

# ADIVASI

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## EDITORIAL

This is the 52<sup>nd</sup> Volume of “ADIVASI” which speaks of its uniqueness, exclusivity as well as its glorious past and promising future. Since our brethren who belong to Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes constitute special categories, this research journal that has been publishing research articles on every aspect of their society, culture, problems and development for last 52 years soon after independence, has also become special. Many great scholars - both national and international have enriched it by their valuable contributions and are still doing so. The learned readers have acknowledged it with their stamp of appreciation and recognition. I have no words to express my gratitude to our contributors, readers, patrons, well wishers for their continuous support to this journal

This issue is a Special Issue that centers round the theme of tribal language and culture as well as tribal education. It presents an inspiring review of the various facets of tribal language and culture. It's fully readable, immensely informative and entirely research-based. The papers embody scholarly discourse and points of view. A common world of concepts, beliefs, rites, rituals and attitudes is shared inside. We can discover the beauty of rhythm, syntax and morphology of tribal languages along with the splendor of native metaphors, similes, proverbs, quotations, riddles and short stories while reading. The language used in the whole volume is plain and pleasant.

As we know, language and culture are complementary to each other. They can be considered as the two sides of the same coin. Language is the vehicle of culture to carry it from one generation to another. On the other hand culture upholds and strengthens its brawn by the frequent and skilful use of language.

But in the present day of English and westernization, whether there is any relevance of tribal language and culture is a big question to ponder over.

Of course in modern India, the presence and dominance of English is the outcome of several factors – historical, social and political. Now India is the third largest English-using nation after the U.S.A. and the U.K. In such a scenario, preserving the fading tribal languages poses a great challenge. But a language when internalized to the fullest stands as a help than a hindrance in multi-lingual situations. The strength of an undying language and culture lies in its continuity and vivacity. Inclusion of a tribal language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution or establishment of a tribal language medium school is not enough for the growth and promotion of language and culture. A continuous and sincere effort in that direction is solely essential. The language should be used vastly by the tribal elites for various purposes like political propaganda, for literature and for imparting education for tribal children at the primary level for bringing about social change. Translation from tribal language to state languages at the school level should be encouraged. Above all, a silent inner revolution with dedication and determination is needed among tribal elites to maintain their linguistic identity.

By the way, to open the vivid pages of ADIVASI, a bouquet of 11 research articles by learned scholars of which 10 are on the theme of tribal language, education and culture and 01 on the critical area of tribal development will surely enlighten the readers.

The first one, **“Transaction of Teaching Learning Process for the Tribal Children; Mother Tongue as the Key for Development”** highlights the problems of tribal pupils in the schools due to lack of text books in their own language, i.e., mother tongue and shortage of tribal language teachers.

The second one, **“The Invariants in Saora: a Critical Discussion”** discusses the lexicology of Saora language from linguistic point of view.

The third one, **“Language, Script and Ethnic Identity of Tribes of Odisha”** harps on preservation of linguistic and ethnic identity of the tribal communities and proper language nourishment. It shows genuine concern over the undue emphasis on bilingualism and multilingualism at the cost of marginalization of the mother tongue of tribal groups.

The fourth one, **“Language Barrier in Educational Attainment among Tribal Children: A Study of Ashram Schools in Koraput District of Odisha, India”** aims at exploring the socio-economic background, quality of education, school environment and the existing language problem in Ashram schools of Koraput district of Odisha. The author emphasizes on development of a culturally contextual and child friendly environment in school and strongly argues for an integrated approach and need based planning to promote and address tribal education issues in the district.

The fifth one, **“Multilingual Education in Odisha, India: Constructing Curriculum in the context of Community and Culture”** explores the ‘principles’ put into ‘practices’ to ensure an equitable quality education. The author has presented some case studies to examine how community knowledge can be a better instrument for cognitive development in classroom with a foundation of children’s cultural context and community’s intellectual participation in school. He says that, the multilingual education has assumed importance as a part of development input in order to bring the tribal communities to mainstream. He has reported about an innovative programme named “Srujan” (creativity) – a cluster approach to education for tribal pupils to develop creativity through community culture adding constructive value to curriculum.

The sixth one, **“Language death in Sundargarh District of Odisha due to Industrialisation”** focuses on the causes behind the death of many languages and highlights the impact of the industrialisation on the tribal languages. Linguists claim that every fortnight, a language dies somewhere in India. The author laments that the fastest growth of industrialisation has posed a threat to the tribal languages for their existence.

The seventh one **“Equitable Quality Education in Tribal Areas: the case of Tribal Education in Odisha”** presents an expressive analysis of the on-going projects on quality education in tribal areas of Odisha. He argues that education of tribal children advocated by the tribal or nontribal practitioners have to go through a ‘loving struggle’ for cooperation to establish that they also have wisdom to discover the truth from the life and making meaning from the local to feel the global from the land in which they thrive.

The eighth one, **“Language Maintenance in the Context of Industrialization and Development: The Rourkela Case-Study”** analyses the reasons behind the loss of ethnicity among the minorities. It focuses on the impact of market-driven industrial culture and the hegemony of state language over the language of the minority communities in the field of education. He recommends that a collective effort of field social scientists and humanists, linguists and speakers of endangered languages

can effectively influence the formulation of national language policies for development.

The ninth one, **“Nature-based OLCHIKI and Santal Ethno-Nationalism”** discusses the nature-based OL- CHIKI script invented by Pt. Raghunath Murmu which in the author’s opinion seems to be an essential part of tribe-caste contrast and continuum. It concludes that at the pristine level, any development in tribal culture is nature-based that emerges spontaneously from within.

The tenth one, **“Tribal Language Movement and Development Intervention in Mayurbhanj District of Odisha”** avers tribal language movements in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha taking into account the historical aspects and its development prospects in recent times.

The eleventh one, **“Sustainable Development in Tribal Odisha: Critical areas of Concern and Need for an Integrated Development Agenda”** highlights the critical issues in Tribal Development in a pragmatic manner. The author feels that most of the objectives stipulated by independent Development Interventions have either not been attained or partially achieved which has resulted in a slow pace of inequitable development in the tribal areas. He highlights some critical issues in tribal development for using them as a reference to draw an Integrated Development Agenda for the sustainable development of the community in the form of recommendations. It is basically an empirical study on various development projects with focus on the literacy rates, population profile and work force participation of the displaced and dispossessed tribals.

Lastly my sincere thanks go to all the paper contributors for contributing their articles to this journal. I also express my earnest gratitude to Shri S. C. Mohanty, O.S.D. (Research) and Associate Editor for taking all the pains and sparing ample time and effort in spite of his several preoccupations, to bring out this Special Issue of ADIVASI. I am also thankful to Prof. P. Panda, former Director of SCSTRTI for his help and cooperation in collection and compilation of the articles. I shall be immensely elated if the articles will serve good for the researchers, academicians and informed readers. I openly invite the research scholars to enrich all our future issues with similar beauty and majesty.

**A. B. Ota.**

26th January, 2013  
Bhubaneswar

EDITOR  
& DIRECTOR, SCSTRTI

# Transaction of Teaching Learning Process for the Tribal Children Mother Tongue as the Key for Development

**\*B K Panda**

## **Abstract**

*In this article an attempt has been made to highlight the problems of tribal children in the schools due to lack of text books in their own language, i.e., mother tongue and shortage of language teachers. Although, the problem of tribal language has remained crucial for the development of the tribal children in the schools, very little has been done to incorporate tribal languages to teach the children upto primary levels in the schools so that the tribal children could have been benefitted greatly. The adoption of bilingual primers and teachers with knowledge of tribal languages has been viewed as of great importance for better academic achievement among the tribal children. Saikia and Mohanty in their study found that the Bodo tribes achieved better when they were taught in their mother tongue along with the language of the State (2004).*

**Keywords:** Tribal; Mother Tongue; Languages; Dialects; Schools; Teaching and Learning; Bilingual; Primers.

## **Introduction**

Language is the prime vehicle of communication and socialization. Language is also a way of natural transmission of communication skills that the child inherits from the parents instantly. It does not require any skill or proficiency of a teacher to teach. However, when the child enters a school he is subjected to learn a language which may not be his own language. The schools are not in a position to teach in the mother tongue of tribal children. The language of a community is also one of the most important mediums by which the culture and values of a society is passed from one generation to other. The language of the community thus attains prime importance in imparting education to a child. The schools which are the learning centers for the children need to be in a position to articulate and communicate through the language of the community, particularly the mother tongue, in order to make the learning more interesting and effective. Researchers have proved that the children tend to fare better if the language of the community and language of the teachers teaching in the school is same. In order to make the children understand properly what is being communicated, what is to be answered and what is to be written, etc., as there is a big difference between the language used by the children at home and the language communicated to them at school they find themselves in a difficult position to learn and articulate their

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views in the classrooms. This difficulty in understanding the language taught in the school can become a barrier in the process of learning in the schools. Studies have shown that due to non-availability of mother tongue based education it is also considered to be a denial of access to free and compulsory education. When the

children do not understand what is being taught by the teacher, the language of the teacher becomes a barrier, putting the child in a position where he/she does not understand what is being transacted in the class room. In fact, in 1974, the Supreme Court of US acknowledged this fact of lack of provision of mother tongue transaction in the school which ultimately denies access to education. This phenomenon is prominently acute among tribal children.

It is a well-known fact that generally children first of all think in their own mother tongue, and then respond to the teachers in the language followed in the school, wherein the mother language becomes the medium of thinking process among the children. If the child does not understand the lessons taught properly, the process of articulating the subject matter and assimilating the contents of the subject becomes difficult. The basic concepts are not learnt adequately which affects their future studies. The international forums suggest for the need of imparting education through mother tongue. Even the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights has stated in one of its conventions that the mother tongue instruction is considered an important component of quality education, particularly in the early years, and it is felt that it should cover both teaching of and teaching through this language (UNESCO, 2003). Even a study conducted by Mohanty (2000) concluded that there is a greater advantage of mother tongue in a society, as it helps not only in socio-economic mobility but also in social integration of linguistic minorities.

In this article an attempt has been made to understand the importance of mother tongue as a language of instruction in effectively imparting education to the children belonging to the ethnic groups of India known as the Scheduled Tribes. The linguistic rights have received great importance in the international forums as well, particularly in educating such minority ethnic groups all over the world. The Linguistic rights that have been framed include the following:

- (a) Schooling in their languages, if so desired;
- (b) Access to the language of the larger community and to that of national education system; and
- (c) Inter-cultural education that promotes positive attitudes to minority and indigenous languages and the cultures they express (Linguistic Rights: 1990).

### **The efforts made**

The Scheduled Tribes constitute 8.2% of the total population of the country with 573 tribal groups and 270 tribal languages. In India, the States have their own specific languages through which the curriculum in the schools is articulated. This is the crux of the problem where the schools are not in a position to articulate in the mother tongue of the Scheduled Tribe children in the schools creating a gap in the learning process among these children. As early as 1980s attempts have been made to have bilingual primers with a provision of switching over to the language of the main stream education of the States but no breakthrough could be achieved due to various reasons of feasibility. During 1980s an attempt was made by Srivastava, LRN (1980), in order to develop tribal primers in the States of Odisha and West Bengal. This attempt found a boost with the development of a primer for classes I to III for the Saora Tribes of Odisha during 1984, with NCERT coming out with a coloured pictographic primer for the Gunpur and Gudari districts of Odisha. The primer in the Saora Tribal dialect was known as "SaoraYamna" means the Saora language primer.

The basic premise on which this particular primer was developed was that the children who were conversant in spoken language at home are transacted in the school by the Saora teachers, which enabled the children to learn through their language, the main stream language of the state, i.e., Odia. The Saora child learnt the main stream language of the State initially through their own mother tongue and practiced speaking and writing in the Odia script by utilizing the language of their mother tongue, i.e., Saora. This practice took place in the classes I and Classes II and by the time they reached the Class III most of the words of Odia are learnt and they were in a position to write, read and understand the meaning of the word taught to them by the teacher. This experimentation was successful but due to lack of resources, academic support and political will of the governments this could not be implemented or rather replicated among various tribes of the state. Otherwise out of 63 tribes in Odisha, 30 - 35 tribal primers could have been prepared and used successfully in the primary schools in last 25-30 years and majority of them would have been assimilated into the main language of the land without any language hurdle. However, the inception of District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) emphasized the need for bilingual primers particularly to be adopted in the schools serving the tribal areas, in order to have better transaction of curriculum in the schools. This was further strengthened by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Programme (SSA) and the State governments were provided with grants to develop primers for major tribal groups. The state level Project Officers and the SCERTs are roped in to identify the major tribal groups having some kind of script and language in order to develop primers in those tribal languages. The attempts are underway and many of the states like Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Kerala, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh have developed a variety of instruction material both for the teachers and learners belonging to the Scheduled Tribes.

Although it was late, there is a realization of the fact that the teaching in the native language/mother tongue has greater impact on the learners and this has paved way in developing work books, primers and hand books, etc., in transacting the tribal dialects in the schools.

### **Modalities of curriculum transaction**

Curriculum transaction in the schools is a very complicated process. Although it looks very simple, faulty transmission of curriculum can lead to disastrous learning among the children. All said and done, there is a need for great precision in teaching the children in the schools, and most particularly the primary children in the schools, as it is the stage where the foundation of learning takes place among the children. If they are taught properly they learn effectively, otherwise they learn which are faulty and remain to be out of track. Here, the role of the teacher becomes crucial, where he should be in a position to communicate effectively to the children and for effective communication the language and, more particularly, the mother tongue plays a crucial role.

The oral communication of language of any society being the basis for transmission of culture has an important role in the schooling of a child. More particularly, the tribal child who learns the language from his parents and siblings and imitates whatever comes across enables the child to practice the oral tradition of language learning in the society. However, the society where the parents are literate, learning takes place systematically with the parental training. The child in rote learning, identifies the items, denotes the alphabets, and conceptualizes the colors



and practices writing. This systematic learning either takes place at home or at the preparatory schools where the child learns speaking, identifying and interacting with the peers. But this does not happen in case of a tribal child, where there is no training for learning is available, the script is not known and the elders utilize the oral tradition of communication to a great extent without depending upon any kind of rote learning and writing skills. In such a context, the tribal child gets well versed with oral traditions of learning the native language as well as the songs and stories of the tribal community.

The problem lies in the methods of teaching such children with different language background as well as switching over from communication through oral tradition to that of a tradition which has a different language, and reading in the different language, then writing which is a new skill they learn, and unaware of the rote learning practices. The language in such a context becomes a barrier for learning. The teaching in the schools does not take into consideration the importance of the native language as well as the process of transforming the child who has come with a oral learning tradition to that of the skills of reading, writing and speaking a different language, and most of the words which they do not understand and are being used in their text books. It is like learning blindly without comprehending what is being taught. When the language is not clear the learning also takes place in a vacuum, i.e., as such no effective learning takes place in the classroom.

### **Why our programmes are not successful?**

The paradox is that the schools are there and teachers do teach, but ultimately who learns? And if at all everyone learns - the question is "what is being learnt"? "Is it the unidirectional monotonous learning, the biggest question to think about"? The problem is more pronounced in the schools serving heterogeneous tribal communities with different languages. "Are the teachers in a position to teach in all the tribal languages present in these schools"? For instance, a teacher teaching in a school where the Baiga and Gond children are admitted, will the Gondi teacher be in a position to utilize the Baiga language and switch over to Gondi language and then to the Hindi language of the State of Madhya Pradesh to teach the children attending from two or more tribal communities? Does the education department have any training facilities for the teachers to equip them adequately in two and more than two tribal languages to tackle such situations? Have the policy makers thought of such dilemmas arising out in the schools?

These situations which are mostly prevalent in the tribal areas, and more particularly States with major tribal population, there is a need for a clear cut language policy in the primary schools. This requires States to establish proper mechanism to reach the tribal children through their own languages. Half-hearted efforts of only preparing primers and hand books for teachers may not be the solution as these books will remain in the State headquarters and there will not be any user of these primers. The teachers are somewhat unable to transact the lessons from these primers due to lack of training or inadequate teacher preparatory programmes.

### **What needs to be done?**

A clear-cut language policy has to be put in place by the respective States, more particularly, for the benefit of the Scheduled Tribes inhabiting the States. This needs concerted efforts of identifying the dominant tribal groups with scripts, planning

curriculum, understanding the tribal culture (flora and fauna of the habitations), development of primers, development of teacher hand books, and creation of supplementary learning material in the form of story books and poems, etc., for enhancing learning in the schools.

The schools need to be provided with teachers either who are knowledgeable in the tribal languages or are to be trained adequately in the languages they are going to teach. Handbooks for teachers are a very important component, which provide guidance to the teachers in overcoming some of the difficulties they might face while teaching a tribal language. Therefore, proper handbooks for the teachers, and work books for the children need to be developed with plenty of activities and pictorial presentations and depiction of the tribal art and culture. The training to be provided to the teachers is the most important aspect of curriculum delivery; if the training is not done adequately it might affect the transaction of curriculum to the tribal children. The training centres in various tribal languages have to be created and the primers developed for the tribal children should be specific to the tribal groups. The classroom activities should not be confined to only rote learning, memorizing and practicing writing skills, but also should have more activities which can generate interest among the children to learn, understand and comprehend what is being taught in the class. Here the role of the supplementary learning material attains significant importance.

### **Curriculum Development – State Examples**

Most of the States have taken up activities for quality improvement of tribal area schools. One of the issues identified by the States was the problem faced by tribal children whose home language was very different from the regional language, which was the medium of instruction at the primary level.

Assam prepared teachers' training modules and separate teaching learning materials for the Bodo tribal language. Bodo language is also a medium of instruction in some of the districts of Assam. The work on tribal language materials was undertaken with the help of local coordinators who belonged to the tribal community. Resource material in Bodo language has been prepared and all workbooks at primary stage have been translated/ adopted in Bodo language. In Golpara district, Garo medium workbook has been translated /adopted and distributed in the schools.

Andhra Pradesh developed bilingual dictionaries and teacher training has been organized in Warangal and Vizianagaram districts. For use of the bilingual material, research studies have also been undertaken on the issue of language and mathematics learning by tribal children. It has been decided to use the multi-level kits developed for tribal areas in Vishakapatnam district in other tribal areas also. More than eight primers for dominant tribal groups have been developed and are in use. Gujarat developed dictionaries in Dangi and Bhili dialects. A local work glossary in Dangi has been prepared and distributed in schools for class I-IV in Dang district. Similarly, a local word glossary in Adivasi dialect has been prepared for class I-IV in Banaskantha district and distributed in schools. The Vidyasahayaks were given training on the use of these dictionaries. Gujarat has also initiated extensive work for preparation of TLM in tribal languages. The TLM developed include flash cards for different languages and also cards for mathematics. These have been supplied to all schools in tribal areas. Bridge Language Inventory has also been introduced in Ho and Mandavi languages in Ranchi district of Bihar.

In Karnataka, a text book for class I and II has been developed and introduced for Soliga tribals in Soliga language. A handbook has been developed for sensitisation of teachers towards social and cultural specificities of tribal societies. In Maharashtra tribal language dictionaries have been developed. Language resource groups have been set up for Bhili, Pawara, Madia, Gondi, etc. Bridge material has been developed in Dhule district. Kerala has developed bilingual language materials at district level in Kasargod, Waynad, Malappuram and Palakkad.

