improves local

infrastructures and promotes mutual understanding. On the contrary, an uncontrolled mass tourism can have a damaging impact on local population by destroying its original context.

- **is unique and irreplaceable**

The deterioration or the disappearance of a heritage property is a loss for the humanity as a whole. A masterpiece cannot be replaced once it has been destroyed.

Indian Educational Curricula and Issue of Heritage

In India broad guidelines regarding content and process of education at different stages are formulated by the national government. These guidelines for school education are further elaborated by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in the form of curriculum frameworks. Following curriculum frameworks syllabi, textbooks and related materials are prepared for school children. So far four curriculum frameworks have been prepared by NCERT and all these frameworks have talked about enabling children to appreciate India's rich cultural heritage. The curriculum for the ten-year school, 1975 states "The teaching of the Social Sciences should enable children to appreciate India's rich cultural heritage..." National Policy on Education (1986) also mentions India's common cultural heritage as one of its

ten core components. National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education– A Framework, 1988 underlines preservation of cultural heritage as one of the emerging concerns and imperatives which have a bearing on the school curriculum. National Curriculum for School Education–2000 demands for strengthening national identity and preserving cultural heritage as one of the curricular concerns. It says, “Study of Indian civilization and its rich cultural heritage along with other world civilizations and their interconnections may be the major area of study drawn from history.” National Curriculum Framework-2005 states that, “to strengthen our cultural heritage and national identity, the curriculum should enable the younger generation to reinterpret and re-evaluate the past with reference to new priorities and emerging outlooks of a changing societal context” and, “oral lore and traditions of craft are a unique intellectual property... By including these in the curriculum for all children, we could provide them with windows of understanding and kernels of ideas, skills and capabilities that could be worked into forms and inventions that could enrich their own lives and Society”. NCF–2005 is supported by twentyone position papers. 'Heritage crafts' is one among these position papers which recommends to sensitize younger generation of the potential of the crafts and craftspeople.

Heritage Education

Since the nineteenth century, the general notion of the term 'heritage' was associated with monuments and relics with historical value. If heritage was on offer at all in education, it was usually in the form of (passive) visits to monuments or museums. Since the 1970s, heritage has taken on a broader meaning in European countries. During the last decade, the phenomenon of heritage has been extended by including non-material heritage such as folk tales or traditions, and developed landscapes which evidence human impact on urban and rural places for agriculture or pleasure. Institutions, such as archives, are also opened increasingly to the public. Reflecting this new openness and interest in the past, heritage is now increasingly used in their classrooms. These countries have successfully implemented heritage focussed projects but in spite of its mention in all our curriculum frameworks for schools until recently a general introduction to heritage education in an Indian context was missing. Under *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan* (RMSA) launched in 2009-10 culture/heritage education has been made an integral part of the teaching-learning process at the secondary level. This issue has been addressed at different levels: at the school, block and district level through various programmes such as study tour within and outside the state, art/culture camps in the school, block and district level and training of teachers on

heritage and culture education. A few non-government organisations are working in this area. CBSE has recently launched several programmes to promote heritage education in schools including the celebration of World Heritage Day, Adopt-a-Monument programme and functioning of Heritage School Clubs. Some schools are regularly organising heritage activities in their schools but still there is a long way to go.

An Integrated Approach

Heritage education is an approach to teaching to better understand history and culture rather than an academic discipline or subject area. It draws its content from history, geography, literature and the arts, architecture, and the social and natural sciences to study the evidence of the past remaining in the natural and built environment, the material culture, written documents, and in community practices and traditions.

The first and foremost step in helping students succeed in any subject is determining what we want them to know and be able to do. There are many different discussions of what students should know and be able to do in social sciences but they all agree that students in social sciences need to know and understand content and also be able to apply specific kinds of thinking skills commonly used in the study of social sciences. NCF-2005 in its position paper 'teaching of social sciences' states:

'Social Science teaching needs to be revitalized towards helping the learner acquire knowledge and skills in an interactive environment. The teaching of social sciences must adopt methods that promote creativity, aesthetics, and critical perspectives, and enable children to draw relationships between past and present...' In order to make the process of learning participatory the position paper calls for a need to, 'shift from the mere imparting of information to involvement...' Heritage education very well fits into these criteria as it—

- (a) focuses the learner's attention on the actual evidence of our history and culture, such as the natural and built environment, the material culture, community practices, oral history, music, folklores, as well as written documentation;
- (b) engages learners in an interactive exploration of this evidence to enrich their understanding of the themes, issues, events and people that are a part of our historical experiences and cultural expressions;
- (c) encourages learners to move from idea to action, from insight into the significance of a resource to commitment to protect it;
- (d) allows teachers in different disciplines to work together in teams to introduce elements of heritage education into classroom teaching that will impart to students the desire to know, to cherish and to act in favour of heritage conservation;

- (e) through various activities involved it helps in the development of various skills such as information, investigative, speech, written and social skills;
- (f) promotes awareness of and involvement in heritage to inculcate a respect for diversity, tolerance, mutual understanding, patience and promote peaceful co-existence in schoolchildren; and
- (g) encourages children to learn about national heritage as well as gain exposure to their local heritage.

