



# ASECA CHANNEL

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## Editorial

Population pressure and pursuit of economic development are the main reasons for exploring new regions mainly forest areas. The regions which hitherto have remained untouched from any kind of intervention are now being opened up for development or developmental activities. These pristine regions or lands are primarily inhabited by the tribals or other forest dwelling communities. Due to the reason of inaccessibility, these regions and people are economically disadvantaged and educationally disabled. Be it evacuation of people from their home and hearth for developmental schemes, elephant menace, tiger project, sanctuary, reserve forest, the final brunt is on these people who are inhabiting at these places through generations from time immemorial. Whatever development is being conceived, it is always this hapless population, who carry the entire burden with a pinch of salt. The crux of the matter is that these populations have not felt the necessity to develop among them the knowledgebase to defend themselves. On the other hand, it is always the outsiders who seeing their plight raise voices and sensitize others on the issues. This is the tragedy on human civilisation that some segment of the people still remain defenceless due to very primary level of knowledge which is inadequate for them to pursue their issues with the establishment that is believed always to be tardy and insensitive to the problems of poor people. This segment is thus not in a position to pursue their matter with the administrative apparatus/ processes which are sophisticated, cumbersome and time taking. The delivery system of the administration is so slow that it takes lots of time to get things done. So for getting things done one needs to have patience. For having patience, one needs to have minimum support system. The poor people who toil day and night for a square meal cannot be expected to sustain the long drawn process to get justice or help from the

administrative machinery. Take the case of elephant menace. Every year herd of elephants intrude the mainland and create havoc in the areas by destroying houses, crops and killing people. It is a natural phenomenon and for this, elephants cannot be held responsible. It is a common fact that due to economic pressure, young masses both literate as well as illiterate have left for cities in search of jobs. The old people and women are left in the village. It can be easily imagined what could be the plight of the old people and women when wild animals as well as people from administration visit their places to take over land and covertly or overtly create disturbance.

Now the issue is whether the affected people are being given adequate attention with proper care. Quite often, questions are raised on the efficacy of government delivery system. As such, the pace of government delivery system needs to be enhanced so that people who are in need of help and service could be reached within shortest possible time. The help during the emergency when wild animals intrude their home and during the process of finalising rehabilitation and resettlement packages at the time of relocation are equally important.

The approach should be designed taking into consideration mainly the human rights and from the perspective of the fellow human being. Unless this threshold problem is shorted out, human tragedy and misery will prevail.

As external help is always inadequate and temporary, people from the affected groups should be well equipped with knowledge and wherewithal to tackle problems. So there is a need for the introspection among the affected people whether they have that willpower and vision to build a foundation which would be adequate to safeguard their genuine interest and state of survival.

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# Learning Teaching Problem of Tribal Children

(Source: Orissa Primary Education Programme Authority)

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## INTRODUCTION

**The National Policy on Education 1986** and the **Programme of Action 1992** specified objectives and strategies for the education of the children hailing from the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes. The cultural variations noticed between various ethnic and caste groups, the gaps or the gulf between the home language and the school language, the comprehension of the relationship between space and time from the specific tribal or caste point of view, and the construction of knowledge from one's own cultural context were cited as some of the relevant points, which determine the education of the children hailing from the scheduled tribes.

Cultural plurality, thus, is suggested as the basis of contextual differences in primary education. School as a system is to propagate knowledge and wisdom to open the gateways to education and to enable the children to understand the meaning of one's own world around them.

In a multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual society, using a culture-free textbook or adopting common curricula largely based on the dominant language environment challenges the efficiency and competencies of the children of different groups. The cultural context and the common curriculum content in a language other than the mother tongue of the children is not only a contradiction in any learning system but also it is a serious threat to cohesive cognitive development in the child.

The content must have a context and this must support the language of thought and the language of speech of the children, if it has to be a childcentered learning. A child understands her own environment from her own mother tongue, around her own cultural context, and in the school the same experiential knowledge helps her to enter into a new world of hitherto unknown knowledge. Association of experience with the

classroom knowledge helps the child in constructing a broader knowledge in her mind.

In the Indian situation, the content and process need to be adaptable for the children of special needs. Due to the gap between the home language and school language, and due to the gap that exists between the content of the curricula and the external context in which the tribal children live, the pedagogy followed in teaching the children from the non-tribal and the non-tribal dominant language situation will not be effective. As a result, in many a places we are unable to reach out to the tribal children and introduce effective learning processes for the targeted children. Thus, the competence and the performance of the children remain at the lowest level, and achieving the minimum levels of learning by the tribal children has become a distant goal or dream.

The **National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE)** advocates the use of culture-specific and teaching pedagogies through mother tongue. The NCFSE argues, Pedagogy is perceived not merely as a source of instruction but as a culture or as a set of sub-cultures, which reflect different contexts and different teaching behaviour- inside and outside classrooms..... as cultural specificity should get embedded in the pedagogical practices, which should be evolved for tribal, rural, urban and other ethnic groups and communities.

In the context of education of tribal children at the primary school stage, the home language of the tribal children is wholly different from the school language in many areas. Acquisition of an unfamiliar language as the medium of instruction takes precedence over the acquisition of the knowledge about the world. So, this terrible gap, indeed, determines the teaching. The questions relating to content, process, teaching, and learning follow only when the issues of language is addressed at first. If the issue of language, rather

the acquisition of the language through which content is to be taught is not adequately learned beforehand, then, the children's progress in understanding the world around them and effectively communicating their understanding and interacting with the world become handicapped.