In Madhya Pradesh teachers' handbooks called Bridge Language Inventory (BLIs) have been prepared in 3 tribal languages, viz., Gondi (Shahdol and Betul district), Kuduk, (Raigarh) and Bhili (Dhar). Identified teachers were imparted training for use of BLISs in classroom transaction. The teaching-learning package called *DhamDhamaDham* was translated into Gondi and supplementary reading material *Kopal* was developed for tribal children. The class I textbook *Bharati* has been translated into tribal languages. Supplementary TLM for tribal children has been developed in Jhabua district using local cultural forms, i.e., folk tales, songs, proverbs, riddles to make the learning process interesting. In all, 450 teachers of 311 tribal area based schools have been trained to use the supplementary materials.

Odisha took initiative to develop a comprehensive strategy for education of tribal children. The State of Odisha has the distinction of having 65 tribal groups and with the largest number of 13 Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). With such a large number of tribal groups as well as the PTGs the task of the educational planners and curriculum developers becomes very tough. The State has initiated a number of activities for addressing the quality improvement of tribal education. Some initiatives in this direction may be listed below.

- (i) Seven Tribal Primers in seven tribal languages, i.e., Saora, Santali, Kui, Kuvi, Koya, Bonda and Juanag;
- (ii) Teachers' handbook of the 7 tribal language primers;
- (iii) Saora self reading materials;
- (iv) Picture dictionary in tribal languages;
- (v) Training module on how to use the tribal primer in classroom;
- (vi) Sixteen (16) folk stories developed in Saora (tribal language) and Odia for both teachers and children;
- (vii) Conversation chart prepared and distributed with about 100 commonly used sentences in Odia Saora.

## **Conclusion**

Studies have shown that low achievements of the children particularly belonging to the tribal groups are either due to their low or poor performance, lack of proper or adequate teaching material, lack of learning environment at home and lack of literate parents so on so forth. However, there are very few studies which have focused on the issue of the languages, and most particularly the mother tongue, and its importance in the process of learning, generating thinking process, conceptualizing the things which they have not seen but heard from the text books,

and articulating their own view points or the ideas. They conceptualize certain concepts, but are not in a position to translate and present it to the teacher due to the inability to have the right kind of words of the language in which they are taught. This kind of situation creates a barrier in their articulation of ideas and viewpoints with the teacher. No efforts have been made by the teacher to understand such language-based problems of the tribal child as the teacher does not have any understanding of the tribal language. While conducting a simple written test for the primary section children in tribal schools in the research study (Panda, B. K. 2010), it was observed that although the language used was simple, the tribal children belonging to different linguistic groups found it difficult to understand the test questions. But when a teacher of the same tribal group translated the test question in their respective mother tongue, it was observed that there was a great relief on the faces of the children as they felt happy to at least understand the question of the test paper to a great extent. Thus, many studies tried to show that the mother tongue has a positive impact while other languages can have negative impact. A study conducted by Kangas (2009) has also indicated the negative impact of regional language as medium of instruction in the understanding of the tribal children in the schools.

The official recognition of some dominant languages and non-recognition of the minor languages has also impeded the development of the ethnic groups, who are forced to learn a language which is not their own. Even the dominant languages within the States discriminate the people on the basis of the region they belong and brand them differently, for e.g., in Odisha, the people speaking Sambalpuri (Western Region) which has influence of the bordering Chhattisgarh (with Kosali language) and being a border region the language has a mixture of Odia and Kosali. Similarly, the southern region of Odisha which is adjoining the State of Andhra Pradesh has mixture of some Telugu words, although the language used in majority is Oriya, while the central region which does not have any borders have ethnocentric views about their dominance in terms of Odia language among other regions of the State. So also, in the State of Andhra Pradesh, a similar situation prevails in the districts which have borders to Maharashtra and Karnataka with differences in the language they use and the language used by the central districts which do not have any State borders to be of pure Telugu language. Many of the Indian States are struggling with the issue of language and sometimes it has even created division in the States.

Under such circumstances, the States which have their own regional languages are also not free from linguistic bias arising out of different regions of a State. The language politics is very high, and given such a situation, the language of ethnic groups further suffocate and do not get importance among the regional languages. The dominant socio-politico groups need to overcome these regional inequalities in order to consider the development of tribal groups by implementing their mother tongue or the native languages in the schools in order to bring these ethnic groups to the forefront of development.

Studies have also estimated that 90-95% of the spoken languages may extinct or are very seriously endangered by the end of this century, and most particularly, indigenous languages in majority will disappear (Mogga et al., 2004). This alarm which is signaled in the international forums needs to be seriously taken up by not only taking measures of preserving the tribal or indigenous languages of India but also by developing effective policies of restoring the existing indigenous tribal languages of the country. One of the important policies perhaps might be that of

initiating a quick process of developing the tribal language primers, utilization of the available tribal scripts, dialects with their adaptation in the schools, which ultimately can lead to preservation and revitalization of the existing rich tribal culture and dialects of the country. This will have a multiplier effect of teaching the tribal children in mother tongue with restoration of rich tribal culture and conservation of language from extinction.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for a multipronged approach wherein many activities have to take place simultaneously in order to make the language policy percolate down to the tribal schools effectively. It is not only the question of developing primers but also there is a need to audit the requirement which range from a number of dominant tribal groups requiring mother tongue education, primer curriculum planning and publishing the primers, teacher guide books, teacher training in tribal languages, implementation and monitoring the teaching-learning process taking place in these tribal schools, etc. A greater policy needs to be in place by each of the State governments in planning such a herculean task of mother tongue teaching in the tribal schools.

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# The Invariants in Saora: A Critical Discussion

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## **Abstract**

*His paper on the invariants in Saora language is a modified part of the research report based on the empiric investigation in Rayagada district of Odisha. The lexicology of Saora language has been discussed from linguistic point of view. The language as we have seen is very rich in terms of its morpho-syntactic features. As there is a mismatch between many of the forms recorded by Ramamurti and the empiric data available with us, wider research is required to crosscheck and validate the data. It could be possible that the data provided in Ramamurti's Manual are purer than that of ours as the impact of the neighbouring languages cannot be ruled out. The initiative for Multi-Lingual Education covering ten prominent tribal languages (Saora included) of Odisha launched by the Odisha Primary Education Project Authority is a welcome proposition in the process of standardizing the language, enhancing its functional load and ensuring its prolonged life. The Saora community should be encouraged to do research from within on its language as it would bring out the nuances of the languages missed out by the external researchers. It is opined that more in-depth empiric research would explore the unexplored areas in the language.*

## **Introduction**

Out of the 6000 plus languages spoken in the world, 4500 are indigenous. Though many of these languages have more than one million speakers, they run the risk of dying unnatural deaths. Lack of facilities for standardization and governmental patronage push them onto brink of extinction. The hegemony of the dominating languages over the dominated continues unabated despite the sporadic initiatives for their standardization. Speakers of the dominated languages are often found in a complex relationship with the speakers of the dominating languages, as they apparently facilitate the weakening and extinction of their own languages, which require urgent attention. With this plight of the minor languages in the backdrop, the UNESCO apprehended that half of the languages spoken today would disappear by the end of this century and initiated the Endangered Languages Program to promote and safeguard endangered languages and linguistic diversity as an essential part of the living heritage of humanity.

Odisha is home to about 62 tribes who constitute a large number of aboriginal proto-Australoid populations. They are appropriately called 'adivasis (original inhabitants). They are predominantly forest dwellers but a substantial number of them started living in

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the towns and cities because of resource scarcity in their native villages and also due to the allurements of urban culture and expectation of better living. Most of these tribes have their

own languages but only a few have their scripts. Linguistically, the tribes can be categorized into three of the four major language families spoken in India: Indo-European, Austro-Asiatic and Dravidian. Kharia, Juang, Gadaba, Ho, Munda and Saora are among a few of the most ancient tribes whose dialects belong to the Austro-Asiatic linguistic family, while those of Paroja, Oraon and Kondh belong to the Dravidian linguistic group. Most of these languages are endangered. Srivastava (1984) endorses this when he puts the tribal languages in the doubly disadvantaged group 'minority and powerless'. In a number of cases minority languages (especially tribal languages) are facing rapid attrition. These factors are: (a) language policies; (b) modernization; (c) speakers' attitudes towards their languages; (d) separation of the link between language and identity or a change in the speech community's perception of its identity (Pandharipande 2002: 218). The Saora language also, being a minority language, in spite of having a population of more than three million and strong cultural heritage, is 'potentially endangered' (Moseley, 2011).

The Saoras are one of the most ancient but dominant tribes in the southern part of Odisha. Though geographically they are distributed across many States, like Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Assam, they are concentrated in the Gajapati and Rayagada Districts of Odisha and Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. Saora (also Saora, Saonras, Shabari, Sabar, Saura, Savara, Sawaria, Swara, Sabara) is spoken by some 310,000 native speakers (2007). It has several dialects and contains loanwords from [Hindi](#), Odia, and Telugu. Yet in many areas it retains the power to assimilate these to Saora syntax and morphology. The Saora language has a script of its own called *Soran Sompen* (*Akshara Brahma*), invented on 18th June 1936 by Shri Mangei Gomango who was well conversant with English, Telugu and Odia. The 24 letters installed inside the OM shaped *Akshara Brahma* are the initial letters of 24 Saora deities. The *Akshara Brhama*, therefore, is no way less than a pantheon for the Saoras. In addition to these twenty-four letters, the Saora numerals from one to twelve, its year of invention and recognition (1952) have also been included in the *Akshara Brahma*. Shri Gomango established a religious order dedicated to Akshara Brahma to lead the people of his tribe from ignorance to enlightenment, from darkness to light. As the script has been based on a Hindu mythology, it is yet to find wide acceptance among the non-Hindu speakers spread in other places (Nayak, 13, 1995). Emerson enumerates the use of this script in various religious contexts like a variety of printed materials, tracts, almanacs, invitation cards, and similar ephemera. Despite the enormity of the literature and text books produced in this language till date, the extent and quality of research carried out on this language is meagre. However, like any other standard language, the language exhibits its richness in terms of its morphology and syntax. The present paper aims at highlighting the features of the invariants found in this language in terms of their conformity with and divergence from the features usually associated with the invariants in other languages. The invariants in any language exhibit peculiar characteristics: they remain constant or unvaried even with the changes of number, gender and case or with the change of tense. But in this language we come across a few features which are not in tune with

the common perceptions regarding the invariants. Among the invariants in Saora, we have the adjectivals, adverbials post-positions, conjunctions and interjections.

### Saora adjectival

The adjectivals in Saora, despite coming under the group of invariants, show some strikingly divergent features, which seem to be unique to this language. The Saora adjectivals are uninflected forms that occur with nouns, mostly in pre-nominal positions, in typically endocentric modification of structures or predicate adjectives. The nouns following the adjectives take the prefix 'a' and the adjectives lose their endings '-n' or '-ən'. This prefix before the noun is often found to be linked to the preceding adjective to indicate the relation between the two (the noun and the pronoun). If the adjective ends with the vowel 'a' or 'ə', then this vowel is assimilated to the prefix 'a'. Similarly if the noun begins with the prefix 'a', then the vowel is elided and is assimilated to the preceding prefix 'a'.

*drin(g)-je-dan(g) a-tan(g)-arajan(g) a-jaa*  
*lonely road unripe fruit*  
*(R) pəlun-ə- 'talij –that (is) white that cow, i.e. a white cow*  
*pəlu:-ta-ən – white cow*

In this example 'talij-ən' has been contracted into 'ta-ən' and 'pəlu-n' has lost its ending 'n'. The adjectives also lose their endings 'n/ən' when they are used predicatively. In these cases the adjectives either take the intensifier 'boiboi/bob-boi' (very much) or are used independently. In these constructions, we often notice the absence of the verb, which is either silent or not marked.

*kun cel boi-boi langi*  
*that girl very beautiful*  
*That girl is very beautiful.*  
*(R) unte-mandra: boiboi suda-that man (is) very big.*

Both in our data and in Ramamurti, we find the use of 'dam/dəm' as an intensifier.

*kun anib boi-boi dinga-(dam)*  
*that tree very tall*  
*That tree (is) very tall.*

Adjectives like 'lan(g)am (handsome)', 'langi-n(beautiful)', 'dan(g)da-n' and 'dan(g)di-n'(young woman)' are virtual equivalents of compound nouns like 'langa-mar', 'langi-boi', 'dan(g)da-mar' and 'dan(g)di-boi'. So the words derived from these adjectives also retain the distinction of gender. Both the Saora nouns and adjectives show vowel (tamme-new), consonantal (papur-old) and nasal (mettang-soft) endings.

On the basis of their functions, the Saora adjectivals can be classified into the following categories.

#### **Adjectives of quality:**

*bandrap-angry,(M) lama-soft, bansa-good, dangda-young, langa-beautiful*

#### **Adjectives of quantity:**

*alan bitti- a lot of wealth, bo-salen(g) daa- a pot of water, asodam ali-a little of liquor*



### **Adjectives of comparison:**

*sukru-n atlin(g) mangda-n calaki*  
*sukru than/from Mangda clever*  
*Mangda is cleverer than Sukru.*  
*sabitri-atlin(g) sabita langa-dəm*  
*Sabita is more beautiful than Sabitri.*

In Saora we do not have different forms of adjectives for different degrees as we find in English and some other languages. In order to express an adjective in comparative degree, the speakers use two independent clauses with two semantically opposite adjectives.

*anin bodo-dam, nen bala-ti*  
*he healthy/strong, I strength not*  
*He is strong but I do not have strength/I am weak.*  
*(R) amən suda:, nen sanna*  
*he big I small*  
*I am smaller than him.*

Sometimes the speakers use the intensifier ‘bob-boi/boi-boi’ (very) or ‘agada’(more) before the adjectives to express the comparative degree of the adjectives. Often, ‘dam/dəm’ is also found to be used with the adjectives to express the adjectives in the comparative degree.

*gaman(g)-dam/agada-gaman(g)-more rich or richer*  
*anga-dam/agda-langa-more beautiful*

Though Ramamurti mentions the existence of a comparative form (jin-jin-lanka:n-ə-ra:- a taller tree ), it has not occurred in our data.

To express the forms of the adjectives in the superlative degree, the Saora speakers use the phrases ‘sabi-atlun(g)/at-lin(g)’ (of all) before the adjectives. This could be due to the influence of the speakers of the neighbouring language Odia in which ‘sabutharu’ (of all) is frequently used with the adjectives to indicate their superlative degrees.

*anin sabi-atlin(g)/atlun(g) langa-dam.*  
*She all than beautiful*  
*She is the most beautiful of all (the girls).*

### **Participial Adjectives:**

Participial adjectives in Saora are formed by prefixing ‘a’ and suffixing ‘tin’ or ‘tin-an’ to the root verb. In this case also, the noun following the adjective takes the prefix ‘a’ before it.

*a-dimat-tin-an-a-paci a-de-gon(g)*  
*sleeping child wake not*  
*Do not wake the sleeping child.*  
*a-benle a-jir-tin-a-anti a-binta-gong*  
*flying running bird aim not*  
*Do not aim at the flying bird.*

### **Nominal Adjectives:**

*sindri-n-a-muṇa ara-n-a-kurci*  
*cotton bag wooden chair*

### **Numerical Adjectives:**

It is pertinent to note the changes that occur in both the nouns and numerical adjectives when they co-occur. The plural marker 'ji' is often omitted from the nouns when there are numerical adjectives before them and the adjectives refer to a number which is two or more than two. Like English and Unlike Odia, the numerals do not take any suffix with them to express their number. Of course, the simultaneous use of the plural marker 'ji' with both the numerals and the corresponding nouns is not rare.

*galji paci- ten children (Odia: dashajana pila)*  
*bagunji mandranji-two men*

Mangei Gomango uses 'er-th', 'ber-th', 'jar-th', 'ur-th', 'mer-th', 'tur-th', 'gur-th', 'tam-th', 'tin-th' and 'gar-th' for the ordinals from first to tenth. But they seem to be more anglicized than original'. In our data, we have not come across instances like these.

### **Adverbials:**

An adverb in Saora, like the adverbs in other languages is found to be used to modify the meaning of a verb, an adjective or another adverb. However, as regard the position of the adverbs we find a strong influence of the neighbouring Odia language. Like the Odia adverbs they are also found in pre-verbal and post-nominal/post-subject positions. In terms of their structures, the Saora adverbs can be classified into the simple ones and the derivatives. The simple adverbs are mostly one word adverbs. They are used independently without any suffixes or particles attached to them.

*(d)riiban-yesterday, muui-day before yesterday*  
*(R) nam/lemi-now bijo/bijodi-tomorrow*

The derivatives are formed by adding the following particles/suffixes to some nouns, adjectives and adverbs.

**ba:n/ban:** *a-bon-ban-near the head, a-don-ba:n-near the body (R) ə-kən'dun-ba:n-behind him*

**dom/dam:** *bansa-dam/langa-dam-very well (R) boi-'boi-dəm- exceedingly*

**ga:mle/gam:** *sarda-gam-gladly, (R) kadin-ga:mle-silently*

**ge:** *asai-ge(i)-like coal (R) kumab-ge-like ashes*

**goi:** *ette-goi-in that manner, (R) enne-goi-in this manner*

**le:** *lisa-le/lisa-gam-slowly, (R) bansa:-le: well(bansa-gam is also possible)*

**dale:** *a-sui-dale/a-sui-dam-generously*

**loge:** *(R) uai-lo-ge-loudly*

We also find compound and reduplicated adverbs in this language. The compound adverbs are mostly compound nouns behaving as adverbs, being used as adverbs of place and time.

*dil-dinna- every day*

*riyen-riyen-quickly*  
*julu-julu-afterwards*  
*(R) jar-jar-around*  
*(R) kote:n-'kote:n-then and there*  
*anan(g) anan(g)-sometimes*

On the basis of their meanings and functions, the adverbs in Saora can be classified as adverbs of time, place, manner, degree, frequency, affirmation and negation.

Adverbs of time are either simple or compound ones. Though they are often found with 'n/ən' in their ends, they being the invariants do not undergo any changes with the change of tense and number of the verbs.

*at-kulin-at last*  
*togald-ən-in the morning*  
*miin-num-ən-last year*

It is to be noted that the adverb 'lemi/lami/nam (R)' is used to indicate different shades of meaning like now, today etc. It is also used as component of two other adverbs (lemin-tan-still and lemi-a-miin-num-this year). Adverbs of place can also be simple or compound.

*julu-n-behind, pada-n-outside (R)jaitan-down, dilli-n-in Delhi*

Ramamurti records a peculiar use of the archaic prefixes like 'mid-', 'bar-' and 'er-' with 'da' to mean 'in one place', 'in two places' and 'in three places' respectively but similar samples have not been found in our data. To express the adverbs of manner, the Saora speakers normally use the particle 'gam'/gam-le' (Saora equivalent of English -ly) with the adjective. Besides this, suffixes like '-e' and '-goi' are found to be used with the adjectives. Of course, we come across some natural adverbs of manner (which are not derived). The use of reduplicated forms for expression of manner has also been attested.

*bigda-separately, lis-lisan-slowly, sub-sub-gam-falsely, ette-goi-like that*

Adverbs of frequency are either simple adverbs or compounds. Use of reduplicated form is also not very uncommon.

*ba:r-ba:ran-again, moreover, arjai-often/everyday, angijja-never, bo-tan(g)ar-  
once*

It has been noticed that the word 'tan(g)ar'(meaning *road*) is compounded with the numerical adjective to indicate the frequency of some action(once, twice, three times....). The informants could not explain the reason behind this peculiar use of the word 'tan(g)ar'. Adverbs of degree and quantity are also one worded or compounds formed with the addition of 'dam/gam'(very rare) to the adjectives or intensifiers. Some of them are also reduplicated forms.

