

Heritage Craft and Community Division

Murti Making Tradition of India

Introduction



India's murti-making tradition is one of the most profound cultural practices that continues to shape the spiritual, artistic, and social fabric of the country. More than an art form, it is a living heritage that reflects the philosophies, rituals, local identities, and aesthetic sensibilities of countless communities across India. Every region has developed its own vocabulary of form, proportion, colour, and material making murti-making not only diverse but also deeply rooted in the cultural ecology of each place.

INTACH Heritage Craft and Community Division (HCCD) Heritage, Craft & Community Division (HCCD), undertaken the first-ever documentation of Murti-Making Traditions across India, has initiated the “Murti-Making Tradition of India” project to bring focused attention to this extraordinary legacy. The tradition matters because it is not merely about creating sacred icons; it is about sustaining the intangible knowledge systems that have been handed down through families, guilds, and communities for centuries. Murti-making embodies a confluence of art, mythology, craftsmanship, design thinking, local resource knowledge, and community participation. In many

regions, murti-making has played a pivotal role in shaping social cohesion, seasonal festivals, and community-led celebrations.

Yet, despite its cultural richness, this tradition faces mounting challenges. Rapid urbanisation, availability of mass-produced mutis, declining access to natural materials, financial uncertainties, generational shifts in artisan families, and a lack of formal recognition have placed immense pressure on these craft clusters. Many master artisans struggle to pass their knowledge to younger generations, while several regional styles remain undocumented and at risk of fading away.

It is within this context that **HCCD's** initiative becomes vital. Documenting murti-making is not just about recording an art form, it is about preserving the stories of communities, safeguarding traditional techniques, understanding regional variations, and creating visibility for artisans whose work has shaped India's cultural identity for ages. By mapping centres, documenting processes, identifying challenges, and highlighting best practices, this project aims to create a comprehensive national resource that can support future research, craft policy, artisan livelihoods, and heritage conservation.

Most importantly, this concept underlines the belief that the murti-making tradition is a shared cultural inheritance that needs collective care. Its preservation ensures that future generations continue to experience the subtle beauty, symbolism, and craftsmanship that define India's spiritual art. Through this initiative, HCCD seeks to strengthen the continuity of the tradition, encourage sustainable practices, and celebrate the artisans whose creativity keeps this heritage alive.