



ASECA CHANNEL

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WELCOME NEW YEAR 2011

ASECA CHANNEL & ALL INDIA ASECA WISH HAPPINESS, PEACE, PROSPERITY AND QUALITY LIFE ON THE EVE OF NEW YEAR TO SUBSCRIBERS, WELL WISHERS, CONTRIBUTORS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS

Editorial

It was in December 2003, with the flash of news regarding approval by the Parliament to include Santali language in the VIIIth Schedule to the Constitution of India, expectations soared among the people with a renewed zest. The expectations of people were subsequently fulfilled through various steps taken by various institutions of Government of India. The steps/initiatives of the State Governments were expected to be more vigorous and prompt but till now it is the initiatives of the Govt. of India which have surpassed the initiatives of State Govts. in all areas/spheres.

It was optimistically believed that respective State Govts. will introduce much proclaimed education policy of imparting education through mother tongue i.e. Santali and would create facilities and provisions. Santali language education though has not received prime patronage of the Govt. departments; institutional arrangements through private initiatives have taken place. People through voluntary initiatives have started imparting education through this language also. Discussions are going on whether to introduce whole curriculum in Santali language or policy should be centred on adopting a curriculum with Santali as a modern Indian language subject. Though consensus is yet to be reached, there are different views emerging with regard to introduction of regional language in primary, upper primary and higher education stages. It requires a broad base discussion to arrive at a viable and progressive arrangement. It is feared that without involving vast cross section of population, adoption of an education policy may not be adequately supportive for the upward mobility of the Santals. The Santals' tryst with destiny needs a thorough consultation process to arrive at a decision for its emancipation.

There are various forums where the subject of education policy suitable to Santal students is being

discussed though intermittently and with limited resource base. But these documents are seldom made public to elicit views, suggestions and modifications. In the absence of wide publicity and participation, the policy lacks the acceptance of the people. Here is a suggestion, how educational system for Santal students be formulated. Taking into account the present and future need of Santals and keeping in mind the market conditions prevailing in India, Santal students should opt for MIL in Santali and they should start learning English from the very beginning. They should avail the opportunity to opt for a curriculum in other languages also if they want to do so. The emphasis is on creating a curriculum which is meaningful and will be able to bring facilities and immediate focus rather than a stereo type curriculum. The idea is to provide them a shelf of options and not to restrict them with a limited or controlled mechanism.

By opting the option to get educated with English as a language medium, Santals can improve their marketability in different professions and gradations. Being educated up to standard six also can fetch them good salary and they will be able to access pan Indian market. For being forced to know only the regional language which is also alien to them, they are being positioned at disadvantageous position and are getting menial jobs only with such level of education. The question may arise, how they will be employed by the State Govts. without knowing the regional language. Apply the extant policy of imparting education to the employees of the State Govts. in regional languages up to six standard to make them able to work in various levels. In any case, the working knowledge on regional language is always there due to proximity and influence of neighbourhood. This aspect needs a serious understanding and appreciation to see Santals pursue their future aspiration and positions with dignity and definite depth.

Learning Teaching Problem of Tribal Children

(Source: Orissa Primary Education Programme Authority)

{Continued from December 2010 issue...}

□ **Academic support in addressing the bi-lingual classroom**, preparation of tribal Oriya bi-lingual teaching learning materials is not undertaken at teachers' training level. Continuous upgrading of the knowledge of teachers on language teaching, and understanding the diversities of sociolinguistic aspects are not taken up as a priority area. In stead, a common curriculum is used for all children irrespective of cultural or linguistic diversities.

□ **Teacher training Institutes** are yet to extend academic support to the Block level and District level.

□ **State language policy (three language formula)** on using the mother tongue is not clear. Therefore the diverse cultural and linguistic areas of the state have also been ignored, and so, a common curriculum, which is not context-sensitive, is not child-centric, but teacher-centric.

□ **Lack of long term planning and sustainable efforts** to implement the education of tribal children at the academic domain.

□ **Parental attitude towards teaching** the children in their mother tongue.

State Intervention on Education of SC/ST in DPEP

After the introduction of the DPEP in Orissa during 1996-97, education of tribal children was treated as one of the "interventions" to be undertaken by the State. The experience was like, "We make the road by walking". With the help of the Academy of Tribal Dialects and Culture, and also with the help and active participation of some eminent tribal educationists, the issues, strategies and intervention were conceptualized. The steps taken up to implement this process of intervention were more evolving than a ready – made Programme. The learning was initiated through the dialogues with the teachers from the tribal areas. Experience

of the teachers helped identify the needs of the tribal education.

The initial interaction with the teachers aimed at the identification of training needs of tribal area teachers. Major issues focused upon were the

- Non -contextual text books,
- Teachers lack of knowledge on bi-lingual education
- Teachers attitude towards tribal language and children,
- Lack of academic support from the top
- Lack of course content in the teacher training Programme to address tribal children as a special focus group

When the initial attitudinal assessment was administered it was found that the teachers have their own understanding regarding the tribal languages and tribal children, as follows:

- The Tribal language is inferior to the Oriya language.
- Mother tongue should not be used in the classroom.
- Children should be discouraged to use mother tongue in the class rooms.
- Tribal children are docile.
- Tribal children are weak in arithmetic in comparison to others.
- If a child uses mother tongue, he will be dull.
- There is no science or scientific knowledge in a tribal village.
- Arithmetic isn't used in the village.
- Illiterate people are ignorant people, and they don't have knowledge
- Girls are dull in arithmetic.
- Tribal children are afraid of schools.
- Knowledge is found in the books only
- There is no knowledge beyond textbook.
- Oral Folktale/song/riddles are not knowledge because they are not written texts.