*aso-ala-le-more or less/almost*  
*(asokan-little alan-a lot)*  
*kuddab-gam- completely*  
*(R) bade'-bade-enough*

*agda/agada-much*  
*okka-only*

**Interrogative adverbs:**

Interrogative adverbs in Saora are simple, compound or derived in their structures. The simple interrogative adverbs are one word adverbs whereas the compound ones are formed by the addition of post-positions to the adverbs). When they are derived, they are formed by the addition of suffixes to the existing adjectives or adverbs.

*anan-when*  
*yangam-how*  
*itin-what*  
*butin-who*  
*butin-adon(g)-whom*  
*butin-ate-whose*  
*itin-asan-why*

Adverbs of affirmation and negation in Saora are often used in isolation because they are used in response to questions that need 'yes/no' as answers. So they can also be called as sentence adverbs.

*au/ a a –yes, sari-right, (R) u?u-yes*  
*ijja-no, sari-ti/te-wrong, (R) amədoi(əga:sa)-not at all*

The Saora speakers of Andhra Pradesh use 'oa' or 'an(g)a', those of Gunupur area use 'padia' whereas speakers of Gudari area use 'ijja/ijja soi/orikka' to mean 'not at all.'

Conjunctions in Saora show two broad divisions: the Coordinating Conjunctions and Subordinating Conjunctions. Though most of the Saora conjunctions are simple, derived and compound conjunctions have also been attested. The Coordinating Conjunctions in Saora can be the Cumulative or Copulative Conjunctions, Adversative, Disjunctive or Alternative Conjunctions and Illative Conjunctions.

**Cumulative/Copulative Conjunctions:**

*paravatin da kuntin skula-n il-le-ji*  
*Parvati and Kunti school went*  
*Parvati and Kunti went to school.*

Ramamurti mentions 'ba:r', 'ba:r-ən', 'ja:', 'gamle' as the other variants of 'da' but we have recorded the use of 'ba:r' and 'anan' and the other forms have not been observed.

*Mangdan da Harin bagun-ji gada-n il-le-ji*  
*Mangda and Hari both went to the forest.*

**Adversative Conjunctions:**

*Anin lami-a-dina it-tai-bin gam-e-tin mantram an-i-ai-tin*  
*He today comes to said but not come*  
*He had said that he would come today but he did not come.*  
*Anin adonga-n dal-te delijja itta*  
*He health in good not still came*  
*He was ill/not in good health, still he will come.*

### **Disjunctive or Alternative Conjunctions:**

*Raman siien ki skula-n it-te*  
*Rama home or school went*  
Raman will go to home or school.

In this language the conjunction 'ki' is also used to express the sense contained in both 'either...or' and 'neither...nor'.

*lami/lemi savitri-n ki gurubarin moinna a-ni-ai-le-ji*  
*Today Savitri or Gurubari none not come*  
Today neither Savitri nor Gurubari has come.

Ramamurti records the use of 'ja:', 'ja:-ja:', 'ude-ude', 'de-e', 'de ete', 'po po' as the variants of 'ki'(or). The use of 'ki' as a disjunctive conjunction is a clear instance of the influence of the neighbouring language Odia.

### **Illative**

*riban/ruban yangam-de-len gur-re gamle-n-den tan(g)aran sal-dale*  
*Yesterday certainly rain as road muddy become*  
*It must have rained yesterday as the road has become muddy.*  
*aman anin-a-don(g) kani-l-e antasan/untasan anin an-ni-ai-tin*  
*You him scolded hence he not come*  
You scolded him, hence/so he has not come.

Mohanty records the use of '-ntasan', '-ntasakka', 'saliti' and 'unti-asan' as the variants of this conjunction whereas Ramamurti mentions 'unten-ə-m'me:le', 'unten-əpse:le' and 'unten-əsan' as its variants. 'Kan-te-asan/kantasan' (therefore) is another illative conjunction in this language.

The Sub-coordinating Conjunctions in this language also can be broadly classified into:

#### **A) Conjunctions of Time:**

*nen a-dolai amuda anin jagan anda-e-tin*  
*I reach before he place left*  
*He had left the place before I reached.*  
*(nen) a-anda-le-nen sikkoi/a-uttare anin gna-i-tin*  
*left I after he entered*  
He entered after I (had) left.

Anga-te(when)', 'akadi(while)', 'samayi(at any time)' are some other Sub-Ordination Conjunctions of time attested in this language.

#### **B) Conjunctions of Reason:**

*Nen barab-da-lin gamle-n-de anin gatra-jin-tin*  
*I angry became because he insulted*  
I became angry because he insulted me.

Ramamurti records 'iten-asan' as the variant for this. 'Yan-a-san' (why) is also used as a subordinating conjunction indicating reason.

#### **C) Complementary Conjunctions:**

*nen er-galam anin mii-nu-man uan dako-ne-tin*

*I not know he last year where stay*  
I do not know where he lived last year.

**D) Conjunction of Result or Consequence:**

*anin daka-n sarda de-li gamle/da rapti-a-gij-in-t-in*  
*He so much happy became that cannot see me*  
He was so happy that he could not see me.

'Pantikoi (as soon as)' is another subordinating conjunction that indicates result or consequence.

**E) Conjunctions of Concession:**

*anin kar-ran bara-ne-t-in etija anin a-baran sel-le*  
*He hard worked though he his-work failed*  
He failed in his work though he worked hard.

'Degon(g)/jəna/ jəna-de are used as the variants of this conjunction. Delija' (although) is also found to be used as a Subordinating Conjunction indicating concession.

**F) Conjunction of Comparison:**

*nen atlun(g)/atlin(g) anin agada dengi*  
*I than she more tall*  
She is taller than me.

**G) Conjunction of Condition:**

*aman karran(g) bara-lin-en-de mapru sai-t-am*  
*You hard work if God help you*  
God will help you if you work hard.

Ramamurti also records the use and existence of some other conjunctions like 'mu-nən-kan'(by the by)', 'ju:lu'/'tette-sitəle'/'tenne-sitəle'/'ən-səriŋsəle ten(then)', or 'ete'e:te(whether) and '-be'/'-le-be'/'de-le-be'(till) which can be used to introduce or connect clauses of equal or unequal cadre but they have not been attested in our data.

**Post-Positions:**

The pos-positions in Saora are equivalents of the English prepositions. They are used with the nouns and pronouns in the formation of different cases and in other contexts where it is necessary to relate one linguistic item to another. Though most of them are simple ones, a couple of them are formed by the addition of prefixes or suffixes.

**andale/(R) omd"-le/'sedia-le (except)**

*aman andale nen bar maina-te*  
*you except I again none*  
I have none (to call my own) except you.

**asan/(R)əm'me le/əp'sele(for)**

It is used as a case marker for the dative  
*nen-asan anin dinga lagga-ne-tin*  
*I for he much pain*  
He took so much pain for me.

**atlin/atlun(than)**

It is used as a casemarker in the ablative.

*nen-atlin/atlun anin agda dinga*

*I than he more tall*

*He is taller than me.*

**ruan/(R) 'batte'/'ruan'/'tudu-le'(with)**

*sitan ruan lakmin andi-ne-tin*

*Sita with Laxmi played*

*Sita played with Laxmi.*

**dang-di(upto)**

*anin deulan dangdi il-le-ji da jar-nai-ji*

*he temple up to went and returned*

*They went up to the temple and came back.*

**ban/(R)'adəm-ba:-n(near/at)**

*garjan-ban-len a-garjan(g)-ji*

*village near our their village*

*Their village is near ours.*

Instead of calling it a post-potion, Starosta calls it a Noun Auxiliary because it forms an integral part of the noun and precedes the nominal or personal suffixes.

*(S) garja-ba-n-to, at the village*

*grja-ba-n səri-from the village*

In Saora there are many widely used post-positions like 'battu/batin'(by), len/(R)'le:-ən'/'-do:ən/pəlati'kui/ə-berna(on), lin(g)an/lun(g)an/(R) le:-ən/'-de:e-n(in), akandun-ban (afterwards), padan(outsside), a-lun(g)an/(R)le:-ən/'er-'su:le-bel(within), atrandi/(R)ə-tə'ra:ndi:n, -le:n(in the midst/amidst), barre/(R) batte(in exchange of), sikoi-den/a-uttare/(R)ə-'de:le:n, ə-tiki(after), amanen(g)/(R) muka:-le(n)(towards), ammuda /(R)'enrə-de:n/m'man(before), anruka(by), tarann(g)di/ (R)təra :ndi:n/təra:ndi: len (between), adayar/(R)jar-jar, ə-pai-pai and unji-se-ən(around).

**Interjections**

The interjections in Saora are very limited in number.

*O-O(joy)*

*oi/itin gai-What?(surprise)*

*ai/agai-alas! (sorrow)*

*itin a ganroi-What a shame!*

*ijja-No(disapproval)*

*sarri-alright (approval)*

**Conclusion**

The language as we have seen is very rich in terms of its morpho-syntactic features. After more research, it would be possible for scholars to explore the unexplored areas in the language. As there is a mismatch between many of the forms recorded by Ramamurti and the data available with us, wider research is required to crosscheck and validate the data. It could be possible that the data provided in Ramamurti's Manual are purer than that of ours as the impact of the neighbouring languages cannot be ruled out. The initiative for Multi-Lingual Education covering ten prominent tribal languages (Saora included) of Odisha launched by the Odisha Primary Education Project Authority is a welcome measure

in the process of standardizing the language, enhancing its functional load and ensuring its prolonged life. People from the Saora community should be encouraged to do research on this language as it would bring out the nuances of the languages missed out by the external research scholars.

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# Language, Script and Ethnic Identity of Tribes of Odisha

*\*Chinmayee Satpathy*

## **Abstract**

*Language has been one of the distinct ethnic markers among the tribal communities whose identity has been obliterated by exogenous factors. The linguistic taxonomy of tribal languages created hullabaloo. The linguistic identity problem among tribes in areas of bordering states is multifold. To preserve the linguistic and ethnic identity of the tribal communities, proper language nourishment has become crucial since the development strategies adopted till date have resulted in over emphasis on bilingualism and multilingualism at the cost of marginalization of their own mother tongue.*

## **Introduction**

The State of Odisha occupies a unique position in the tribal map of India. It is the second largest tribal dominant State of India comprising of 62 preferentially discriminated Scheduled Tribe categories constituting around 22.13 per cent of the State population. The tribes are known as *Adivasi* (aborigine), *Vanabasi* (forest dweller) and *Girijana* (mountain dweller) and are broadly classified as general and primitive tribes on the basis of acculturation, occupation, retention of tradition and geographical distribution. The tribal communities have distinctive cultural traits, natural habitation, diverse geographical setting and varied level of social and economic development. Most of the tribal habitats are surrounded by the hilly forest areas, which are very thinly populated and are generally away from the alluvial plains of rivers. Most of the tribal villages are uni-ethnic in their composition, unplanned and are comparatively smaller in size. The tribes are the most marginalized and disadvantaged communities in the State. The tribal literacy rate of the State is only 37 per cent whereas the tribal female literacy rate is even lower, i.e: 23 per cent. Around 73 per cent of tribal live below the poverty line (2001 Census Report). Due to several economic, social and institutional obstacles, the tribal communities have not received the gains of development in an equitable manner and continue to languish in abject poverty (SCSTRTI, 2010).

Language is one of the the most important medium of communications for expression of human sentiment. Language influences directly or indirectly for the development of the region and it is the appropriate indicator to discover the lifestyle and history of any human groups and communities. So the development of every human civilization depends upon the level of development of the language of the region. "The most fundamental characteristic of human verbal behavior are preserved in their languages which are distinctively observed in the vocabulary, sound symbolism, grammatical structures or such other aspects" (Mahapatra, 1990) . In a multi-lingual State like Odisha which has given official recognitions to as many as 62 tribal Communities and their

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languages, it is essential to look into the present status of tribal languages which form an important part of tribal culture and identity. While exploring the folklores of tribal communities in the State of Odisha, it is noticed that majority of tribal communities don't have any literary tradition, but only have oral traditions as most of the tribal languages of Odisha are spoken languages without any script of their own. The tribal have distinct ethnic identity based upon their linguistic tradition. Some of the tribal communities share certain common features and structures of their languages which are grouped under one category. Languages of each tribal group are interrelated both genetically and structurally. They have a common source, common ancestry and cultural heritage (Mahapatra, 1997).

Linguistically the sixty two tribes inhabiting in Odisha can be broadly classified into three broad ethno-linguistic group categories (SCSTRTI, 2004), namely

- (i) Indo-Aryan Group
- (ii) Dravidian Group
- (iii) Munda Group (Austroasiatic)

### **(i)Indo-Aryan Group**

Twenty-two Odia speaking Scheduled Tribes come under this category, which constitutes around 17 per cent of total tribal population. The Scheduled Tribes are Desia, Bhuyan, Bhatari, Jharia, Matia, Kondhan, Laria, Bhulia, Aghria, Kurmi, Saunti, Bathudi, Sadri, Binjhia, Banjara, Baiga, Bhunjia and Halbi.

### **(ii)Dravidian Group**

Fourteen Scheduled Tribes come under this category, which constitutes around 17 per cent of total tribal population. They are Parji (Dharua), Koya, Kui (Kutia / Dongria Kondh), Konda/Kubi, Ollari (Gadaba), Kurukh/Oraon, Gond, Madia, Kisan Kuvi (Kondh, Japatu) and Pengu (Pengo Kondh).

### **(iii)Austroasiatic / Munda Group**

Twenty-six Scheduled Tribes come under this category, which constitutes around 40 per cent of the total tribal population. They are Didayi, Gadaba, Juang, Koda, Birhor (Mankidia), Mundari/Munda, Santali, Lanjia Saora, Parenga, Bonda, Kharia and Ho (Kolha).

The tribal societies are simple societies as they share certain common characteristic features that are different from our complex or advance societies. The tribal communities of Odisha manifest certain cultural traits and features which signify simple socio-cultural parameters. Though the tribes of Odisha are broadly classified into three linguistic divisions, yet they have lots of socio-cultural similarities among them. Language is the foundation for promoting cultural homogenization and bond of solidarity among tribal groups through creating common cultural identity. These tribal communities having more or less homogeneous cultural tradition together characterize the notion of tribalism. So, lingualism has high potential for unification of diverse sects and groups under one plane.

The main features of tribal languages are:

- (i) Duality of structure (phonemic and morphemic)
- (ii) Productive capability (creativity and novelty)
- (iii) Arbitrariness (no correlation between linguistic morphs and their meanings)

- (iv) Interchangeability (vocal and auditory functions are simultaneous)
- (v) Specialization (codes and code-switching capability).
- (vi) Displacement (abstractness of speech)
- (vii) Prevarication (ability to misrepresent reality) and
- (viii) Cultural transmission (learning and inculcation)

Like other languages, tribal languages have four sub-systems, such as (a) phonomorphemic, (b) syntactic, (c) semantic and (d) symbolic. The major difference between tribal and non-tribal languages is that the former are unwritten ones. However, some major tribes like Santal have been trying to develop literary traditions of their own through Santhali language movement in the eastern regional States of India, such as Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal. The Santhali language has its own script called OLCHIKI which had been developed by Lt Raghunath Murmu in the district of Mayurbhanj in the year 1970. The Santal language has been officially recognized under eighth schedule of Indian Constitution. The Santali literatures have been written in OLCHIKI script in the form of books, songs, myths, riddles, proverbs, anecdotes, dramas, etc. The other three tribal languages in which scripts have been developed are Ho (Kolha), Saora, Kui and Mundari. The script of Ho (Kolha) is known as Warrang Chiki which was developed by Kol Lako Bodra of Singhbhum, Bihar, in the year 1980 which is being promoted in the States of Odisha and Bihar. Similarly, the script of Saora is known as *Sorang Sompeng* was developed by Pandit Mangei Gamang of Gunupur area of Koraput district in the year 1978. So also the *Kui Lipi* has been developed as the script of Kui by Dayanidhi Mallick of G Udayagiri in the year 1990. Similarly *Bani Hisir* is the script of Mundari language developed by Rohidas Singh Nag in the Rangamatia area of the district Mayurbhanj during 1990s.

### **Typological Classification of Tribal Languages:**

The different tribal communities in the State of Odisha use different tribal languages which are in different stages of development. The uneven status of languages are observed from various aspects, such as numerical strength of the speakers, primitiveness of the tribe, use of own separate script, richness of oral literary tradition, influence of other languages, prevalence of bilingualism, tendency towards Odianisation and adaptation of regional Odia dialects (Mahapatra, 1997).

- Languages having distinctive tribal identity (e.g; Santali, Bonda, Oraon, etc.)
- Languages which don't have distinctive linguistic identity (e.g; Lodha, Mirdha, Bhumia, Japatu, Bagata, etc.)
- Languages having only dialectal distinction from autonomous tribal language (e.g; Mahali, Kondh, Kisan, etc)
- Languages of tribe which are scattered in different regions under same tribal name.(e.g; Kondh, Saora, etc; living in Koraput, Ganjam and Phulbani districts use Odia dialects)
- In cases the name of the tribe and their language are different(e.g; Kolha speak Ho, Kondh speak Kui / Kuvi)
- Language of sub-groups of each tribe speak distinct dialect (e.g; large tribes like Kondha have several sub-groups like Desia, Kutia, Dongria etc; and sub groups of Saora like Lanjia, Arsi, Sudha, Juray, etc.)
- Language from cognate groups having commonalities in grammar and vocabulary level

The present state of affairs shows a very gloomy picture so far as the development of tribal languages and scripts is concerned. Except OLCHIKI of Santal, no other language of tribal people in India had been accorded official status till 2004. It is also found that the tribe and the tribal language are not coterminous. The people speaking tribal languages have long been enumerated as Odia speakers in the Census and in other official reports which are erroneous especially in tribal pockets of bordering states. Though there are four written tribal languages found in the State of Odisha, such as Santhali, Saura, Kui and Ho, only Santhali language has been recognized very recently. Tribal languages like Gondi, Oraon/ Kurukh with more than millions of speakers are not yet scheduled in the Constitution of India. Historically and culturally, the tribal people in India, and Odisha in particular, have been playing important roles. Some of these tribal languages have more numerical strength than some of those mentioned in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution (Pasayat, 2008).

A language cannot be viewed as a monolithic entity which translates itself into a single body of sentiments that connects it to its speakers. When evaluating the impetus of the Santali Language Movement today, we rather have to view it as a convergence of varied activities, imaginings, interests and strategies, from all those groups that are affected by and concerned with the language. This approach cannot confine itself to the interest groups within the speakers' community, but has to extend necessarily to groups outside of it, such as language planners, administrators, politicians and educationists on the state and national level (Lotz, 2009).

There is no such tribal language which is so perfect in terms of its phonetics and qualities of vowels used. It is also a difficult task to develop separate scripts for each and every spoken language of the tribes. In addition to this, the problem of bilingualism such as using own language and State language put them under confusion. Hence, there is a need of expansion of literary activities in different tribal languages to generate academic interest among different tribal communities and initiatives are to be taken to enroll more number of tribal students to increase tribal literacy. In addition to this, adult literacy programs are to be sincerely implemented for developing mass consciousness among tribal people. Besides, deliberate efforts are required to identify the tribal language and to classify them under broader divisions. Then only it is possible to take necessary administrative measures for improving the tribal languages and scripts in the respective tribal belts of the State.

