

Clay Art

Chetan Patali



If we ask a question to ourselves in the context of formal Indian schooling system, do we focus on core subject areas or co-curricular areas? The answer would be core subject areas, where the co-curricular areas are dealt superficially. But these co-curricular subjects also play an important role in the overall development of child.

In this context, art is one of the co-curricular areas which needs to be strengthened and practised in school along with core subjects with structured curriculum, design and planning. Art is an effective tool to communicate one's feelings, ideas and thoughts in several modes, such as drawing, painting, sculpture, music, dance, drama etc.

Since the last four years our school is practising different forms of art, providing time for it in our school time table. However, in the academic year 2016-2017 all of us teachers felt that we should try an art form from the basic level to its next level. We all sat together and discussed what type of art form we could try and practise it from the scratch. In this discussion two main ideas came up. One was carpentry and the other was clay modelling. We selected clay modelling on the basis of availability of resources and resource people to aid the teaching.

At that stage I was dealing mainly with the core subjects and part of the art syllabus, like drawing and painting. However, I didn't have any qualifications or experience of teaching art as such, but had an interest in it.

I started working on the new art curriculum to enhance my knowledge and understanding on what art is and its role in education, what clay modelling is and how it can be taken to classroom, etc. Then I planned the timetable - my art classes where I could include the clay modelling activities, types and their frequency.

Prior to starting the actual classes, we needed proper clay for the process. So, along with my other preparations, I interacted with Hanamantappa, a local potter from Naikal, from whom I got ideas regarding what type of clay to use, where

it is available, how to prepare the clay and other related facts it. The potter had suggested us to bring clay from Mudnal village, near Yadgir. Then we as a school contacted the members of Mudnal panchayat where the proper clay could be collected and got the required permissions to take it. After this the first class was arranged as a field visit, where we planned to collect clay and had discussions with the children related to the purpose of the visit and safety measures to be taken. The purpose of the field visit was for the children to understand that not all clay is suitable for modelling and that it is not so easy to make the objects out of it.

On a chosen day all the children of class five went along with three teachers to Mudnal to collect clay and store it. Although the potter who had agreed to come and support us during the process, due to some personal reasons couldn't come. So I started preparing the clay as per the instructions given by potter. The clay was cleaned with wire mesh by children and then made ready for modelling by adding and mixing with a specified amount of water. After two to three days the clay was ready for modelling.

Then as we started to make the articles, we faced different kinds of challenges, and so discussed them with the children in the class and got a few ideas. After all this, the children and I had discussions about the methods we had followed. Here are some of their responses:

1. *'When we were in fourth standard we did not have clay work, so when we went to collect the clay, I was unsure about how we were going to do it. But when we gradually proceeded I got the confidence to do it*
2. *'Before starting this clay work, we were only drawing, painting and doing craft work indoors, which began to get boring. But this work outside of the classroom made us happy and we even exhibited our work in the library'*
3. *'In the initial days of clay work, I was unable to make any objects. At that time I sat quietly and thought of a few ideas. Then I tried those with*

clay, which turned out very nicely.'

4. *'I was very happy with this work because we went through the whole process in which potter carries out his work. In this manner we too put in the same efforts as the potter does.'*
5. *'So far, we have been able to make simple articles, if we get the support of potter, we can do more.'*

The challenges faced as a facilitator and learnings have been as follows:

1. The non-availability of resource person (potter) caused a delay in starting the work.
2. Maintaining the consistency in preparing clay was a challenge. Sometimes the clay was getting very wet, sometimes dry.
3. There was a question in my mind as to what kind of objects we could create.
4. There was some anxiety when I gave themes to create articles about how the children would imagine and express themselves.
5. Needed support from the expert to practice it more effectively.

My learning has been significant. These are some observations:

1. The process motivated me to identify ways of preparing clay, choosing the theme, searching for the different ideas to create articles.
2. The children expressed their ideas in three dimensional forms, whereas before this we were only trying to express ourselves in two dimensions. The children did very well.
3. Each and every child was involved in gathering

the ideas and information to create objects, resulting in co-operative work.

4. The children began to own the process and the objects that they made, so that there was accountability. We were able to see the ownership of the process in children.
5. Some of the children were creating stories through what they had made.
6. The children were able to appreciate each other's work.
7. The children who had so far hesitated to draw and colour showed interest in making things with their hands.
8. The participation of children was satisfying.
9. As a facilitator I was able to understand while working the new area of art and got some new ideas about this new form.

Throughout the process our objective was to involve and expose all the children to a new art form with consistency. In this process, our main motto was to think and express - not the end product of it. I also conveyed and ensured that there would be no comparisons, either good or bad.

We have to look at art as an integrated part of every subject. There is lot of scope in the subjects also to use different art forms, which will help us in developing the art skills not only in the art classes.

So in this way the journey of clay art was executed for a year. I would like to thank Principal and my colleagues of the Azim Premji School, Yadgir for supporting me as well as the project in the mobilising of resources and helping in the video documentation.





Chetan is currently a teacher at the Azim Premji School in Yadgir. He may be contacted at chetan.patali@azimpremji.org