It was found that majority of teachers have the aforesaid misconceptions.

The initial attitude of the teachers towards the tribal children, tribal language, and learning display the unfavourable perceptions of the teachers.

Various interactions demonstrated that the teachers needed intensive training to eliminate their wrong assumptions about the tribal children. The need for such training was necessitated also because,

- Tribal children are first generation learners.
- Tribal children do not have a proper study atmosphere at home as their parents are non-literates.
- There is a visible disparity among the tribal and non-tribal.
- The ethnic prejudices and biases are high in society and school, and as a result of which the tribal children have little hope of competing with non-tribal children.
- Most of the teachers working in the tribal areas are non-tribal and have a number of beliefs and false assumptions on tribal society, people and tribal children.
- The ethnic biases among teachers, the traditional process of teaching learning, lack of knowledge on tribal culture and society among the teachers, and their inability to relate to the children in their language and socio-cultural context are some of the main reasons for educational backwardness of the tribal children.

Hence it was felt that the teachers teaching in tribal areas must possess a healthy attitude towards tribal language and culture. They must be free from any type of biases and prejudices, which may come in the way of their interaction with the tribal children.

Therefore, it was resolved that unless the attitude of the teachers was changed and a new vision towards tribal children and culture was developed, a simple content-based and process-oriented pedagogy will not serve the purpose.

The attitudinal training aimed at making the teachers rethink their traditional teaching practices and styles, questioning their personal beliefs and

assumptions which they initially took for granted, and remove some of these prejudices - thereby making them more endearing to the tribal children and culture was necessary. When such changes are in effect, this would automatically reflect in enrollment, retention, and greater achievement.

To address these issues, a training module on attitudinal aspect was devised with the help of resource persons some of whom were the tribal area teachers. The training module consisted of the following content.

- Initial attitudinal assessment on language.
- Understanding about the children.
- Likes and dislikes of children.
- Enrich the natural and cultural environment of tribal children with context specific content.
- Knowing that the children construct their knowledge from their own cultural context.
- To make sure that experiential learning is extended to the classroom content and is helpful to children in knowing the unknown.
- To know how language is learnt in context.
- Use the community resources for pedagogical improvement.
- To explore the rich folklore of the tribal community and to use them for teaching learning materials.
- Understanding tribal society and ways of using local knowledge for classroom teaching.
- Ways in which the village can be made a living classroom for a tribal child.

The teaching – learning process related issues – Teaching use of activity methods, people interest poem learning, class room management, use of TLM, evaluation procedure are to be examined.

The government of Orissa with the financial support of different national and international organizations is trying to neutralize all the hurdles in the way of quality elementary education in the state with special attention to the tribal population. Now, here, it is proposed to conduct a study relating to the learning – teaching problems of the tribal children and developing the strategies for further improvement.

(To be continued....)

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

B.K. Roy Burman

{Continued from December 2010 issue...}

If we are to go by revealed knowledge informing the PESA, the peoples of the tribal villages of Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh, Andhra, Orissa constitute artificial communities; they will emerge Miranda like from oceanic wisdom of PESA and only then the tribal development programmes will become communities centric programmes. Thereafter an era of peace and progress will dawn on the central tribal belt. This is what expert group set up by the planning commission assures us. Even the draft National Tribal Policy 2006 informs us the under PESA regime tribal development will acquire the glow hue of being community centric.

There may however be one problem snag. Coming to specifics, there may not be agreement about what constitutes community centric approach. In 1950's Nehru advocated the a community-centric approach around three basic institutions namely a primarily school, a panchayat and a cooperative in every village. But towards the end of his life he was facing opposition from the rightists within the Congress in early 1960s T.A. PAI Committee recommended establishment of market centric multi village cooperative societies. After Nehru's demise the market centric approach gained tremendous momentum. In term of this approach Farmers Service Societies were established in the nontribal areas and Large Agricultural Multi-purpose Cooperative Society (lamps) were advocated for tribal areas. I presided over the meeting of the directors of the state tribal research institutes which considered the suggestion in regard to LAMPS. While the administrators were in favour of LAMPS the research us were mostly opposed to the idea. After hearing the arguments on both sides I observed that LAMPS will bring darkness but the administrators went ahead with promoting LAMPS. Now most of the LAMPS have ceased to function or are having moribund existence. The expert group of Planning Commission which made a

strong plea for community centric development has also recommended the revival of the LAMPS. One wonder whether the propounders of new liberal economy will agree to change label or whether some sticklers would hold that a leopard remains a leopard even if it covers itself with a sheep's skin.

PESA has the potential of distributing the traditional system of dispute resolution among the tribals. It claims that "every gram sabha shall be competent to safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the people, their cultural identity, community resources and customary mode of dispute resolution". This stipulation is contrary to the systems prevailing among most tribal communities. While petty disputes or routine matters of interpretation of custom are decided in the village level more important ones are decided at inter-village level. In the matter of adjustment of custom to the emerging new situations there are systems of regional meets where decisions are taken. On the face of it PESA interferes with the foregoing time tested systems. An Expert Group mostly consisting of former non-tribal bureaucracy and only two members belonging to tribal communities has recently tried to cover up the incongruity of the provisions of PESA in this matter by stating that the provisions in PESA covers traditional decision making process by different agencies at all levels unless tested in a court at the appropriate level. It will be difficult to say whether such amplification suggested by the Sarkari Expert Group has any validity in law. It should be noted that there is no record to show that such amplification was ever discussed at any level during the preparatory stage of drafting the Bill. Hence there is no supportive travaux preparatorie. At section 4 (g) it has been stipulated that the seats of the Chairpersons of Panchayats at all levels shall be reserved for the Scheduled Tribes. This ignores the demographic reality. {To be continued...}

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