The main cause of low literacy among tribal communities is due to lack of improvement of the tribal language and script as a result of which the tribal literature has not been properly codified and restored in course of time. Adequate measures have been taken by the State government to introduce tribal language / mother tongue as medium of instruction for imparting education to the tribal students at the primary level in recent years. The State government has taken steps under DPEP to prepare primers in ten tribal languages which has not been implemented completely.

While exploring the present state of affairs it is observed that some tribal groups are in advantageous positions in comparison to other tribal groups or communities since they adopt bilingualism or multilingualism after being assimilated with the mainstream. The convergence of tribal language with other language result in language loss and language shift which are observed in many progressive tribal communities. Some of the tribal communities have left their own languages or mother tongue and adopted other languages. In a study on "Tribal Students of Odisha : Attitude towards Mother Tongue", it has been observed that a good number of tribal

groups like Bhil, Bhuyan, Bhumij, Murias, several branches of Gond, Lodha etc. have already given up their languages in the past and there are some who reveal greater instability and shift in favor of the dominant languages. Rapid social change as a result of modernization and urbanization, uniform educational opportunities, linguistic practices and pragmatic desire for better socio-economic conditions and ever-increasing pressures by dominant groups on geographically isolated and dispersed linguistic minority groups make an impression on the language maintenance and behavior. These vulnerable ethno-cultural groups of Odisha such as Birhor, Bondo, Chuktia Bhunjia, Didayi, Dongria Kondh, Juang, Kharia, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, Mankirdia, Paudi Bhuyan and Saora are not only socio-economically backward but their languages are also at risk. The dominant group imposes its own language, rather in a friendly way, as the only legitimate one and pursues a policy of minority assimilation. Conversely, the more literate tribes show a deviation towards maintenance of the mother tongue (Sinha, 2009). For example, the Santal language has been officially recognized under Eighth schedule of Indian Constitution and the Santali literatures have been written in OL CHIKI script in the form of books, songs, myths, riddles, proverbs, anecdotes and dramas etc. By the way, it's a matter of unease that many well placed Santals can't read and write in their own mother tongue.

The tribes such as Lodha, Mirdha, Bhumija, Jatapu, Bagata, Pentia, some section of Gond etc. do not have distinctive linguistic identity. Mahali, Kondh and Kisan tribes have only dialectal distinctions from autonomous languages like Santali, Kui and Krurux. Although scripts have been developed for Santali, Saora, Ho, Kui and Mundari, authorship as well as leadership of good literary works are still confined only to a few as there is limited scope for learning, reading and writing in tribal scripts (Mahapatra, 1998).

Language is a very important instrument to preserve the identity of any tribal group or community. Language is very significant to the individual for naming the self and also interconnects the individual's identity with collective identity. There are several environmental conditions that promote these interconnections. For e.g. the upbringing of a child is dependent on linguistic interactions with his/her parents and the spoken language plays a significant role in establishing ethnic identity of the child with his/her parents. There is no such tribal language which is so perfect in terms of their phonetics and qualities of vowels used. It is also a difficult task to develop separate scripts for each and every spoken language of the tribes. In addition to this, the problem of multilingualism such as using own language and state language put them under pressure. For e.g. ten Eklalavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) have been established by Government of Odisha in the tribal areas of the state in the year 2007-08 to impart education to the tribal students in the English and Odiya medium. One Model Residential School has been established in the Mayurbhanj district to impart education to the tribal students at the primary and secondary level. The students belong to different tribal communities such as Santal, Bathudi, Kolha and Bhumija who have come across the districts to take education in this residential school. But even after five years of establishment of this school, desired results have not been achieved in improving the education level of the respective tribal communities. The major cause is the language constraints faced by the tribal students in the school. Hence, there is a need of developing tribal literatures taking into consideration the common aspects of different tribal languages so that every tribal group will have equal access over such language and script. In this context, deliberate efforts are also required to identify the tribal language and to classify them

under broader divisions. Then only it is possible to take necessary administrative measures for improving the tribal languages and scripts. Besides, initiatives are to be taken to enroll more number of tribal students in the school by generating academic interests among different tribal communities in the state.

## **Conclusion**

As an ethnic marker, language is firmly attached with the identity of the speaker. In order to preserve the identity of a tribal community or group it is essential to take necessary measures for proper nourishment of the tribal language of the concerned region. Over the years, the tribal communities have been compelled to adopt bilingualism even multilingualism where the State language has been overemphasized instead of their own language. It has created major constraints in the development of the tribal languages. Tribal people of bordering states face multilingual problems. Though several attempts have been made by the State and district level authorities in the State of Odisha to impart education and training to the tribal people in their respective languages, it is not adequate in view of the large number of tribal groups and sub groups with dissimilar language patterns.

In this context, due attentions should be given by the government officials, policy planners, administrators involved in the tribal development program, especially for the development of tribal languages and script in the State. More linguistic researches and documentations need to be done to diagnose the ground realities of the problem in order to bring improvement in the tribal languages and scripts of respective tribal communities. The tribal development authorities and the linguists should take into considerations the needs of the tribal learners and the quality of education or training input to be given to them to promote the tribal languages, script and literature. It is necessary that the literate tribal persons in the respective tribal communities should take wholehearted initiatives for the development of their own languages instead of showing apathetic attitudes.

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# Language Barrier in Educational Attainment among Tribal Children: A Study of Ashram Schools in Koraput District of Odisha, India

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## **Abstract**

*The study aims at exploring socio-economic background, quality of education, perceived educational environment, living condition and life enjoyed by the scheduled tribe children in Ashram schools of Koraput district of Odisha. The findings of the study indicate that most of the students are first generation learners having poor socio-economic background and agriculture is the major source of livelihood for many parents. Students experience language difficulties in school and the mother tongue of majority of students is Desiya language, which is not the medium of instruction in schools. Multilingual situation exists in almost all the schools. Learning achievement of majority of students in four core subjects is not satisfactory, 54.8 % of students have scored less than 30 % of marks in English, 47.9% of students in Social studies, 39.4% of students in Mathematics and 36.8% of students in Science. Majority of students consider the condition of their classroom environment (60.5% boys and 66.3% girls); hostel rooms (49.1% boys and 59.6% girls); and overall environment of their schools (53.4% boys and 58.6% girls) to be good. Both quantitative and qualitative tools have been used for data collection from 142 Ashram schools in Koraput district of Odisha. The study also emphasizes on development of a culturally contextual and child friendly environment in school. The author strongly argues for an integrated approach and need based planning to promote and address tribal education issues in the district.*

## **Introduction**

Education is everybody's human right. It means that no children, however poor, however desperate his/her country's situation, is to be excluded from school. There is no acceptable excuse for denying him/her the opportunities to develop to his/her fullest potential. Education saves and improves the lives of children. It is considered as a primary indicator of human development and progress. The present decade is closely identified with the children's access to primary education in India and a strong national commitment to achieve universal elementary education and attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Education also enhances the ability of individuals to achieve desired demographic and health goals (NFHS-III, 2005-06). The National commitment to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of 6-14 is now a Fundamental Right of every child in India as per the 86th Amendment Act, 2002. India

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became one of 135 countries to make education a fundamental right of every child. Odisha Human Development Report (2004) ranked Koraput district in 27th position in the Education Index of our state. According to 2001 Census 47.58 % of males and 24.81% of females are literates and gender gap in the district comes about 22.77%. The literacy rate among SC males in the district is 48.52% and female is 22.45%. The corresponding figures for ST are 29.25% and 8.38% respectively. The dropout rate at primary stage among the ST girls of Koraput district, before launching of DPEP, is reported to be as high as 71.84% as against 60.85% of their male counterparts (District Inspectorate of Schools, Koraput, 1999). As many as 4, 150 tribal children aged 6-14 years of the district (1, 993 boys and 2,157 girls) are still out-of-school (CTS, 2008-09; Reported in DPO, SSA-Koraput, 2009). The major factors as identified through Child Tracking System (CTS), 2008-09, are lack of interest among the students, lack of access to education, engagement of children in household chores, temporary migration of parents, and a host of socio-cultural factors (CTS, 2008-09; Reported in DPO, SSA-Koraput, 2009). Under these circumstances, right of children to elementary education assumes significance in the Koraput district.

### **The State of Education of Tribal Children: What Research Says**

Scheduled tribes constitute the statutorily weaker section of society and form a distinct target group under the existing pattern of planning. Due to determined efforts of the government at the central and state levels, the enrolment of ST children has increased considerably at the primary stage. The participation of these children is now more or less in proportion to their share in population at the primary level. Dropouts, though declining over years, are significantly large. The factors responsible for the high rate of dropout among the ST children of Koraput district, as revealed from a DPEP sponsored study conducted by Pradhan (2001) are teacher absenteeism, lack of adequate teaching-learning materials in schools, irregular supply of mid-day meal, lack of participation of VEC in school program, poverty, and illiteracy of parents etc. These findings have immense implications for designing education of the tribal children in the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) regions of the country, including Koraput district.

According to Pati and Panda (2010) with a very poor infrastructure and absence of the requisite number of teachers, students in the backward districts/regions have frustrating experience in the schools. Most of the students, as they come from socio-economically disadvantaged communities like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are scared of the teachers and do not find anything interesting to hold them on to the schools and gradually they start withdrawing from the schools. Jha, P's (1985) evaluative study on hostels and Ashrams for tribal girl students found that the number of students admitted to the hostels was much higher than the number expected and the superintendents of these hostels were neither trained nor qualified. The hostel rooms were overcrowded and did not have basic facilities. Sharma, R.C (1984) mentioned that introduction of different incentives like free uniforms, textbooks and boarding and lodging facilities resulted in higher enrolment of SC and ST students including girls. Pratap, D.R and Raju, C.C (1973) found that the working and physical conditions of Ashram Schools unsatisfactory. Some of teachers working in these schools did not stay there and visited schools occasionally. Desai, B and Patel, A (1981) found that in most of the Ashram Schools the number of children enrolled was much higher than the prescribed number. Biswal, G.C (1991) in



Odisha found that fewer girls as compared to boys, in the area got enrolled in the schools.

Das et.al. (2003) in a study of Ashram schools in Karnataka opined that the socio-economic profile of the Ashramites indicates that a vast majority of them belong to the poor socio-economic status group. The Ashram schools, thus, are catering to the needs of the poorest of the poor and are helping the inmates to remain in the school system without dropping from it. Another study conducted by Chitnis, S. (1974) also showed that SC and ST children had a very poor opinion about the facilities available to them. Sachidananda and Sinha, Ramesh P. (1989) found that most of the ST students got the advantage of special programs planned for them and recommended that teachers from the same community should be appointed in schools where population of this community is high. The States should also see that facilities available to these communities should go to the most disadvantaged.

### **Rationale for the Study**

The Ashram schools established by the ST and SC development department provide education with residential facilities in an environment conducive to learning. The major objective of the scheme is to increase education among the communities. The scheme is operational in the Tribal Sub-Plan States/UT Administrators. In Koraput District, 142 Ashram schools have been established across 14 blocks at primary, upper primary and secondary school levels to cater the needs of the children belonging to SC and ST communities. Necessary facilities, including infrastructure, environments have been created; and human as well as material resources have been provided to impart quality education in these schools. Despite all these, there are possibilities of weaknesses and threats entering into the program at different time, different levels and in different ways. This study was, therefore, undertaken to help the implementing agencies in preventing such undesirable things to happen and explore the best practice existing in the system so as to exploit it to achieve the ultimate goal of the program.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- a) To study the socio-economic background of the students in Ashram schools.
- b) To assess perceived educational environment among children of Ashram schools.
- c) To study the living condition of students and life enjoyed by them in Ashram schools.
- d) To assess the quality of education in terms of teaching learning process, class room transaction and role of language in learning levels for children in Ashram schools.

### **Population and Sample**

All the 142 Ashram schools of the Koraput district constitute the population of the study. The sample of informants such as students, teachers, and parents has been selected from each of the 142 Ashram schools employing incidental or purposive sampling techniques. The sample of Key informants who mostly provided relevant data for the purpose of the study constitutes the following:

- Students (10 students per school) : 1398
- Teachers (2 per school) : 264
- Parents (2 per school) : 280

Besides the key informants, a cross section of students (30-40) from each school was taken for Focus Group Discussion (FGD) during the process of data collection employing incidental sampling technique. The responses of the students, as revealed from these discussions, on the major variables of the study have immensely influenced the findings of the study.

### Tools and Techniques used

The study benefited from a combination of various data gathering techniques. It, however, relied heavily upon qualitative data obtained from interviews, observation, focus group discussions, physical evidence and documentary analysis. The quantitative data obtained from school records, particularly with reference to students' enrolment and attendance, teachers' attendance were also used to support and substantiate results obtained from qualitative data.

The tools and techniques designed and used by the research team for the collection of data from the sample of key informants were Interview Schedule for the Students, Interview Schedule for the Teachers, Interview Schedule for the Parents, Focus Group Discussion for the Students, School Observation Schedule, Learning Achievement Test Questions for the Students, School Observation Schedule, Classroom Observation Schedule, School Information Schedule and Achievement Test Battery.

### Findings of the Study

#### Socio-Economic Background of the Students

**Table 1: Parents' Family Type**

Sl No	Types of Family	Number	%
1	Nuclear Family	818	61.7
2	Joint Family	525	38.2
3	Total	1373	99.99

The family background of the students interviewed in the survey indicates that 61.7% belong to the Nuclear family and only 38.2% are from joint family background. The outcome of the result reveals that being a tribal dominated district with 50.66% of ST population as per 2001 Census, the concept of nuclear family is gaining popularity with the advancement of the society and the process of social change.

**Table 2: Parents' Occupation**

Sl No	Types of Occupation	Number		Total	
		Father	Mother	Number	%
1	Agriculture	1065(79.2)	743(55.4)	1808	67.3
2	Labour	179(13.3)	367(27.3)	546	23
3	Service	63(4.6)	204(15.2)	267	9.9
4	Others	37 (2.7)	0	37	1.3
5	Housewife/	0	27(2.0)	27	1.0
	Total	1344	1341	2685	99.7

It is evident from the result that agriculture comprises major occupation of the 67.3% of the parents (79.2% of fathers and 55.4 % of mothers) of the students and 20.3% of the parents are engaged in labor work for their livelihood and income generation, out of which 13.3% are the fathers and rest 27.3% are mothers. Only 9.9 % of the parents belong to the service sector category and 2% of mothers are housewives. The research outcome reveals that poor occupational status of the parents forced them to send their children to the Ashram schools which have residential boarding facilities in the district. In the long run after completion of the elementary education from Ashram schools, many students especially girls are compelled to engage in economic activities to provide financial support for their families instead for going to higher education either in high school or college. The result of the survey corroborate with the findings of the Das, Naidu and Sreedhar (2003) study on 'who joins Ashram school in Karnatka' where they concluded that the parents because of their poor occupational status cannot sacrifice the immediate help of the children for long term benefits of education bestowed in them. Thus the children are expected to earn something from any source instead of education at the age of schooling.

**Table-3: Parents' Education**

Sl No	Educational Background	Number		Total	
		Father	Mother	Number	%
1	Illiterate	729(54.2)	1159(84.9)	1888	69.5
2	Primary	466(34.5)	146(10.7)	612	22.5
3	Secondary	134(9.9)	43(3.1)	177	6.5
4	College	20(1.4)	16(1.1)	36	1.3
	Total	1349	1364	2713	99.8

Parent's education reveals that 69.5% of the parents are illiterate and out of them 84.9% are mothers and rest 54.2% are fathers. The outcome signifies that maximum students under the survey are first generation learners and also support the view that higher the education of the parents, the greater the enrolment of the children in schools. Similarly, it is also observed from the result that 22.5% of parents have completed primary education and 6.5% are secondary literate. As Koraput district ranks low in human development indicators (HDR, 2004) particularly in adult literacy rate and gross enrolment ratio of primary, secondary and tertiary, education of the children studying in Ashram schools assume significance for the illiterate parents. Therefore, more stress should be given for the retention and continuance of the education of these children for a literate society with overall development.

**Table 4: Causes of joining in Ashram Schools**

Sl No	Causes of enrolment in Ashram schools	Boys	Girls	Total	%
1	Residential education facility	207(43.0)	420(46.5)	627	47.6
2	Teaching is good	165(34.3)	272(30.0)	437	33.1
3	No school in our village	56(11.6)	114(12.8)	170	12.9
4	Brother and sister are reading in this school	32(6.7)	43(4.7)	75	5.6
5	Others	2(0.4)	6(0.7)	8	0.6
	Total	462	855	1317	99.8

It is observed from the table 4 that 47.6% of students studying in Ashram schools opined that residential education facilities has motivated and encouraged them to enrol in these schools. Similarly, for 34.3% of boys and 30% of girls teaching in Ashram schools is good and this influenced them to join in Ashram schools. Having no schooling facilities in the village is another possible cause mentioned by 12.9% of students and only 5.6% of students admitted that their brothers and sisters are studying in these schools is an important reason for getting into Ashram schools. The result ignited a new dimension for the educational policy makers that in tribal areas like Koraput educational advancement could be possible at primary level only by providing residential schooling facilities, since majority of the parents are illiterate and their primary source of earning is agriculture. In Ashram schools, school takes the responsibility of the children from the day of the enrolment till the completion of the education without giving any kind of burdens to the parents.

**Table 5: Composition of Learners in Ashram Schools.**

Classes	SC		ST		Others		Total		Grand Total
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
I	264	81	1973	2177	194	196	2435	2754	5182
II	254	41	1736	2038	152	137	2139	2494	4676
III	293	48	1732	2160	159	133	2184	2742	4926
IV	258	02	1570	3999	202	148	2019	3946	6020
V	185	90	1096	1980	154	143	1434	2295	3729
VI	35	66	1404	1058	102	69	1792	1346	3139
VII	96	30	1054	807	79	58	1335	990	2312
VIII	48	1	714	656	65	51	869	870	1739
IX	82	01	455	549	43	38	580	688	1268
X	34	9	302	386	24	32	360	471	837
Total	1849	2199	12036	15810	1174	1005	15147	18596	33828

It is ascertained from the table 5 that are high in SC & ST categories and boys have exceeded girls in other categories. Class wise composition of learners in Ashram schools indicates that in SC category except in class VI and VII, the enrolment of girls has outnumbered the boys in all classes. Similarly, in ST category, except in class VI, VII, VIII in all other classes the enrolment of girls is higher in all Ashram schools of the Koraput district. It is to be mentioned here that in Koraput district, the sex ratio is 999 per 1000 male as reported in 2001 census.

### Life enjoyed by the children in Ashram Schools:

**Table 6: Perception of Boarders about Accommodation in Ashram School**

Sl No	Facilities/Provisions	Boys		Girls	
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Livingroom is sufficient in hostel	69.2	29.3	77.3	21.5
2	Toilet is sufficient in hostel for all students	26.0	71.7	37.2	61.7
3	Bathing complex (place) is sufficient?	21.8	76.9	32.6	64.9
4	Emergency light in hostel	37.6	59.5	35.5	62.2
5	Dining Hall/space available in hostel	28.5	69.2	38.6	60.0
6	Water is sufficient in hostel	44.9	52.2	46.8	49.8

7	Cut (bed) is available in hostel	48.6	49.5	48.7	49.1
	Clean Drinking water	68.0	29.9	65.5	33.1

The results in the table 6 show that majority of the boarders are not satisfied with the essential facilities available in hostels such as toilet (71.7% boys and 61.7% girls); bathing complex/ place (76.9% boys and 64.9% girls); water facilities (52.2% boys and 49.8% girls); emergency light (59.5% boys and 62.2% girls); and dining hall (69.2% boys and 60.0% girls). These basic facilities are essential not only for the comfortable stay but also for quality learning of the boarders in the hostel. It can be seen from the results of the table that according to majority of the boarders living rooms are sufficient (69.2% boys and 77.3% girls); and clean drinking water is provided in the hostels (69.2% boys and 77.3% girls).