How to Practise?

The best means for including heritage education in the curriculum is infusion-integration with existing curriculum patterns—rather than creation of new courses or stand-alone units of study. Established goals and subjects in the social studies provide numerous points of entry for teaching and learning about artefacts and the built environment. And the content of heritage education provides opportunities for connection of the social studies to other subjects as well in the curriculum, such as languages, literature, and fine arts. Heritage education thus infused with all the disciplines at all the stages through various activities will facilitate the integrated teaching approach to heritage. The ultimate goal of these activities will be to inspire and reinforce young people's commitment to preserve our heritage, and to help close the gap between school and society by offering

stimulating activities which promote involvement in the community.

Such cross-curricular collaborations and project works lend themselves particularly well to using heritage at primary as well as secondary level.

An Exemplar Activity

1. Visits to Sites/Monuments

Heritage education provides a unique opportunity by offering students to come out of the classroom and let them visit historical areas of cities/towns/ World Heritage sites, archaeological sites and museums in their neighbourhood, or country. They can also go on nature walks/excursions to local parks, areas of bio-diversity and even rural sites. A site visit enhances the student's learning experience, develops observational skills, enables an understanding of the interrelationships between disciplines and encourages a sense of appreciation for our diverse cultural legacy. NCF-2005 states that “heritage sites assume great significance as sites of learning. Not only the history teacher, but also teachers of all subjects need to inculcate in the children under their care a sense of respect for sites of archaeological significance and the desire to explore and understand their importance.”

Preparation

Sufficient preparation is a prerequisite for a successful site visit. This involves:

- A preparatory visit to the site by the teacher(s). During this preparatory

visit, try to gather all the practical information you need (such as the entry fee, opening and closing hours, permission to take photographs, availability of drinking water, food or snacks, souvenir shops, rest rooms, first aid), and check whether all the students can be accommodated at the same time, or if they should be divided into groups.

- Interaction with students on the site selected for the visit is very important. This interdisciplinary activity can either be done by different social science teachers' presentations or by students themselves.

How to Do this Activity

Divide the class into different subject groups (history, geography, literature, science, arts, etc.) and ask them to prepare group projects based on various aspects of the site and its history/heritage. For this purpose, they may look into the materials in the classroom/library/internet, etc. Suggested work for each group:

History group will provide information about the site throughout the ages such as when was the monument built? Who is the historical figure associated with the monument? etc.

Geography group will point out the special features about the site's location and its geographical features, the materials used to construct the

monument, the places from where the materials were procured, etc.

Language group will provide special texts (literary, poetic, and dramatic) such as a biography on the historical figure associated with the monument.

Art group will draw pictures such as murals or frescoes used in the monument, designs of specific style, and the other art forms associated with the building—paintings, sculpture, wood carving, etc.

Mathematics/architecture group will write about the shape/size of the monument, using graphs, pie charts and statistics, presents the results graphically or produces scale models of the site, draws an elevation of the monument, define and draw the main architectural features of the building—arch, pillars, brackets, and dome, etc.

Science group will write about the natural surroundings (flora and fauna) of the monument, cleanliness of the surroundings and possible threats to the site from tourism.

At the end of the completion of the project work, the different groups may be asked to make presentations followed by discussions. This will enable children to have a better understanding of the site on various aspects and also understand the interrelationships between disciplines.

- Prepare before, on site and after visit student activity sheets in order to measure the change in students' knowledge, attitudes, skills and

behaviour about the site. For example:

Ask students to fill up an activity sheet prior to a site visit.

Name of the site

Name of student

Date of the site visit

Write down your expectations for the visit (what do you want to discover, learn about, etc.).

- Collect all materials and equipment needed for the visit, such as writing and drawing paper, cameras and pencils. If you have a video recorder, the visit could be taped and a video programme produced to be shown afterwards to students, parents and others.

The Site Visit

When you are at the site you can ask students to do the following:

- Make a drawing of a feature or part of the site which you particularly liked.
- Record some facts and figures which you learned about the site.
- Take photos of the monument and its artistic features.
- Carry out interviews (among the students themselves or people living near the site and find out what the site means to them).
- Produce a video (depending upon the feasibility the teacher can decide).

Follow-up to the Site Visit

The follow-up to the visit is just as important as the preparations, to allow students to assimilate their experience and to share it with others. This can be done in the form of various interesting activities.

- **Group discussion**

Children may be asked to discuss on the following lines:

- Were your site visit expectations fulfilled? Discuss.
- Why do you think that this site is important?
- What you saw and learned, including what you liked most and least?
- How to improve the site to promote tourism while protecting it, examine possible threats to the site and eventual solutions?

