BHIS-183 Traditions and Perceptions of Crafts in Bharat
(TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT)

Course code: BHIS- 183
Assignment Code: BHIS- 183/ASST/TMA/2026-2027
Marks: 100

Note: There are three Sections in the Assignment. You have to answer all questions in the Sections.

Assignment -I

Answer the following in about 500 words each.

1. What do you understand by Shreni? Discuss the major guild and their type. 20

2. Describe some of the government initiative to boost the handicraft sector in Bharat. 20

Assignment- II

Answer the following in about 250 words each.

3. Explain the relationship between swadeshi, Self-consciousness and Swarajay. 10

4. Discuss the concept of learning by practice. 10

5. What is the existing models for craft marketing and problems therein? Explain. 10

Assignments III

Answer the following in about 100 words each.

6. The survival of Craft 6

7. Craft as vocational education 6

8. Blue pottery of Jaipur 6

9. Sona Bai Rajwar 6

10. Sujani Embroidery 6

1. What do you understand by Shreni? Discuss the major guild and their type. (20)

Answer

A shreni was an organised association of people engaged in a common craft, trade or economic activity in ancient Bharat. The term is often translated as “guild”, but its meaning went beyond a group of sellers. A shreni helped artisans and merchants protect their livelihood, regulate work, train newcomers, preserve standards and represent their collective interests before rulers and local society. Its importance grew with the spread of towns, specialised production and long-distance trade. Buddhist Jataka stories, inscriptions, Dharmashastra literature and references to urban occupations show that economic cooperation was a recognised feature of early Indian life.

Nature and organisation of a shreni

Members usually belonged to a particular occupation, such as weaving, metalworking, pottery or trading in a particular commodity. A guild commonly had a recognised head, variously described in sources by words such as shreshthin, setthi or jyeshthaka, and it could make decisions about admission, fees, apprentices, working arrangements and disputes. Rules were not necessarily identical everywhere or across all periods. Some organisations drew on hereditary skills and caste networks; others were linked primarily by occupation and commercial interest. The guild could also look after members in times of difficulty and organise collective religious or charitable acts.

Guild organisation had an economic advantage. Skilled work often required costly tools, raw materials, dependable buyers and knowledge passed down over many years. By acting together, artisans could organise procurement, share knowledge, maintain quality and negotiate with merchants or authorities. Merchants similarly benefited from pooled information, transport arrangements and mutual protection against risks. Thus shrenis combined production, social solidarity and the practical regulation of economic life.

Major kinds of guilds

Craft or artisan guilds: These brought together producers following a particular craft. Weavers, carpenters, metalworkers, potters, ivory-workers, jewellers, stonecutters and oil-pressers offer examples of the kinds of occupations associated with collective craft organisation. Guild members could preserve particular techniques, regulate workmanship and transmit knowledge from senior artisans to younger learners. Local demand, patronage and access to materials determined the exact form of organisation.