**Table 7: Students' Perception on Physical Environments in Schools**

Sl. No	Aspects of Physical Environments	Good		Average		Poor	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1	Class room	60.5	66.3	23.7	19.8	12.9	4.4
2	Hostel room	49.1	59.6	36.4	29.3	10.2	8.4
3	School Environment	53.4	58.6	37.0	31.8	6.0	6.2
4	School Garden	38.3	43.3	41.8	39.3	18.9	16.4
5	Kitchen	27.4	35.1	37.8	36.3	32.2	27.2
6	Dining hall	18.5	20.8	18.5	22.8	57.8	51.9
7	Playground	18.3	15.8	20.2	20.5	56.8	57.8

Majority of students consider the condition of their classroom environment (60.5% boys and 66.3% girls); hostel rooms (49.1% boys and 59.6% girls); and overall environment of their schools (53.4% boys and 58.6% girls) to be good. However, most of the students consider condition of their dining hall (57.8% boys and 51.9% girls); and play ground (56.8% boys and 57.8% girls) to be poor. Similarly, 57.8% boys and 51.9% girls consider that their kitchens are in average condition. It was observed, in many cases, that though ST and SC development department has constructed new dining halls in many Ashram schools, they appear to be inadequate to cater to the needs of students. In many cases the dining halls were found to be used for the preparation of foods. It was further observed in some Ashram schools that class rooms are overcrowded but, in many schools, school environments are attractive and well maintained.

**Table 8: Innovative/Good Practices in School**

Question No	Innovative/Good Practices	Yes	No
1	Yoga	47(53.41)	41(46.59)
2	Vocational Training	23(34.3)	44(65.6)
3	Wall Magazine/ Painting by Students	77(77.0)	23(23.0)
4	Science Exhibition	61(65.5)	32(34.4)
5	Evaluation of Teacher by Students	74(73.2)	27(26.7)
6	Community Cleaning/ Plantation	69(70.4)	29(29.5)
7	Health Camp	107(94.6)	6(5.3)

8	Remedial Coaching for show learners	109(91.5)	10(8.04)
9	Life Skills Education	62(73.8)	22(26.1)

The results of above table reveals that majority of schools follow innovative/good practices such as yoga, wall magazine, peer evaluation, science exhibition, community cleaning, health camps, remedial coaching and life skill education. However, there is a need to start vocational education in Ashram schools across the district to make school environment conducive for learning and creating sustained interest among the students towards education.

### Quality of Education and Language issue in Ashram School

Most of the students are satisfied with the wall activities and black board in class room during teaching. However, group activities are not in practice in many schools. It is also observed from the table that many students are not assigned individual project works and teachers in most of the Ashram schools in the district are not using TLMs during teaching in class room. Students also opined that library is not available in majority of the Ashram schools as a result, students are not using library for academic growth. Regarding text books availability, majority of the students are satisfied.

**Table 9: Students' Perception on Teaching Learning Related Issues**

Q. No	Items	Yes		Total
		Boys	Girls	
1	Use of wall activities and black board in class room during teaching	435 (94.6)	856 (95.3)	1325
2	Group activities are done in class room	299 (62.2)	478 (53.2)	787
3	Teacher uses Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) in class	350(72.8)	675(75.2)	1036
4	Classes are held as per time table	349(72.6)	610(67.9)	971
5	Teachers are accessible beyond school/class time	318(66.1)	616(68.6)	946
6	Teachers assign any project work	205(42.6)	361(40.2)	572
7	Allowed to ask question in class	446(92.7)	804(89.5)	1264
8	Teachers use TLM in class	261(54.3)	490(54.6)	761
9	Your notes are corrected by teachers regularly	414(86.1)	767(85.4)	1194
10	You ask question to the teachers in class	425(88.4)	758(84.4)	1196
11	Do you have progress card?	68(14.1)	149(16.5)	217
12	Library in your school?	264(54.9)	512(57.0)	784
13	If yes, do you use library books in your school?	150(31.2)	287(32.0)	444
14	Whether you have text books in all subjects?	360(74.8)	681(75.9)	1055

**Table 10: Learning Achievement of Students in Core Subjects (Class-V)**

SL No	Subjects	Less than 30 %	31-60%	60%+	Total
1	Social Studies	647(47.9%)	421(31.2%) )	282(20.9%)	1350(100% )
2	English	739(54.8%)	382(28.3%) )	228(16.9%)	1349(100% )
3	Mathematics	532(39.4%)	469(34.8%) )	348(25.8%)	1349(100% )
4	Science	497(36.8%)	430(31.9%) )	422(31.3%)	1349(100% )

The results pertaining to learning achievement of students in four core subjects (social studies, English, mathematics and science) at three levels of attainment reveals that in Science subject 31.3% of students have scored more than 60% marks followed by Mathematics (25.8%), and Social Studies (20.9%) . In English, only 16.9% of students have scored more than 60% of marks. Around 54.8 % of students have scored less than 30 % of marks in English. It signifies that English language needs more attention by the teachers in Ashram Schools across the district. The corresponding figure for the subjects Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science are: 47.9%, 39.4%, and 36.8% respectively. Learning achievement of majority of students across the subjects is not satisfactory. This may be attributed to the factors like shortage of teachers and lack of subject teachers in Ashram Schools of the district.

### **Language Issue in Ashram schools**

Language is considered as the vehicle of communication and Odisha is a state with many languages, many cultures and many identities. The National Curriculum Framework (2005) for School Education gives recommendations on the use of the mother tongue in education, which should be “ideally identical with the state language”, and should be “ideally, a medium of instruction at all stages of school education, but at least on the elementary level”. In the case of those students whose mother tongue is different from the state language or regional language, it is suggested that “the regional language may be adopted as a medium only from the third standard onwards. The 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2007-2012) also recommended that use of primers in tribal languages should be extended to all the schools in tribal areas. In Odisha multi-lingual education has been introduced in 544 MLE pilot schools in 8 tribal populated districts i.e Gajapati, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Malkangiri, Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Rayagada and Kandhmal through National Flagship Programme of Sarva Shikshya Abhiyan (SSA). But MLE pilot school is only limited to schools run by the School and Mass Education Department rather than the Ashram schools run by the ST and SC development department of the state (OPEPA, 2012).

The key challenges of tribal education in Odisha are inappropriate medium of instruction in schools, imperfect teacher-pupil ratio, unsuitable curriculum and textbooks, incompatible formal school environment and less community participation in school curriculum. Exclusion of mother tongues in education limits access to resources and perpetuates inequality by depriving language communities of linguistic human rights, democratic participation, identity, self-efficacy, and pride. It is

interesting to explore the language issues in Ashram schools of Koraput and how students viewed language problem in their class room and school context.

**Table 11: Percentage of Children by their Mother Tongue**

Sl No	Language spoken by children	Boys	Girls
1.	Desiya	242(50.3)	524(58.4)
2.	Gadaba	12(2.5)	22(2.4)
3	Kandha	52(10.8)	69(7.7)
4	Kui	46(9.3)	67(7.6)
5	Odia	25(5.2)	39(4.3)
6	Paraja	73(15.2)	119(13.3)

The mother tongue of majority of students is *Desiya* language, which is not the medium of instruction in schools under study. *Odia*, which is the medium of instruction, is the mother tongue of negligible percentage of students (5.2 % boys and 4.3 % girls)

**Table 12: Language Difficulties in School**

Sl No	Language difficulties in school	Boys	Girls
1.	Experiencing Difficulties	112(25.4)	256(27.6)
2.	Not experiencing difficulties	349(72.6)	626(69.7)

The results of above table show that as high as 25.4% of boys and 27.6% of girls have reported to experience language difficulties in school. In Ashram schools 72.6% of boys and 69.7% of girls are not experiencing language problem.

**Table 13 Types of Language Difficulties experienced by Students in School**

Sl No	Types	Never		Sometimes		Always	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1	During teaching in class room	27(7.4)	56(15.5)	63(17.4)	145(40.1)	24(6.6)	46(12.7)
2	Interaction with the students	1(14.4)	47(32.7)	39(12.2)	102(32.0)	14(4.4)	11(3.7)
3	Reading of books	28(7.5)	60(16.1)	69(18.5)	145(39.0)	28(7.54)	41(11.0)
4	Writing answer during examination	19(5.16)	41(11.1)	0(21.7)	179(48.6)	19(5.16)	30(8.15)

The result of above table shows the type of language difficulties faced by the students of Ashram school students. It can be seen that 12.7% of girls and 6.6% of boys experience it during class room teaching; 11% of girls and 7.54% of boys face it in reading of books; and 8.15% of girls and 5.16% of boys during writing answers in examination. Overall, girls experience more language problem than boys in Ashram schools. It was also found during focused group discussion that majority of girls expressed that they experience language problem during initial years (Classes I and



II) of schooling. The outcomes of focus group discussion further revealed that majority of children are not interested to pursue formal education in their mother tongue. This situation raises many issues such as whether to make curriculum and teaching learning materials culture specific, introduction of multi-lingual education in class I and II, organization of storytelling festivals, development of tribal museum in schools, collection of folk tales and tribal paintings in school to make it culturally more appropriate and friendly for the children.

### **Suggestions for improvement of Ashram schools**

The following suggestions are important for enhancing quality of education and improvement of living conditions of students in Ashrams schools of Koraput district.

I) The first generation learners need deliberate and systematic remedial coaching facilities across the subjects; and are engaged in sports and cultural activities to motivate them to pursue formal education. Problems/issues associated with education of girls are to be addressed on priority basis to sustain their interest towards formal education.

II) Majority of the children in the Ashram schools under study belong to tribal communities. These children are fond of plays, songs, dance and music. Lack of adequate and culturally appropriate musical instruments and/ or sports materials affect organization of such activities in these schools which consequently affect the quality of learning among the students. Introduction of vocational education and skill development programs will attract learners belonging to families that mostly depend upon agriculture and other traditional/hereditary occupations. The National Policy on Education (1992) emphasized inter-linkage of education and culture to promote the process of child's personality development particularly in terms of exploring the inherent potentialities within the child. From the social constructivist viewpoint, it is important to take into account the background and culture of the learner throughout the learning process, as this background also helps to shape the knowledge and truth that the learner creates, discovers and attains in the learning process (Wertsch 1997).

III) Inadequate use of teaching learning materials (TLM), group work strategy and other activity-based approaches will result in passive learning. Children will not be interested to retain in classroom for long and/or in school till the completion of elementary education. Children's participation in classroom process through Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), use of TLMs and various activity-based teaching learning approaches will enhance the quality of learning.

IV) Teachers' use of Odia language in school, which is the second language for majority of children in Ashram schools under study, both in and outside the classroom implies that they lack knowledge of the language of the locality. They need training in different local languages. Communicating the students in their mother tongue will not only promote teacher-pupil relations, but also the quality of learning. Education in a medium other than one's mother tongue, particularly at the elementary stage, will hinder thought process of children. The exclusion of tribal mother tongues from education limits tribal children's chances of adequate classroom learning and success in academics and, consequently, limits their freedom and ability to influence the direction of their lives.

V) Holding of remedial classes on subjects that students find difficult to understand, viz, Maths and English, will promote retention of tribal learners and their learning achievement in these subjects.

VI) By making curriculum culture-friendly through introduction of multi-lingual education in classes I and II; organization of story-telling festivals; development of tribal museum in schools; collection of folk tales and tribal paintings in schools may promote students' participation, retention and learning achievement.

VII) Lack of play ground in schools would hamper organization of various co-curricular activities, including games and sports, drama, annual day celebration. These are vital activities that attract students towards education and facilitate all-round development of personality.

VIII) Toilet and drinking water facilities are essential conditions for the promotion of enrolment and retention. Lack of these facilities de-motivates children, particularly girls to pursue education.

IX) Extensive cultural meets and exchange program to be organized at the inter-school, inter-blocks and inter-districts level to spot creative talents among girls. Regular competition of essay, debate, drawing, storytelling, and acting should be organized to explore hidden potential and develop competitive spirit among students and they can think "we can". Learning of local folk songs, tribal community theatre conventions must be promoted in all Ashram schools

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# Multilingual Education in Odisha, India: Constructing Curriculum in the context of Community and Culture

*\*Mahendra K. Mishra*

## **Abstract**

*This paper aims at exploring two community-based programmes adopted in Odisha as the outcome of 'principles' put into 'practices', to ensure an equitable quality education. One programme "Multilingual Education" aims at imparting mother tongue based multilingual education to linguistic minority children of the State at primary stage through thematic approach based on the philosophy of National Curriculum Framework 2005. Tribal communities have contributed their knowledge in framing the curriculum and preparing instructional materials for their children studying in 500 schools of the State. Some case studies have been presented to examine how community knowledge can be a better instrument for cognitive development in classroom with a foundation of children's cultural context and community's intellectual participation in school. However, the multilingual education has assumed importance as a part of development input in order to bring the tribal communities to mainstream. However the process need not ignore the community uniqueness and culture specificities. A programme named "Srujan" (creativity) – a cluster approach to education has been introduced in tribal areas where the school and community members provide a space for the children to express their creative ability through community culture and connect this knowledge with school curriculum. The focal theme of the paper is to establish that intellectual activity of the community which can be more appropriate for the children to contribute their culture in shaping the education and learning of their community, thereby reducing the gap between school and community.*

*We believe that our culture is better known to us since it is a part of our life. Our aim is to concretize the knowledge system of tribal culture through practice and not just knowing the theory. We are told that now Universities are teaching tribal culture. What do they teach? If they don't know our language how could they teach our culture? Can anyone interpret what is the meaning of Santali? We create our theory through our life, land and language. Reading and writing theory in cities by the elitists does not help the tribal. We learn from our ancestors and we live with them. Do the university professors learn from their ancestors? They don't have generations of cultural inheritance that we have. We write our Santali book based on our Santali culture which is not known to nontribal since they don't understand our language and culture.*

*Sri Surai Hembram*

*A Santali Writer,*

*Mayurbhanj*

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## Introduction

Community has been defined differently in different contexts by the theorists and practitioners. While western sociologists define community in their socio-cultural context, community in the Indian context has its own characteristics. Defining the community, McIver and Charles H Page say, "Whenever the members of any group, small or large, live together in such a way that they share, not this or that particular interest, but the basic conditions of a common life, we call that a group or community"(1962:8-9). Maine Arts Commission defining the community says, "Every place has its own sights and sounds, its own smells and cycles that condition the way we see the world and how we interact with our community. Over time, community members sift through those environmental elements and develop ways of integrating them in to their lives. What makes sense in one community may not make sense in another. The things we see every day, the language we use, the way we earn our living and the history of our shared experiences all influence us in a way that, added together, creates a community." It is necessary to understand community from the Indian point of view. Since India is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural country, the concept of community needs more elaboration in terms of language, ethnicity and religion. In the Indian context, the word community is used by the development agencies to signify the target groups and the beneficiaries involved in different programmes. In the Indian school context, it is accepted that community comprises a whole village irrespective of religion, language and ethnicity. Indian sociologists define community on the basis of its complex social formation. Prof Yogender Singh (2008) discussing community in the Indian context says that there are 4,635 major communities in India which cut across religion, ethnicity and regions. He further explains that the notion of community in the Indian development paradigm is territorial.

In Odisha, for example, a community in a tribal area can be formed by:

1. Territories with only one tribe (Bhunjia, Bonda, Juang, Kamar, Gadaba, and Lanjia Saura) settled in one locality with the tribe being dominantly monolingual.
2. A settlement of more than one tribe (Gond and Bhunjia, Kamar and Halwa, Kondh and Paraja, Munda and Kol, Santal and Bathudi)
3. Tribal and non-tribal settlement: Tribal and non-tribal people live together and sustain themselves on agriculture.

Linguistically Odisha is a land of three language groups:

1. Austro Asiatic language group,
2. Dravidian language group
3. Indo-Aryan language group.

The Austro Asiatic and Dravidian language group constitute one fourth of the total State population. But their language and culture are historically neglected, both in social and academic domains.

### **Community as a Creator of Culture:**

In 1871 E. B. Tylor defining culture stated that, culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (1924:1). This indicates that the community or a society has its own cultural system which distinguishes one from

another. Culture is the learned behaviour of mankind expressed in different forms, created by the community. Education is a part of the human culture which is learnt from one generation to another. Learning takes place in the social context with purpose and meaning. Children learn many things from home, neighbour and society prior to their enrolment in the schools. They learn many things through doing work. Learning in tribal society is not a conscious effort; rather it is a bi-product of a purposeful necessity.

As Community, the creator and consumer of culture is found in tribal society, diversity of culture in a society/state is the foundation of multiculturalism and multi-lingualism. People from different cultures and different languages live together within communal harmony. According to Putnam, "they form their 'social net-work' bound by mutual trust and shared understanding of the common goal by virtue of social capital inhered in it enables its member to leverage a far wide range of resources than are available to a stand-alone member in a community"(Putnam, 2000.) Community created the culture through the ages by refining their practices that expressed in their creativity. These are the part of their learning process. Every act of the community that is created and shared collectively, fulfilling a purpose of society and maintaining human values, are known as culture. Folklore is the expression of culture. Folklore as a cultural system has four elements that are created and shared by the community. According to Dorson, folklore has four broad areas. These are:

- i. Oral tradition (tales, songs, proverbs, riddles, legends, myths, epics, etc.)
- ii. Physical folk life or material culture (folk art, architecture, costumes and cookery)
- iii. Social folk customs (festivals and celebrations, recreation and games, folk medicines, and folk religion) and Performing arts (folk drama, folk music, folk dance, etc.)(1972:3-5).

Some folklorists have tried to define folklore from static and dynamic structural point of view while some define it from tangible and intangible heritage dimension. Over a period of time, culture changes with the change of society and it is adapted by the community.

### **Schools in Tribal Society**

School as a social institution is a recent development in tribal society of Odisha. Residential schools were opened in tribal areas to mainstream them with the State education system, which was designed by the upper class people, to fit into their goal, than to fulfil the needs of children of divergent socio-linguistic groups. Thus Ashram schools also became the centres of not recognizing the cultural and linguistic diversity. Teachers were from the upper caste-class and were looking at the tribal from their values. Tribal people were made to feel that their own culture is inferior to the mainstream language and values so they should learn a language than many languages. In general, as Illich (1981) points out, we first create conditions that make people hate their own languages and heritage and then spend token amounts of money on their revival. (Illich: 1981).

Schools in tribal areas are State Institutions following the culturally-dominant curriculum and aim at mainstreaming all tribal children through the dominant State language and culture. Till now we don't have any evidence that the tribal community or the tribal teachers have their share in curriculum development. Even the teachers



from tribal communities don't use tribal language in classroom for the comprehension of the tribal children. Thus, both the tribal teachers and tribal children are denied to use their language in classroom. Unfortunately, there is a huge gap between the national goals and aspirations to maintain the cultural and linguistic diversities in school system, and the practice that is adopted in the tribal area schools. Schools are the symbol of subtractive models of education and the whole academic and management structure and function is vested in uniform monolingual education that the State has adopted. According to Mahatma Gandhi,

*"The dry knowledge of the three R's is not even now, it can never be, a permanent part of the villagers' life. They must have knowledge given to them which they must use daily. It must not be thrust upon them. They should have the appetite for it. What they have today is some-thing they neither want nor appreciate. Give the villagers village arithmetic, village geography, village history and the literary knowledge that they must use daily, i.e. reading and writing letters, etc. They will treasure such knowledge and pass on to the other stages. They have no use of books which give them nothing of daily life" (Mahatma Gandhi, in Harijan 22-6, p 173).*

Examining the current school system in the light of Gandhi we can infer that our schools are pictures of cultural hegemony systematically denying education to tribal children. From the curriculum to the teaching methods adopted in the classroom, every-thing is far removed from the cultural context of the tribal children. It is no surprise, therefore, that the State has witnessed high dropout and low literacy rates in tribal education over the last 50 years.