- **Exhibition**

Invite students to make larger paintings or sculptures based on their sketches and drawings, and exhibit their work, develop photographs taken during the visit, label them with appropriate captions and set up an exhibition (students can be given opportunity to select several of the best pictures and prizes may be given to the winners.)

- **Assignment**

- (i) You can ask students to list some steps that can be taken to

make buildings and monuments accessible to differently-abled people. This will sensitize students towards the needs of differently abled and old people and will help them acquire an understanding of skills of application and attitudes and values.

- (ii) Invite students to write an article on their visit for a school and/or a local/national newspaper or write information leaflets or advertising slogans about the site.
- (iii) Invite students to write and perform a play about a tourist, who disrespects sites, spreads litter, sometimes damages them with graffiti or otherwise. A respectful tourist is keen to learn more about local traditions and culture (history of the site, local crafts and works of art, music, food, clothing, etc.). Once the play has been written and performed by the students, discuss how such a tourist could be changed into someone who is interested in visiting local and national historical sites and shows respect for them, by referring to the guidelines . Invite students to select a local, national historical site and make a list of suggestions for a campaign which would give tourists a new way of visiting the site. Discuss the suggestions

and share them with the local tourist board.

Some other Activities

2. Museum visits

Visits to museums are another important aspect of Heritage education and museum personnel can be useful partners to teachers. Museums are often the only places where evidence of a particular cultural or natural feature can be seen and studied. For schools which are not located near a museum, other local places, local people, parents and grandparents can play instrumental roles in recalling the past and linking the past to the present. Some museums are enormous and hold thousands of objects and artefacts, too many for young people to assimilate and appreciate during one visit. During their visit to museum students can focus on a particular theme or topic. For this visit you can arrange for a special lecturer (someone who is both knowledgeable and entertaining) or you can also do this job with a little research. Students can be asked to prepare a chart describing physical features, construction, function, design and value of any museum exhibit. This can be shared with others after the visit in the classroom.

3. Visits to craft workshops

Some types of crafts (for example, pottery, embroidery and metal work) seen in museums are still being made today by craftspeople whose art has been passed down from one generation

to another for decades or even centuries. By organising visits to craft workshops, students can touch and see for themselves how traditional crafts, which they have seen in museums, are still being made today. They can interview craftspersons and based upon their interview they can write the step-by-step processes involved in making the craft and also make a timeline of the craft showing its stages of development. They can take photographs of the entire process involved in creating the particular craft and can also try making the craft herself to get a better idea of the craft. All these activities will help them in understanding the linkages between their identity, heritage and local crafts. NCF-2005 considers various such crafts as practical disciplines and believes that 'this important area of human knowledge needs to become a substantial part of the school curriculum.'

4. Role play in the classroom

Heritage conservation involves many challenging and sometimes complex questions, such as the choice of different preservation materials and methods, development (demolition of old houses, development of tourism, building of new roads, etc.), conservation and management planning, site inspection, or promotional campaigns. Through role play, students come to a better understanding of these issues and of how to take the appropriate decisions.

The teacher could divide the class into group to reflect and research the position of the group or character which they are to enact. Further help could be given by suggesting where to find the necessary information or data. Each group discusses its position and selects one student to take part in the role play, where each player defends the position of his or her group. The rest of the students play the jury or committee which votes on the decision to be taken in the light of the presentations.

5. Experiential learning

Experiential learning or 'learning by doing' is the best way to make learner's understanding clear on a concept related to any type of heritage. This activity can be done to make model of a heritage site or a part of it. This will stimulate creative skills and will help students learn in detail about a heritage site. This activity can be done in group where each student can be given a part of the site to prepare. Before they start this activity show your students the laminated photographs and overhead transparencies. Invite them to select one or several heritage site(s) and make a scale model. The mathematics teacher could explain how to make a model to scale. The art teacher, or a local artist or architect, could advise on how to make the model. The history teacher could advise on historical accuracy. Upon completion of the scale model(s), prepare an exhibition and invite parents and community members.

Workshops with artists, and local classical or folk musician could also be conducted which involve hands-on learning. Such workshops will help students understand the basic vocabulary of their art or musical form.

Conclusion

Heritage education moves students beyond the pages of textbooks and worksheets to interpretation of evidence from various sources– documents, artefacts, and various objects of the built environment. It fosters an emotional attachment to the past that makes

learning enjoyable and memorable and enhances the teaching and learning of different subjects in the social sciences. Through this enrichment of the core curriculum, heritage education contributes to the common learning and cultural literacy of students. The time is now ripe for government, museums and educational institutions to work in partnership towards promotion of heritage education. This initiative would encourage practical, experiential learning, teach historical literacy and promote an understanding and interest in our national and local heritage.

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