The **National Curriculum Frame Work** recommended that mother tongue or regional language should be children's first language to be learnt right from the first standard (p.39). The reason being "their natural creativity and imagination must be encouraged and fostered that will make them realize the basic difference between their verbal language and the language of mathematics. Thus, learning of language should find a central place in the total educational process."

### **Education of Tribal Children in primary Stage: An overview**

**Tribal Population in Orissa** constitutes one-fourth of the total population in Orissa. There are sixty-two tribes having twenty-two distinct ethnic languages among the fourteen primitive and transitory tribal people in the State. Out of 314 Blocks, 118 Blocks have more than 50% tribal population and have been declared as tribal sub-plan area.

**Tribal Languages are distinct** from the Oriya language. At present, the Santal, Munda, Ho, Saora, Kishan, Khadia, Didayi, Gadaba, Bhumia, Paroja, Mundari, Kuvi, Kui, Bonda, Juang, Kutia, Dongria Kondh, and Bhunjia form the major ethnic groups. They have their home language, and the children speak these languages in their home and society. They also construct their knowledge through their mother tongue.

**Attitude of Non-Tribal Teachers** towards tribal children and, tribal language is stereotyped. The social distance between is very wide. Teachers, who are mostly non-tribal, impose their own culture too on the tribal children. Teachers' attitude towards tribal culture is indifferent.

Teachers from the tribal communities have been de-tribalised to a great extent and they don't

understand the role of mother tongue in teaching in the primary school stage. No teacher, either from the tribal or non-tribal communities, has raised the issue, the issue of the tribal children facing difficulties in understanding the school language. I have no doubt that they do intuitively feel how the language gap between the home language and the school language hampers the construction of knowledge. But no systematic articulation of this intuitive recognition is made.

**Tribal Children are not properly exposed to school language** at the primary school level. Even the content of the book is alien to them since it is non-contextual. The content and the process do not attract the tribal children. The socio-cultural environment of a tribal child is different from that of non-tribal children. The children of tribal areas see, feel, and understand their visible world through their language. Their language of thought and language of speech is entirely different from the textbook language. The meaning relating to space and time in a tribal area is not reflected in the teachers' behaviour or in the content.

**Fear and threat of unforeseen challenge** is another aspect, which prohibit the tribal children from attending the school. Even in the Ashram Schools, the children's self-image or self-confidence is not built properly to help the tribal children maintain their self-image and feel their self-esteem.

**Classroom process and content in Teaching** is wholly non-contextual. Language is alien. Communication is a big issue between the teachers and the children. The purpose and meaning of teaching by the teachers and learning by the learners become meaningless. Teaching is one-sided, teacher-centered. When the teacher does not understand the language of the child, the child-centered approach becomes an unattainable goal.

**Teachers' performance:** Teachers perform their duties without understanding the learning difficulties of the children. Even they rarely discuss their teaching difficulties in the monthly center meetings. The entire process does not reveal any awareness of the special needs of children. **(To be continued...)**

## Contemporary Tribal Situation and Issues of Broad Based Discourse at various levels

B.K. Roy Burman

{Continued from October 2010 issue...}

Some friends connected with tribal administration at the level of policy making seem to be allergic to the recognition of community ownership of land and resources. They speak of common property resources (CRP), which is very different from community owned land and resource. Community ownership may be traced to perception of supernatural bestowal or indication or some historical event or through association of centuries or through some similar process. CPR on the other hand may be owned by the State or some corporate body or public concern or some such similar entity to which members of the community have open access. Campaigners of PESA complain that the State Governments, particularly Jharkhand Government are lukewarm about implementation of PESA. It will not be a matter of surprise if the lukewarm attitude is traced to the delinking mentioned here. Santal Parganas Act speaks of two categories of village, namely Khas village and pradhani village. In Khas village the State there is no hereditary headman. The Collector appoints a person as headman who can mobilize the support of at least three-fourth of the raiyats. In pradhani village there is hereditary headman. On the demise of the headman the Collector recognizes his son as the headman. There is a recorded case in which the Collector, by passing the son of the demised headman appointed another person with support of three-fourth of the raiyats as headman. But this was set aside by the Court. The view held by the Court was that in a pradhani village the Collector did not have the authority to appoint a headman. He had to abide by the tradition of the headman's son succeeding his father as being the headman and for official transactions

recognize him as the headman. But according to PESA unless the State apparatus accords its recognition even community in a pradhani village is an artificial community and the people in a khas village if recognized by the relevant state apparatus is a natural community. Three decades ago Dr. B. D Sharma and myself visited a village, Orcha in Obujmarch area of Chhatisgarh. We were told that Orcha was the husband of a neighbouring village and Orcha had a number of son and daughter villages. Once in a year the insignia of wife's village is taken to the husband village with merry making by the tribal communities of both the villages. The son and daughter villages also visit their father with performance of solemn rites by the tribal communities of the concerned villages. These are the occasion when inter-village issues are also settled. In the tribal villages of Andhra the British engaged rent collectors for groups of villages called mutha. Frequently the muthadars were not tribals and did not reside in the villages. The tribal had their own village organization. Attempts of intervention by the British led to series of revolts throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Alluri Sitaram Raju's bid to establish Gandhi Raj in 1920 and Bhima Bhoi's revolt in 1941 have become glorious chapters in India's freedom struggle. The kondhs of Orissa recognise cognate villages and afinal villages. The kondhs hold that even animals of agnate and afinal villages behave differently in their respective mutual relations.

{To be continued...}

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