Discussing the indigenous education of American Indian children, Wildcat says, "A good deal of the ill surrounding us today are the fault of a society where children learn life lessons that make their formal education often seem meaningless. After all most of what we know is not a result of explicit pedagogy or teaching; it is learned through living" (Wildcat: 2001:13).

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples regarding indigenous knowledge systems in the context of language, culture and education, says:

Article 13, Paragraph 1: *Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit for future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.*

Article 14, Paragraph 1: *Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.*

According to Article 350-A of the Constitution of India the State is to provide education to the linguistic minority children through their mother tongue at the primary stage which has been again reinforced through the NCF 2005. But it is found that since the State is to decide on use of mother tongue in the schools, it has been the State's endeavour to mainstream the tribal children, ignoring their cultural and linguistic diversities. Therefore, in many States, the curriculum prescribes the use of the State language. Odisha, for example, has promoted Odia as the medium of instruction in schools ignoring the tribal population which constitutes one-fourth of the total State population. Even the Ashram schools which educate tribal children from diverse language communities fail to understand the linguistic and cultural needs of the tribal children.

## Curriculum

Curriculum is constructed to achieve national goals through the school system in which the teaching-learning process is based on the socio-cultural context of the children. According to Tagore, the 'creative spirit' and 'generous joy' are the key features of childhood, both of which can be distorted by an unthinking adult world" (NCF 2005: v). The basic philosophy of the curriculum framework is to achieve the desired goal by maintaining the standard of formal education by enabling the children in the subjects they need to study. The guiding principles of NCF are:

- i. Connecting knowledge to life out-side the school
- ii. Ensuring that learning shifts away from rote method
- iii. Enriching the curriculum so that it goes beyond text books
- iv. Making examinations more flexible and integrating them with classroom life

### What is wrong with our present curriculum?

According to National Curriculum Framework 2005, our schools are nothing more than agencies of information and delivery, they do little towards the construction of knowledge of children and thus inhibit the children's ability to explore new ways of knowing. The other shortcomings in the present curriculum are lack of developmental appropriateness and logical sequencing and connection between different grades, and overall pacing, with few or no opportunities to return to earlier concepts. Understanding the importance of child-centred education in a diverse country like India, National Curriculum Framework- 2005 has envisaged the representation of community knowledge in the curriculum to integrate cultural values and identity in education.

The NCF 2005 says,

*"Community may also have questions about the inclusion and exclusion of particular knowledge and experiences in the school curriculum. The school must then be prepared to engage with communities to listen to their concerns and to persuade them to see the educational value of such decisions. For this, teachers must know the reasons why some thing is included while some-thing else is not. They must also be able to win the trust of parents in matters like allowing children to use home language in schools, or teaching about sexuality and reproduction, or play way methods in primary school, or encouraging boys to sing and dance."* (School Knowledge and the Community NCF 2005: 33).

Wilbur B Brookover and David Gottlieb state that in order to understand the community educational system and its integration into the total life of the community, it is necessary to remember the 'analysis of educational processes as it occurs in the non school social system of the community' and also to 'know the demography and ecological factors of the community in relation to the school organisation' (1970:9). If the educational processes of the community are not understood then it becomes difficult for curriculum framers to build on the children's experiential knowledge.

Learning a language and experiencing mathematics in life situations are two major examples. Environmental study is better done amid nature than in the classroom. The tales and songs, myths and legends, riddles and proverbs, along with folktales, all in the oral tradition, take children back to lived lives and, hence, help them understand their world better. This whole physical and intellectual creation of



the community, shared across generations and perpetuated by tradition, is what is called community knowledge.

The community has played a major role in shaping school functions in the context of multilingual education. This happened when the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All) was introduced in the State in which tribal education was one of the major interventions.

Tribal education in Odisha faces certain challenges:

- The State norm of opening a school with at least 40 children of 6-11 age groups is not feasible in many tribal areas.
- Most single-teacher schools are in tribal areas. But few educated and trained tribal teachers are available in tribal areas. Non-tribal teachers who are posted in these areas do not attend school.
- Teachers from outside display negative attitude towards tribal children.
- Children from more than four to five language groups are found in the schools. Teachers teach them in the State language and the gap between home and school languages negatively affects child learning.
- Poor infrastructure fails to attract the tribal children.
- Inappropriate curriculum and instructional materials further impede child learning.

## II

The programmes taken up in the tribal districts of Odisha through Odisha Primary Education Programme Authority are Multilingual Education, Cluster approach to tribal education (*Srujan*) and transformative teacher training in tribal areas (*Rupantar*). These programmes are interrelated in terms of bringing about a pedagogical change in schools of tribal areas. Community involvement is the prerequisite in multilingual education and the cluster approach (*Srujan*) to tribal education in which a host of child-friendly activities are implemented to make learning more meaningful. But *Rupantar* is a teacher training module which tries to change the mind-set of the non-tribal teachers on their changing role in tribal area schools.

These programmes are empirical in that they are based on the theories of indigenous education applied to the context of Odisha. The experiment of two major programmes in Odisha may be examined through some practices.

### 1. Multilingual Education

Multilingual education is a programme where the children express what they know in their mother tongue, explore their experiential knowledge supported by the community knowledge grounded in their own cultural context, and then connect their knowledge with new knowledge of the wider world.

The principles for the adoption of MLE depend on:

- i. A strong educational foundation in the first language
- ii. Successful bridging to one or more additional languages
- iii. Enabling the use of both/all languages for life-long learning.
- iv. Strong community involvement in curriculum development

## **Objectives of MLE**

The objectives of the MLE programme in Odisha are

1. To construct curriculum and instructional materials in ten tribal languages. Language and culture determine what and how the children are to learn. Therefore, each tribal group has prepared its own curriculum and instructional materials based on the guiding principles of National Curriculum Framework-2005.
2. To aim at providing equal opportunity to tribal children for intellectual growth, cognitive development and socio-emotional development.
3. To incorporate diverse pedagogical methods and practices to provide a variety of learning contexts and ensure effective translation of the curriculum objectives inside the classroom.
4. To use home language as school language in the first five grades of schooling and bridging the gap between the languages through maintenance of both rather than taking the submersion / subtractive approach
5. To develop pedagogic competencies of tribal teachers and allowing them freedom in the preparation of curriculum, text books and teacher training modules
6. To enhance Strong community participation in MLE such that the community has decision-making powers and State government supports.

## **MLE in Practice**

The MLE programme provides a platform for community participation in the implementation of mother tongue-based multilingual education in Odisha. From deciding which schools should be adopted for the MLE programme for training of teachers on MLE, the community members of each tribal group play a key role. Framing the curriculum in the village in consultation with the community and the teachers supported by teacher educators is a high-priority action in the MLE programme. The action normally takes off from discussions held in a workshop in which community members and the MLE teachers participate. This is a significant departure from the manner in which the State-driven uniform curriculum is prepared.

Some of the questions discussed in our workshop were

- What is the bottom-up approach to education? Can you prepare some learning materials using the cultural resources of the community? Can the children prepare their own learning materials?
- Do you think you have lost your culture? What are the reasons of cultural loss?
- How do you think you can get it back?
- How were your people learning when there was no school in your village? Can you cite a few examples?
- Do you face opposition while using your cultural resources for school education?
- How can you fight such opposition?

The above discussion among teachers and community members yielded the following:

What should be learnt by the children should be decided by the tribe such that community hopes and wisdom are reflected. Teachers and community members

agreed that they could prepare many learning materials. All those art and artefacts which are the heirlooms of a community are great source of traditional knowledge. Tribal children, too, can prepare many locally available materials.

According to the community members as well as teachers, their culture is at stake. Their cultural values are considered inferior to those of modern culture, and hence, their people are abandoning their own culture and language. They attribute this to intrusion by outsiders into their physical and cultural space. They hope to regenerate their culture through school education. Learning in the tribal communities is nothing but lived experiences. They always learn by doing and knowledge thus gained gets transmitted orally across generations. Their fairs and festivals, stories, rites and rituals related to their land have always been the most important reason for language survival. They gradually know how to count, measure, and weigh. People count by drawing lines on the wall or by counting the birds and animals, etc. They measure and weigh agricultural produce using the local measurement system. They divide time based on the works they do at different times of the day. They know the annual calendar and seasons. They predict rain and storm by looking at the moon. They learn from their elders while helping them at work.

But the participant-teachers in the discussion also acknowledged that they faced opposition from within the same language community. They said that those members of the community who are in the cities oppose the use of mother tongue (MT) in tribal area schools. These city people sponsor the use of MT for establishing their political and ethnic identity, but oppose the use of MT in schools. Through a series of workshops in the villages community members selected their cultural themes for incorporation in the school curriculum. The cultural theme that is used for language curriculum may be examined by an example from the Oraon MLE group.

#### **Oraon Culture in Curriculum:**

*According to Gramsci, "any physical work, even the most degrading and mechanical, there exists a minimum of intellectual activity. All men are intellectuals one could therefore say: but not all men have functions of intellectuals in society. There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded"* (2000:5)

Looking at the community culture as the source of curricular knowledge it is the intellectual work of the community that is created collectively, and have authority of tradition, can be the knowledge that is to be imparted to the children to contest their experience with school knowledge and with teacher centric vs child centric learning. If the school has to be culturally responsive to the school children respecting the children's experience as the entry point for learning, teachers should be ready to learn from the community, or else, learning can't be contextual or child centred.

The National Focus Group on SC/ST of NCERT recommends:

School curriculum should lead to identification and creativity and not to alienation. There is a need to incorporate all the creative arts, crafts, and oral expressions into the curriculum, including those rooted in indigenous knowledge and skill systems. There is need to develop critical multicultural texts and reading materials (NFG:29). But it is always seen that traditional school teachers feel like down pouring his knowledge in the mind of the student imagining that children don't know any-thing. So teachers always impart the school knowledge among the

children. They hardly feel that the children have also lots of experience in their minds which need to be discovered and recognized. The knowledge that is inside the mind of the children has no scope for expression in the school. Therefore, the one way teacher centric classroom fails to capture the mind of the children. Perceiving the Oraon children from the above view point it may be found that Oraon children come to the school with a lot of experience with in their mind.

An Oraon cultural theme used in Class I language and mathematics curriculum is *Saharai* festival. The Oraon community observes this agricultural festival by worshipping their cattle. When the Oraon teachers selected this theme they discussed the function and the context of the festival, learnt its importance from the village elders and then included it in the curriculum. A lesson on this theme includes the stories, songs, riddles, proverbs and myths connected to Saharai festival, its rituals, gods and goddesses, time of worship (season and dates and days) place of worship (village worship hut) musicians and musical instruments played in the festival, dance and songs performed during the festival, priest and shaman, villagers' role, trees, fruits and flowers connected to the rituals, materials and equipment required for the festival, and finally the process of worship.

Language learning in this case happens through learning about the objective and meaning of the festival, learning the key words or new words (illustrated) connected to the festival, listening to stories about the festival and doing reading and writing activities connected with the theme. For mathematics teachers included in the curriculum, number stories, games to learn for comparing, measuring and counting, songs, riddles; etc. The teachers were guided by the syllabus prescribed for Class I mathematics. Oraon children found the lesson interesting since the festival is a part of their experience. Such activities 'connect knowledge to life outside of the school' and 'enrich the curriculum so that it goes beyond textbook.

### Case Study I

#### ***A Big Book on Saharai festival***

#### ***Saharai Parab (7 pictures connected to the festival in 7 sentences)***

*Thump and Buddha, two boys, brought earthen lamps from the potter. The grandparents lighted the lamps in the evening. The grandchildren played with the lights. In the morning women cleaned the cowshed and worshipped the cows. Grandmother cooked rice porridge and horse gram for the cattle. The grandchildren smeared oil on the body of the cattle and fed them the rice and horse gram.*

*The children also ate fried rice. Comprehension questions:*

*What did the grandparents do in the evening?*

*What would have happened if the porridge had not been cooked?*

*Objectives of the Big Book: Shared Reading, comprehension, individual reading, group reading, associating pictures with sentences, whole language reading, identifying words in a sentence, understanding the meaning from the text, connecting one's own experience with that represented in the big book, picking the key words from the big book and practicing reading and writing.*

*Key visual words: potter, lamp, pot, cook, grandfather, grandmother, rice, horse gram*

Recognition of the cultural context of the tribal community in the Big Book signifies community contribution in school education. Besides the folktales and

myths, local legends are also used for language learning. Language activities like listening-stories (collected from village storytellers) and telling experience-stories (children tell their stories in four lines which are then written down) are amply made available to the children through community. These are some of the instances where community knowledge is applied in Class-I and Class II.

It should be noted that each language group came up with thirty language themes drawn from their cultural context (stories, myths, legends etc.). Tribal teachers and community decided to have thirty important components of cultural themes and thus they prepared thirty big books and 60 small books with sixty small stories of the community. Reading and writing became easier since the children now found the content familiar and hence were able to construct, deconstruct and reorganize their thoughts.

It is known that children in tribal areas are not accustomed to doing homework. But after this, non-literate parents wanted to know about their children's learning to which they have contributed. Each tribal community tried to maintain their own distinct culture in their curriculum and instructional materials. For instance, number 12 is the ultimate unit of counting of the Saura. The Munda counting system goes up to 20, while the Juangs count up to five. Number six is significant for the Kishan community. Therefore, six is found frequently in Kishan counting system and also in their games. Based on their cultural numbers and indigenous counting system, number books have been prepared for each group separately.

The following mathematical riddles, for example, was created by the non-literate elders.

**Riddle 1.**

*Sahe goad bastari akhi  
Kete Kukuda Kete Hati*

**Translation:**

*One hundred legs and seventy two eyes  
How many hens and how many elephants  
(22 hens and 14 elephants)*

**Riddle 2.**

*Can you say?  
Wife and husband have twenty two ears (Ravana and Mandodari)*

**Riddle 3.**

*What is that?  
Four legs and 900 ropes  
If you are unable to answer,  
You are a rogue. (A cot having four legs and nine hundred knots)*

There are hundred such riddles on nature, space, birds and animals.. Riddles on natural science and mathematics are more in tribal society, which like visual metaphors represent the wit and intelligence of indigenous knowledge.

The elderly persons of a Juang village also suggested the preparation of big books on themes like traditional ornaments, musical instruments, youth dormitory, traditional political organizations and indigenous medicine system.

## 2. Srujan:

The second important MLE programme in Odisha is based on the cluster approach to tribal education. This programme called *Srujan* aims at reducing dropouts and improving retention and achievement levels of children by making the school culturally responsive. A cluster is a unit of 10-12 schools and 10-12 clusters constitute a block.

Under Srujan School, children meet with resource persons from within the community to tap local indigenous knowledge. This happens through activities like story-telling festival, traditional games, art and crafts, music and dance, nature study, and village project. Community, here, is the creator of knowledge, physical and intellectual. Philip Mandal, a teacher from Saura community collected an etiological myth from a Saura storyteller (katabirmar) and prepared a text. This was shared with the children in the presence of the storyteller. The children as well as the villagers enjoyed the story in their language. They came to know that their oral stories can also be a part of learning.

### The story

#### ***The Heron and the Crow (Why is the Crow black and the Heron white?)***

*"Two birds were living in a tree. One day they quarrelled.*

*Fighting with each other they fell down on the ground.*

*"An old woman, after cooking food, had stored the ashes in one place and the charcoal in another place.*

*"One of the birds fell on the ashes and the other fell on the charcoal. The bird on the ashes became white, heron, and the other was crow."*

*Then the teacher asked the children about the picture in the story chart. The purpose of the picture was to give a visual image to the tale and to initiate the teaching. I was present to observe the class. The text constructed by the children proved how observant and creative they are.*

*Looking at the picture one child said, 'The tree in which the birds are staying has a hollow. There is a snake inside. When the birds are away, the snake will go up to the nest and eat up the eggs.*

*Another child, looking at the picture said,*

*The hut is under the tree, and because of the hearth outside of the hut, the hut might catch fire. I asked, when will this happen?*

*The woman will cook food; will go to have her bath. Meanwhile, the hut may catch fire and it will burn. The woman will have no house when she comes back from the pond. These two imaginary episodes created by the Saora children were experiential from their own cultural context. It is only because the story was in their own language and based on their life context that they could perceive other texts within the given text and were able to construct new knowledge.*

### Case Study II

*A teacher plucks a small branch of a neem tree. The branch has nine leaves. The teacher wants to teach the number nine. He asks the children to tell a sentence each on the neem tree. Children come up with the following:*

*Child-1. Neem leaf is good for the skin. If used along with turmeric it cures skin ailments.*

*Child-2. Neem fruit is a little sweet and a little bitter.*

*Child-3. Herons live in the neem tree and they cover the tree white with their faeces.  
 Child--4. The image of Lord Jagannath is made of neem wood.  
 Child-5. Dry neem leaves are burnt to keep away mosquitoes. Neem leaf dust is also used to kill worms on paddy crops.  
 The teacher stops the children midway and tells them that there are nine leaves on the branch. Plucking one leaf after another the teacher explains that the branch now has no leaf and then teaches them the number zero.  
 The teacher started off well using a TLM from nature but the children's rich experience was ignored. However the teacher came to know that 'children construct their own knowledge' so children's experiences should be explored in the classroom.*

In Odisha, Srujan was introduced in 2007-08 in selected clusters covering 7,814 schools in which about 3 million children took part along with more than 20,000 teachers. Community leaders and storytellers also took part in this programme. The Master Trainers of the programme prepared guidelines drawing the activities from various sources like American Folklore Centers, NCF 2005, and International Story Telling Association. The traditional storytelling method of each tribal society was discussed and the program got a concrete shape.

Each and every programme adopted in Srujan is similar to the activities that go in the village on a daily basis.

<b><i>Routine village activities</i></b>	<b><i>Srujan activities</i></b>
<i>Children and the older folks take part in village activities</i>	<i>Community-school programme in SRUJAN – School children take part along with teachers and members of the tribe</i>
<i>Jati Mahasabha is conducted in which socio-customary issues are resolved</i>	<i>The platform of Jati Mahasabha is used to address social issues like literacy</i>
<i>PRI members take part in routine village activities</i>	<i>PRI members meet to discuss children's education</i>
<i>Village children play games, take part in socio-religious festivals, music and dance, work on the fields, collect forest produce, etc.</i>	<i>School children take part in storytelling festival, traditional games, art and craft, music and dance in simulated situations.</i>
<i>Story telling – community activity and intergenerational</i>	<i>Story telling in school context (teacher, children and the community participate)</i>
<i>Children participate in traditional village games.</i>	<i>Traditional games introduced in school</i>
<i>Children participate in village art and crafts</i>	<i>Art and crafts introduced in school</i>
<i>Music and dance in socio-cultural context</i>	<i>Music and dance performed in school</i>
<i>Informal study of nature and human relations</i>	<i>Formal study of nature and human relations</i>
<i>Children learn by being part of normal everyday life</i>	<i>Discovery of village as children's project</i>
<i>Community myths and legends are local knowledge</i>	<i>There are community resource rooms in schools which generate community</i>

	<i>knowledge</i>
<i>Children observe and learn from their culture</i>	<i>Community culture translated into school curriculum through above activities.</i>

These efforts in Odisha are just one year old and need to be concretized further.

