

Here's how craft classes are bringing in a change in government-run schools

Crafts Council of Andhra Pradesh is hosting regular craft workshops for the students to introduce them to traditional artforms



It is an unusual sight at Gopalpatnam's Zilla Parishad Girls **School**. Under a huge tree in the corner of a playground, a clay moulding workshop is in session. The corridors of the school that generally echo with the sounds of recitation, today, are filled with giggles and cheer as a group of girls take a break from their academics and attend the workshop.

Over 70 girls keenly observe as lumps of clay are skilfully moulded into various animals. Moulding moist chunks of mud into fine

artwork is Janaki Jayaram, a Visakhapatnam-based sculptor. The workshop is a weekly affair facilitated by the **Crafts** Council of Andhra Pradesh under the Krishna Kamalam Praveenya Vikasam initiative. Under this initiative, five Zilla Parishad schools have been chosen where craft classes like the making of Etikoppa toys, basket weaving, Cheriyal masks, dyeing, charkha and soap making will be held regularly.

The rudiments of the initiative go back to ancient times when crafts were an intrinsic part of Indian culture. "Not everyone is born to pursue academics, there are a few who are blessed with artistic imagination and that needs to be nourished from a young age. These workshops are an attempt to introduce the children to various craft works," says Surya Mathukumilli, a member of the council.



Introducing the girls to sculpting, Janaki began the session by explaining to them various forms of sculpting and how it is an artform that is well-received across the world. "There are paintings and artworks that are sold for millions when made by a renowned artists. However, to get there one must have a wild imagination and a true commitment to their art," he explains to the girls as he slowly moulds a lump of clay into an elephant. The girls look at the models in awe as Janaki goes on to make a peacock and camel.

"Lot of students coming from rural backgrounds are unaware of fine arts colleges. Most of these students are uninformed about the various career opportunities in fine arts," says Janaki who graduated from Andhra University's Fine Arts Department . He believes this exposure to the traditional artforms can make a difference in their lives.

For S Jyotika, a student of grade 10, this was her first art class in her schooling of 13 years. Apart from academics, knitting is the only other craft that is taught in the school. "All my life I have seen pots been made out of clay but I was unaware that one can chisel sculptures and make that a source of livelihood. Though I still want to pursue my dream of being a

teacher, I will definitely try making some models at home as a break from my studies," she says. In order to promote art and craft in government schools, Sandhya Rani, the Commissioner of School Education, **Andhra Pradesh**, allotted ₹10 lakh to Craft Council of Andhra Pradesh last year. Of this ₹5 lakh has been allotted to the Visakhapatnam zone. Under the Krishna Kamalam Praveenya Vikasam initiative, crafts workshops will be conducted for children for five Zilla Parishad Schools. The workshops that commenced from September 17 will go on for the next six months.