## Conclusion

Thanks to Srujan!! School curriculum and knowledge is now accessible to tribal parents. What we now have is a culturally responsive school where teachers are culture workers, ready to learn from the community and design the curriculum for children. The experiments in multilingual education and community-based school programmes like Srujan in Odisha have thus given priority to child-centred and mother tongue-based education. A strong link has been established between the school and the community which has led to the empowerment of the curriculum with rich contextual knowledge.

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# Language death in Sundargarh District of Odisha due to Industrialisation

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## Abstract

*Many languages die with the speakers' death, and many languages die when the speakers make it to die. It is when a speaker does not preserve his language and gives chance to flourish other languages, the native language dies its premature death. Linguists claim that every fortnight, a language dies somewhere in India. A UN agency identified 198 Indian languages in danger. There are many causes behind the death of many languages. The fastest growth of industrialisation has posed a threat to the tribal languages for their existence. The district of Sundargarh which has more tribal population than any other district of Odisha faces this problem to a great extent. The aim of this paper is to highlight the impact of the industrialisation on the tribal languages.*

## Introduction

The district of Sundargarh of Odisha state has a population of 18 lakhs, out of which the population of Scheduled Caste is 1, 57,745, and the population of Scheduled Tribe is 918903. The literacy percentage of the district covers 64.86 against 63.08 of the state. (This demography is of the 2001 census). The Tribal population of the district is more than any other district of Odisha. That is why there are many tribal languages found in the district. The tribes like, Oraon, Munda, Kharia, Kissan, Bhuian, Gondh, Mundari, Binjhia, Santhal, Bhumij, Kawar, Kolha, Mahali, Ho, Kondh, etc. all these tribes speak their own tribal languages at their respective communities. Sadri is the *lingua franca* for all these tribes. These tribes have their own cultural practices, which are very rich and lively.

The industrial growth in the district is very fast. The Sponge Iron Units are 31, which are already established and the other 49 are to be established. This leads to an ugly days to the tribes, who used to enjoy the nature as their friend. The tribes are the main sufferer, because they reside in the hilly and rural area which is convenient for them. They cultivate, raise cattle, and collect medicinal plants and many other where jungle is the source for them. They prepare land for cultivation and live by the paddy or whatever they produce. All these activities of the tribes get disturbed. Industrialisation leads to transmigration which is the main cause for language death of the tribal languages. The present work throws light to the areas where industrialisation affects the languages of tribes.

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### **Languages and Tribes in the District:**

There are many tribes in the district as cited above. The four major tribes like Oraon, Munda, Kharia and Kissan are taken in particular to analyse and to collect data from. The Oraon do have 'Kunruk' as their language. The Munda 'Mundari', and Kharias and Kissans have 'Kharia' and 'Kissan' respectively. These four tribes are the old tribes which have a rich culture heritage in the history of India. But the deadly impact of the modern education and the industrialisation has shaken their existence. Oraons of other parts of India like Jharkhand, Bihar, Assom, and Chatisgarh have preserved their language. With a few peoples interest they even have the script. The oraons of Odisha do speak kunruk but only a few people of some places like Ludkidihi, Kingirkela, Lohnipada, Nuagaon, Jhirpani, Gurundia, Sawnamara, Sikajore etc speak to some extent in their communities. The kharias of Amko, Salangabahal, Ghaghari, Andhari, Purnapani, Kahupani, Marain, Birkera, Keshramal, Kusumdegi etc speak their 'kharia' language. The other two also follow the same areas because the tribal members live together.

### **Impact of industrialization:**

**Displacement** is a big bang on tribal society. Tribal lands have been used for industrialisation and the tribes have to move to other places. It takes a lot of time to build a new culture. Meanwhile many tribes give up their languages and the speakers of that language decrease. Because they feel that what is important is to communicate.

The sample survey has been taken in the villages of Sundargarh District and found that the more number of youths in between the age fifteen and thirty do not know their language. This means, they shall neither learn nor teach their language to their future generation. Thus they make their language to die a premature death.

**Integration of other culture** is seen when people of different areas come to work. It is found out that the labourers engaged in the industries are biharies, Bengalies, Jharkandies etc. Tribes of Sundargarh are very innocent and ignored of many things, so they forget the effect that would be on their generation when they adopt other language and culture. This uproots totally the aboriginals; they forget their practices and languages. A child has to learn a language to communicate with his other counterparts in order to be with them. It is seen all the time that it is the tribes learn other languages and copy the living styles of others not they, who have come from far. It might be because they are so flexible and innocent. The same happened when we were under the British, we followed their lifestyle not they, we copied the culture not they, they came with a purpose and they achieved it but we enjoyed the mercy of theirs if any.

**Urbanisation** used to be the term for research for sociologists, today with the upcoming of industries in the tribal areas; the tribes started building their houses near to the main road. They are no longer staying in 'tolla' we called earlier. The 'tolla' were recognised with a name based on the tribes stayed. They're supposed to be the uniformity in which they are living because people of same belief and practices stayed there, spoke the language common to all. But now they want to be separated and stay with those who are of their own rank. While judging their rank they do not see the caste or tribe they belong to but the income that they have. So they build a separate society and culture which is fascinated to the modern or what we call now post-modern. Thus they completely forget their tribal languages.

**Modern education** is a necessary evil of the time. It is a fact that wherever literacy has gone up, the local languages have dwindled because of the imposition of the standard languages by institutions like school, college and state at a large. Everyone earning more than hand to mouth thinks of a good school. It is the need of the hour. The education which is provided in the English medium schools is of top standard, globally designed. When a generation gets trained in these schools forget the tribal language we are speaking about. It is not the matter of tribal language rather the mother tongue also; they only know English and Hindi. Census data shows that two out of three tribes in India do not speak their native tongue. Thing is that the life style of an individual is totally dependant on his or her earning. So the industrialisation is a blessing or curse, we are to decide. It is sure either way we are detaching our sentiments from what used to be in community earlier and forgiving the languages we spoke.

**Technological development** and its impact is also a significant factor we should discuss upon when it has direct influence on tribal languages. It feels good to see everyone in headphones, looks funny, but fashion. Literacy is only marked if one is computer literates or knows something about mechanical things. Starting from cell phones to desktop, what requires is English knowledge to learn the function of it. Again it is a need of the hour, if we have to be global and universal in our approach. That will only come when we are good in English. It is also noticed youngsters saying that they feel shame to talk in their tribal languages in phones. We are so much mechanical that we forget our languages which have got a unique identity. We watch something and feel like practicing them.

Children of today are so used to do with machine that they do not want to go to their rural homes in vacations only because in village there is no power supply, no network, and what not. So what happens they know nothing about a language that their grandparents spoke one day?

### **Conclusion:**

The 'change' is the nature of society. Life needs a change in order to sustain but there is something responsible for every change. We can say that the industrialisation is the cause of language death but all that depends on the people how much respect they have for their identity or they want to be identified with the global identity. It is high time we realise that these tribes still remain behind. A few people realise that languages are more than just a means of communication. They are emblematic of the way a community perceives the world and, thereby offer a unique insight into those who speak them and the culture they represent.

Respecting these sentiments Government has extended support to preserve all the tribal languages by encouraging the speakers. Adivasi Academy in Tejgadh (Gujrat) is one among them.

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# Equitable Quality Education in Tribal Areas: the Case of Tribal Education in Odisha

*\* Priyadarshini Mishra*

## **Abstract**

*The paper is a descriptive analysis of the on-going projects on quality education in tribal areas of Odisha. Due to educational intervention of the governments to achieve an equitable quality education in tribal area, it seems that Govt is in right direction and is approaching its target proximity. The development programs are often digressing from main objectives as achievement yield doubtful integrity of the developing agencies. The new program, unless it has been witnessed, experimented and validated with the desired results, the mainstream culture tries to maintain distance from local and it is hardly assumes as an integral part of it. But once the good result is shown many people adopt it. However, education of tribal children advocated by the tribal or nontribal practitioners have to go through a 'loving struggle' for cooperation to establish that they also have wisdom to discover the truth from the life and making meaning from the local to feel the global from the land that they survive.*

## **Introduction**

Of the total population of India, Scheduled tribe population constitutes about 8.8%. Their contribution in shaping Indian culture through their language, tradition, customs and integrated worldview cannot be ignored. Their rich cultural and human value system contains the powers to maintain the cultural bio-diversity, thereby keeping the globe ecologically sound. But, unfortunately, they are underestimated, misjudged, and historically marginalized. Their land, culture and heritage, which are established in more eco-socio-religious context through oral tradition, are yet to be recognized in the modern educational domain. Historically, some token measures have been taken to incorporate their languages and cultures in the mainstream school education, but nowhere in the country; till today; a culturally appropriate curriculum for the tribal children have ever been made to ensure linguistic and cultural rights -enshrined under Article 46 of the Indian constitution.

There are 698 Scheduled Tribes. In order to promote the tribal people Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, had a conscious vision about their land, social tradition, language and culture. Therefore, he formulated five principles in 1952 to guide the administration of Tribal Affairs. They are –

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1. People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage their own tradition, art and culture.
2. Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected.
3. We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt are needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders in to tribal territory.
4. We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to, their own social and cultural institutions.
5. We should judge results not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved.<sup>i</sup>

Tribes in India after being repeatedly subjected to discrimination by different colonisers, unscrupulous Government officials, non-tribal exploiting agencies and communities during the recent history, the injustice inflicted on them would be reconstructed from the existing distorted picture of their land, forest, language and livelihood. Constitution of India has provided the privileges for the Scheduled Tribes of India relating to their land, language and rights. The tribes in India are not uniform in their socio-economic development. Among tribes, there are 75 geographically located disadvantaged groups identified by researchers for their stagnant or declining population, remote located habitation, very low literacy level and shy nature, whose recommendation was accepted by Govt of Odisha and Govt of India as primitive tribes who are presently known as particularly vulnerable tribal groups. They are being extended special care by the Governments as they are severely marginalised from among the minorities. In post-colonial Indian education system education remained in the concurrent list and the state has its role to ensure education of all children, irrespective of caste, gender, religion and languages. The states adopted the majority language as the official language, but the tribal languages were ignored that time as a part of state policy. However, the constitutional provision is in favour of tribal languages to be used as mother tongue in education.

### **Constitutional Provisions:**

Constitution of India article 29 (1) and Article 350 (A) safeguard the linguistic right of the minority children in school. It is the duty of the state to provide education to the children of linguistic minority in the school, at least in the primary stage.

Article 21 (A) envisages the free and compulsory elementary education of equitable quality for all children up to 14 years of age. Article 29 (1) emphasizes that any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same. Article 46 avers that State has to promote the educational needs of the weaker sections of the society. Article 350A emphasises that it shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and the President may

issue such directions to any State as he/she considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities<sup>ii</sup>

### **National Educational Goal**

The National Policy of Education 1986 has the provision of mother tongue education to the tribal children. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 also envisages the provision of multilingual education in the schools in the primary stage as well as provides education in first language/ home language to the children.<sup>iii</sup> The NCF 2005 has spelt out that multilingual education is not a problem but is a resource. Not using the language of the child as the medium of instruction and imagining child centered learning is the paradox in education.

The National Focus Group of NCF 2005 on Problems of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Children (2007) has clearly spelt out the critique of school curriculum from the perspective of SC/ST groups. It examines the curriculum “as a mediator of dominance and hegemony and explores ideological issues in the selection of knowledge that have a bearing on education of oppressed groups. It further explains, “In India, curriculum and the content of education have been central to the process of reproduction of patterns of caste, class, cultural and patriarchal domination–subordination. Post-independence education policy aimed at nationalization and indigenization of colonial curriculum; but with an ideological context dominated by social, intellectual and economic elites. Brahminical knowledge and pedagogic practice acquired hegemonic status in framing of the curriculum. This has been evident in the curriculum’s emphasis on (a) pure language and (b) high caste literary and other knowledge of society, history polity religion and culture that reflects Brahminical worldview<sup>iv</sup> (2007:24 Position Papers). Ten States of India have substantial tribal population with low tribal literacy, where attempts are being made under District Primary Education Program (DPEP) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) to improve literacy level. These are not based on long-term goals and the state system is always in eagerness to mainstream the tribal children in an early exit mode. In DPEP and in SSA till date no concrete long term plan has been adopted to address the complex educational needs of tribal children. Therefore, the NCF 2005 along with the 11<sup>th</sup> Five year plan stands for the multilingual education of minority children in the primary stage. It is the duty of the state to provide education to the children in their language. Instead a gap in the education of rich and education of poor is visible in the current education system. After independence, many Committees<sup>v</sup> have been set up by the Govt. of India for the economic development of tribal people of the country. Most of the programmes are giving importance to top down in approach, ignoring the local tribal people.

After Independence, the states of India followed the same paradigm and ignored the multilingualism and multiculturalism of diverse socio-cultural situation of the state. A uniform monolingual education system was introduced. The recognition of international language as official language (English) and treating the regional languages – (state languages)- mother tongues/ local languages as lower in the socio-linguistic pyramid, the local languages / mother tongues became back benchers. English and the state languages became the language of power, the local languages; especially tribal languages were looked down. The negative attitude towards tribal languages is reinforced in the state schooling system. Under the given context Constitutional provision was a far reaching goal for the tribal children.

## **Critical Issues in Tribal Education in Odisha**

There is no clear state policy on language education, let alone of tribal education. Only the state language is used as the medium of instruction in the schools. Though three-language formula is adopted in the state, mother tongue of the child is still neglected.

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### **he politics of State Curriculum and unrepresented Tribal Education**

The national model adopted the education system inherited from the colonial model and, therefore, even the Gandhian model of basic Education was also ignored. Contextual issues of education, or even looking at the village as the source of knowledge was ignored. The state education system shaped the curriculum and text books according to the needs and requirements of middle class children and ignored the educational needs of tribal children. This practice is still continuing in all the states and the tribal people don't have a system of education which could fit in-to their socio-cultural context. Thus, a submersion model of education was adopted where the tribal society, culture and language remain unrepresented.

### **2. Contextualizing vs. Mainstreaming**

Schools are the representation of a colonial model which denies the local knowledge being the prerequisite of children's learning. Schools, curriculum, text books and teaching methods are uniform across the state, ignoring the geographical, socio-cultural and linguistic diversities of the tribal people. Thus, in the name of mainstreaming, the hegemony prevail in the schools and local knowledge is denied its due. It is a post-colonial class drive to maintain the dominance over the socio-economically disadvantaged. The Ashram Schools that were opened after independence in the tribal districts of the country are the model of mainstreaming, since children of many ethnic groups with their many mother tongues were enrolled in these residential schools and they were taught in a language that is not intelligible to them. In fact, the Ashram schools could have been the centre of many language resources with much local knowledge drawn from the ethnic groups to maintain the languages and cultures. The influence of the peer groups on a school going child marginalises the influence of parents that the child usually retains. The linguistic ability the child acquires in school transforms him/her from illiterate to literate eventually reducing the impact of parents on him/her.

### **3. Quality Education without using Mother Tongue vs using State Language:**

The state/official language is adopted as the medium of instruction for all children in the state and the importance of mother tongue in education for tribal children was denied. Use of unfamiliar language forces the non-tribal teacher to use teacher-centred teaching methods which undermine the teacher's effort to teach and learner's effort to learn. Therefore, learning is blocked. By using an unfamiliar language in classroom by a teacher, children remain silent/passive. This makes the teachers to adopt chorus method, repetitions, rote memory, and safe talk without caring for the cognitive aspects of the children. This situation leads to school ineffectiveness and low academic achievement experienced by the tribal children. It is quite impossible to impart quality education without the language of the child. The language of thought and language of speech determine the cognitive development of the children. The child sees and understands his/ her world through his/ her language that shapes his/her cognitive development. But neither the language nor



the visual world of the child is reflected in education. So quality of children without context and language is meaningless for tribal children.

#### **4. Non-Tribal Teachers vs Tribal Children**

About 90% of teachers teaching in the primary schools of Odisha are non-tribal and they don't understand the language of the children. It is a contradiction between the child centred learning and teacher centred pedagogy. Even if the teachers are very good in teaching methods, they fail to educate the tribal children.

#### **5. Top down vs. Bottom up Approach:**

Trickling down theory proved to be less successful and least people oriented for any development due to wide variables at the grassroots. For equitable quality education in tribal area it was found to be far from reality. For cultural autonomy and linguistic identity many tribal communities put forth their demands before Government at different times. The perpetual assertion and demand for Santali language to be included in VIII schedule of the Constitution was materialised after it got approval of both the houses in parliament. This paved the way in favour of Santal community such that it has become the obligatory function of the state and the nation to provide education to the Santal children in their own language. Since this was a bottom-up approach where the Santali community could fulfil their demand many tribals feel encouraged to demand for their languages like Saura, Oram, Chui, Munda, Koll and Kishan. The Santali tribal language spreads over states like Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal, and also to a few other eastern States extending neighbouring nations like Bangladesh and Nepal. It is through their language that they established their educational course curriculum to be in their scripts.

**The top-down approach on primary education can be clearly seen in the programs like district Primary Education Program (DPEP), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) and National Program for Education of Girls at elementary Level (NPEGEL) that have guidelines to address the context specific issues of children; since the planners and implementers are ignorant of the critical issues of language education of the girls and boys, they don't address the context specific issues and thus the top down approach only touches the visible physical progress and ignores the intellectual progress of the children.**

#### **7. Community vs. School as the provider of knowledge:**

Till date the school has been the provider of uniform knowledge to the children of diverse languages and social groups. Even the National Curriculum Framework has given clear mandate for using local knowledge for education which is based on that literacy and numeracy through this knowledge to connect the experiential knowledge of the children with that of the new knowledge. Somehow schools are apathetic to the tribal children. They are in the state of double exclusion. They fail in achieving the school knowledge completely on one hand and they lose their local knowledge on the other.

#### **8. Parents' aspiration vs. Educationists' concern in Children or Global English vs. Local Mother Tongue:**

Parent's aspiration to teach their children in English has been high in urban and semi-urban areas. Even this trend is being spread in tribal areas also. This has been criticized by the psycholinguists.<sup>vi</sup> The relation of a foreign language with

cognitive aspect is totally missing in the teaching learning system in the context of any child. This is a serious mental shock to children and also against the linguistic human right.

### **Odisha Scenario from Tribal Context:**

Our Odisha in eastern India is predominantly rural. The majority (85 per cent) of its 36.8 million people live in rural areas, and nearly half the population live below the poverty line. Of the 698 Scheduled Tribes listed by the government, 62 live in Odisha and form about 22.13 % of the State's population. The state has experienced a phenomenal expansion of its elementary education system. While the literacy rate has improved by 14.6 % (higher than the National improvement of 13 % points), female literacy has increased by 16.2 % between 1991 and 2001, higher than the average 15 % increase across India. Alongside, 96.13 % of school children in Odisha have access to a primary school within a walking distance of one km (against the national average of 93.03 %) and 91.73 % of school children in Odisha have access to an upper primary school within a distance of 3 km (against the national average of 87.91 %). But, in spite of these physical facilities, the literacy rate of the tribal in Odisha still very low literacy rate is not challenging but what is challenging is to improve the literacy rate are abysmally low among the tribal communities. Moreover quality of education in schools is a major challenge.

Majority of the scheduled tribes are concentrated in 17 districts of the State. The tribes of Odisha can be divided ethno-linguistically into (a) the Austric Language Group, (b) the Dravidian language Group and (c) the Indo-Aryan language group. Their distinct language, culture, customs and worldview are different from the mainstream culture.

**Table -1: Tribal Literacy in Odisha**

	India			Odisha			Gap
	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	
1991	29.60	40.65	18.19	27.10			28.09
2001	47.10	59.17	34.76	37.37	51.48	23.37	21.71

(Source: Selected Educational Statistics 2002-03)<sup>vii</sup>

The literacy rate of Odisha in 2001 is 63.08 (75.36 males and 50.51 female) and the tribal literacy rate is below the State average. Over a period of ten years the growth of literacy among the tribal is 26 %. According to the Census of India, literacy rate among tribal people in Odisha is 37.37%. Of the literates, for males 51% and for females 23.47%. The overall gap of literacy is 38%, in which the gap in male literacy is 41.25 % and in female literacy is 54%. While tribal literacy in Odisha was 9.46 in 1971, it was 13.96 in 1981. Again it increased to 27.10 in 1991 and during 2001 it was 37.37. This indicates the slow progress of literacy among tribal people in Odisha over the last three decades. At this rate how long Odisha will take to achieve 100% literacy is a question to be answered.

### **Enrolment of Tribal Children:**

In 2007-08 total number of children of 6-14 age group in the State was 67,41,683 out of which ST children constitute 17,44,381. Total enrolled tribal children in the State at primary level is 11,74,809 and in upper primary schools it is 2,83,821. Rest of the ST children are in other classes. At present 2,05,742 ST children are out of schools in selected twelve districts dominated by tribal population.

In 2007-08 enrolment of ST children has increased up to 89.49 % and now only 10.51 % ST children in the elementary level are out of school going children. The access and enrolment of ST children and provision of infrastructure in tribal areas have been helpful in providing space to the socially disadvantaged children in schools, especially the ST/SC girls.

**Table-2: Class wise ST Children in the State:**

ST Children reading in different Classes	Total No. of ST children through out Odisha
Class I	320385
Class II	257650
Class III	239676
Class IV	211162
Class V	147828
Class VI	130492
Class VII	87908
Total	1395101

The number of ST children in the schools, especially in Class I to Class III are about 8,00,000 whose home language is different from the school language. Their home and peer-group communication and social communication is restricted to their home language and they seldom get opportunity to speak a language other than their home language. Tribal children in Class III to V are unable to read the text book properly .In Class I and Class II tribal children don't open up and they don't speak in the classroom since they lack speaking skills. Hence, the children spend their school time in a culture of silence.

**Dropout Rate:**

In 2002-03 dropout rates of ST children in primary stage was 56.28 (58.03 ST boys and 53.50 girls). In Upper primary stage ST dropout rate was 78.12 (boys 77.45 and girls 79.12). This indicates the high dropouts of ST children in both primary and upper primary stage. In upper primary stage the dropout of girls is very high, because of which the literacy rate of tribal women in the State is low. In addition to this, it is found that the overall number of girls per 100 boys by stages of school education is 75 (90 in primary and 81 in upper primary). This indicates that the ST girls heavily drop out in upper primary stage.

After SSA intervention the dropout rate has been reduced considerably. Following table indicates the dropout rate of ST children in the state.

**Table -3: -Dropout Rate at Primary Level**

Category Year	Over all Children		ST children		Gap	
	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls
2002-03	34.7	36.5	53.4	57.4	19	21
2003-04	33.6	35.4	52.0	56.0	19	21
2004-05	32.0	32.7	52.0	56	20	23

(Source: Directorate of Elementary Education, Odisha 2005)

**Table -4: Dropout Rate of ST Children in Elementary Level**

Category	Over all Children		ST children		Gap	
	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls
2002-03	59.0	60.5	77.7	80.3	18	20
2003-04	57.5	58.6	70.3	73	13	15
2004-05	49.2	50.0	69.5	72	20	22

(Schools with % of ST Children (Management Informatics System, OPEPA 2007-08)

While the number of ST children from Class I to class III is about 8 lakhs, number of schools with 100% ST children is 4550 and clubbed with the schools with 99-80% ST enrolment it becomes around 10,347. It clearly indicates that around one sixth of the total schools in Odisha have one way or the other language diversities and the children are the target group in this school. Though the Child Census of Odisha 2005 has identified these issues based on the enumeration, its sociolinguistic study at the cluster level and school level need to be taken up.

**Table -5: Schools in Tribal Areas: Linguistic Minority Children in the Schools**

Schools with 100% ST Enrolment	Schools with 99-90% ST Enrolment	Schools with 89-80% ST Enrolment	Schools with 79-70% ST Enrolment	Schools with 69-60% ST Enrolment	Schools with 59-50% ST Enrolment	Schools with below 50% ST Enrolment	Total No. of Schools	% of 100% ST School
4550	3098	2699	2472	2653	2539	43362	61373	7.41

As per the enumeration of Odisha Child Census 2005 conducted by OPEPA, there are 19,340 schools having 20+ students of Linguistic Minority group and total number of such students in these schools are 10,99,240. Nearly 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of them (711607) belong to Santali language and (150680) and other Tribal languages (560927). 10 Districts account for over 92% of these Tribal languages group children. (Source: OPEPA MIS 2008)

#### **Out- of- School ST Children:**

Tribal Children in 10 districts contribute towards nearly 80% of the total out-of-school ST children. These are Koraput (25540), Nabrangpur (25273), Rayagada (22771) and Keonjhar (19645), the top four closely followed by Sundergarh (13293), Malkangiri (12938), Mayurbhanj (12172), and Sambalpur (11348), Kalahandi (10600) and Bolangir (9994). This indicates that the districts with linguistic diversities have higher number of out-of-school children. Comparatively, tribal education and literacy have shown little significant improvement during the last three decades. The major reasons are inadequate schooling facilities in tribal areas, poor infrastructure, single-teacher schools, unsuitable curriculum and instructional materials, untrained teachers, gap between home and school languages and lack of academic resources for teachers in tribal areas.

The Vision Document 2020( 2003:311)<sup>viii</sup> published by the School and Mass Education Department indicates that inappropriate medium of instruction, imperfect teacher-pupil communication, unsuitable curricula and textbooks, incompatible formal school environment and less community participation are some of the causes that impede the learning of tribal children resulting in high dropout rates. Tribal children alone constitute 27% of the total school dropouts in Odisha. Understanding the challenges of the education of tribal children in the State, there is lack of a sustainable programme which leads to a policy or a policy that leads to the programme. This leads to the tribal children to a situation of double disadvantage.

### **Initiation:**

In 2005 Govt. of India with the UN agencies made a dialogue through a National Conference held in Central institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, where it was resolved that Multilingual Education should be adopted in the country as a programme strategy to educate the linguistic minority children in the schools. Andhra Pradesh had started MLE during 2003-04 with the help of some western MLE practitioners and experts. Odisha during 2006 adopted Multilingual Education as a programme to address linguistically disadvantaged groups' education through SSA.

In 2006 a National Conference was conducted by OPEPA and the findings of the conference were adopted by the government as a programme. In 2006-07 the State SSA initiated MLE programme in ten languages for a period of five years on pilot basis.<sup>ix</sup> The guiding principles of National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 and the syllabus was the foundation. Based on these principles, thematic approach was adopted for preparation of curriculum and instructional materials. The community teachers and the language resource persons from the respective languages were identified through a series of visioning workshops and then they were oriented on ML approach. The program was based on the approach that is adopted in various countries of the world.

The State Tribal Advisory Committee headed by Sri Naveen Patnaik, the Chief Minister of Odisha, in the month of July 2006 provisionally declared the introduction of tribal languages as the medium of instruction in primary schools, including Santali as the scheduled language (using OLCHIKI script). This was a major landmark in the history of tribal education in India. The State Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC) notified to adopt ten tribal languages as the medium of instruction and introduced them in the schools with 100% tribal children with their distinct language situation. The tribal languages adopted are Santali, Saura, Koya, Kui, Kuvi, Kishan, Oram, and Munda as major languages. Juang and Bonda were adopted in MLE as endangered languages.

The challenge for the State is that there are about 19,000 schools with linguistic diversities. The non-negotiable features of the adoption of MLE approach are -

- Teachers from the tribal community will be engaged.
- Primary schools with at least five classes and at least 20 children in Class I
- At least five classrooms and five teachers (at least two mother tongue teachers)
- Community / Village Education Committee's agreement to use mother tongue as the medium of instruction
- Community support for preparation of curriculum and reading materials for their own children
- Academic support from International and National level

- Forming a strong resource group in each language
- Capacity building at the district and sub-district level

The District Collector as the Chairman of the District MLE Committee approved the adoption of MLE schools in the District SSA Committee and schools were identified basing on 100% ST children. Teachers from the same community were identified from the existing teachers list and were transferred to the pilot schools to teach in mother tongue. Local Resource persons were identified to support the teacher-s in preparation of context specific curriculum.

The tribal teachers (State Resource Group) of respective languages took lead in framing the curriculum, collecting the local knowledge to use them in preparing the text books. In 2007-08 154 schools adopted MLE approach in which teachers from their respective language were placed. In the first year total 4060 children were enrolled in the MLE pilot schools. Teachers were trained on MLE approach. The teachers involved in the curriculum development, material production and also in preparation of Master Trainers' training module. They also performed as the Master Trainers to train the teachers of MLE schools. Thus, a group of 120 teachers were regularly engaged in the MLE activities, both in the state and in the field, since last three years to make it happen.

In the year 2008-09 another 277 schools adopted -MLE approach following the same process of selecting the schools and teachers. Briefly, MLE in Odisha rolled out from 2006-07 till date. SSA Odisha adopted MLE as a program in 545 schools on pilot basis for a period of five years. But this was the most strenuous work that needed a serious academic perseverance and a lot of efforts to make it a success. Therefore, SSA Odisha has innovated two programs called Rupantar and Srujan in addition to MLE where the school community linkage can be established through local efforts where the school will be culturally responsive to the children and irrespective of tribal and nontribal feeling, every child will have the ability to perform better in combining the informal learning with formal. It will result in bridging the gap between them.

III

### **Contextualizing Schools through Multilingual Education: Some Conceptual Framework**

#### **MLE Goals:**

1. To ensure equity and quality education to tribal children to explore the world around them and use their resources meaningfully for their livelihood.
2. To empower the tribal children with reading and writing skills to acquire knowledge and information in their mother tongue and also in State/ national and international language.
3. To develop socio-economic status in comparison to the others through literacy.
4. To develop self-respect in/for their language and culture and enrich human knowledge.
5. To promote national integration.



## Why Multilingual Education?

Many states of India have uniform curriculum and text books which is not suitable for all tribal children whose home language is different from the school language. Denying education to children in their mother tongue –leads to serious intellectual damage which blocks the learning of the children. Research has shown that children do better when they are taught in their mother tongue (Thomas and Collier 2004) .Children competent in mother tongue can do better in other tongues. MLE is to initiate literacy in first language and then to integrate the second language (State/ official language) and third language\_(English or National language). It is essential to sustain cultural and linguistic diversities to promote human knowledge, which is a part of intellectual property. Culture and language should be the foundation of education, especially in ethnic minority and linguistic minority communities, to make education context specific. Multilingual education is a reality and it is a resource.<sup>x</sup> Research says that the mental development of multilingual children is better than the monolingual children.

## What is Multi-Lingual Education?

Multi-lingual education is a program of learning through mother tongue where the children explore their experiential knowledge, supported by the community knowledge to provide learning from their own cultural context, and then to connect their knowledge with new knowledge of the wider world. The principles for the adoption of MLE<sup>1</sup> depend on:

- A  
strong educational foundation in the first language
- S  
uccessful bridging to one or more additional languages
- E  
nabling the use of both/\_all languages for life-long learning.

The purpose of a multi-lingual education program is to develop appropriate cognitive and reasoning skills enabling children to operate equally in their native, State and national languages, starting in mother tongue with transition to second (Odia) and third languages (English). The curriculum is based on the culture of the local community, using local knowledge and customs through which a child can develop common concepts in all areas of learning.

## National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005

NCF 2005 envisages language education and has outlined that -

1. Language teaching needs to be multilingual not only in terms of the number of languages offered to children but also in terms of evolving strategies that would use the multilingual classroom as a resource.
2. Home language/mother tongue of children should be the medium of learning in the schools.
3. Second language acquisition through basic proficiency and development of language as an instrument for abstract thought and knowledge acquisition through literacy.<sup>xi</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Susane Malone, 2006 Planning Community Based Education Programme in Minority language Communities, Resource manual for mother tongue speakers, SIL, Asia Area, Bangkok, P.12.

4. The aim of English teaching is the creation of multilingualism that can enrich all our languages; this has been an abiding national vision. English needs to find its place along with other Indian languages in different States-

5. Learning to Read and write

The authentic place of mother tongue in educational domain is not meant to be subtractive but additive which fosters healthy multilingualism and ensures growth of all languages.

### **Contextualizing the Schools for Tribal Children:**

#### **1. Initial Language Education Plan and Odisha Child- Census 2005 Data:**

While collecting data in OCC – 2005 total 17 tribal languages were identified that cover the majority of tribal language speakers. These are Santali, Munda, Oram, Kishan, Koya, Kui, Kuwi and Saora.

#### **2. Linguistic Survey and Mapping:**

Survey on endangered languages, like Bonda, Juang, etc., and survey in 25 Blocks with high tribal population revealed that though the parents are partially exposed to State language, school children in those areas are not exposed to school language. Based on the above information, schools were identified with 100 % tribal children with diversities of languages in schools. Academy of Tribal Languages and Culture of SC/ST Development Department was commissioned to undertake the study and based on that the languages were adopted.

#### **Odisha Initiative on MLE Planning:**

In October 2005, Govt. of India, NCERT, CIIL and UNESCO conducted a National Seminar in Mysore on Multilingual Education in which many States took part. Based on this, Odisha took up MLE in April 2006 as a model for equitable quality education.

#### **Criteria for Selection of Schools:**

Schools were selected on the following criteria:

1. Where the gap of home language and school language is high
2. Number of tribal children in the school belongs to 100 % monolingual
3. At least it should be a primary school with five classes and five teachers
4. At least one teacher from mother tongue to teach in tribal language

#### **Selection and Placement of Teachers:**

All the teachers in eight languages have been engaged from the existing teacher's posts. But in Bonda and Juang where the regular teachers in those languages are not available, educational volunteers from these two tribes have been engaged by the VECs and Collectors. District MLE Steering Committee chaired by the Collector along with education officers and public representatives approved the feasible MLE schools. Status of Pilot Schools reveals that till date, total 435 schools have been adopted in MLE approach, out of which 100 are Santali in Mayurbhanj. Rests of the languages are one year ahead of Santali, since Santali language was introduced in 2008-09. DIET Baripada has been assigned to prepare Class II materials in Santali language.

#### **Quality Focus in MLE:**

The standard for effective teaching practice<sup>xii</sup>, the non-negotiable, are:



1. It is jointly produced by the teachers and the students
2. It develops competence in language and literacy across the curriculum
3. It connects teaching and curriculum with experience and skill of children's home and community thereby making the learning meaningful for children
4. Teaching complex thinking: challenge students towards cognitive complexity
5. It engages students through dialogue or instructional conversation.

Based on the above guiding principles, MLE in Odisha has emphasized the effective teaching practice in the schools for a transformation in the classrooms.

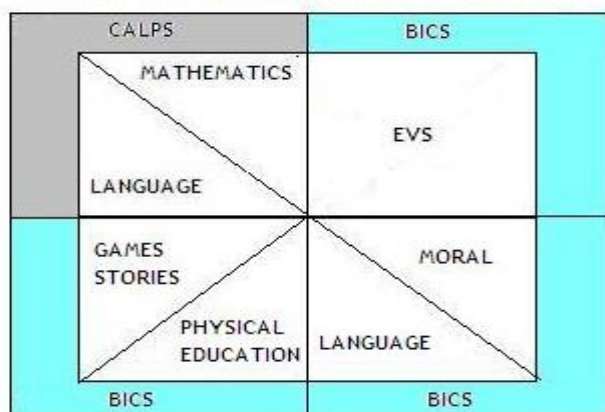
### **Preparation of Curriculum, Text books and Teacher Training Module:**

#### **Thematic Approach in curriculum design:**

1. First language first (MT of the child as medium of instruction)
2. Language teaching is additive not subtractive
3. Second language (Odia) in Class II and third language (English) in Class III
4. Mathematics as a subject to be taught in primary stage up to class V.
5. Linking experience of the child with the curricular texts – cultural themes to curricular themes
6. With regard to teaching methods, a constructivist approach and a departure from reliance on the textbook (NCF recommendation)
7. *Tapping* community knowledge for preparation of curriculum and instructional materials
8. Teachers from tribal community to collect cultural materials, to prepare the cultural themes making meaning with the community resource persons, and to prepare the curricular materials
9. Teachers from the tribal community as the resource persons to prepare Curriculum in their language representing their culture, to prepare text books, and teacher training module
10. The use of an integrated curriculum in the early years on themes chosen from seasonal events, daily activities and local environmental characteristics, all of which are familiar to the child to incorporate local skills and knowledge. (The NCF NCERT, 2005 recommendation)

The whole calendar year is distributed into thirty weeks. Each week represents one theme based on the seasonal themes. This helps the children to connect the experience of the season with the curricular themes while learning (e.g.; Cultural theme Rainy season: text: Rain). Thirty week theme web is administered in a calendar year in the MLE School. Each week contains a set of books for the children to read. Thus, there are more than 90 books in class-I and 90 Books in class II. In addition to this listening stories, experience stories and Story chart are used by the children for innovative self-reading.

## Framework of MLE in Orissa



ROAD-I:-CORRECTNESS AND ACCURACY (NEW KNOWLEDGE)

ROAD-II:-MEANING AND COMMUNICATION(EXPERIENCE OF CHILD/NATURE/SOCIETY)

For class II Odia was introduced as second language and, therefore, second language acquisition skill was adopted as the bridging strategies for language education. For this, materials like word web, alphabet book, Big Book and small Book in Odia (both in MT and L2) were prepared. The content from the MT is transferred to the second language to establish that if the content is known to the child the language can be achieved, and if the language is known content can be understood.

Teacher training Module was also prepared which is based on the basic theories and methods of MLE. This included curricular content and process of teaching and learning, subject areas, importance of use of TLM, reading and writing process, children self-learning activities, classroom transaction, weekly theme web, weekly lesson plan and daily lesson plan and inbuilt evaluation process. To monitor the MLE schools, monthly resource day is conducted in the Blocks where MLE teachers take part and share their teaching experience. The best practice that was developed in MLE Odisha was the teachers' engagement in curriculum design, material production and preparation of teacher training module and also teaching practice.

**Table 6: Transition Plan from Mother Tongue to Second Language Acquisition**

Language and content	Pre-school 1*	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade
MT Language learning	Language Oral MT	Language in MT	Language in MT	Language in MT	MT as subject	MT as subject
Maths	Number MT	Math in MT	Math in MT	Math in MT	Math in L2	Math L2
Curriculum Content EVS I&II	Environmental Studies In MT	Environmental Studies In MT	Environmental Studies In MT	Environmental Studies In MT	Environmental Studies In MT/L2	Environmental Studies In L2
Second Language			Oral 2 <sup>nd</sup> language+	Reading and	Developing fluency in	Language in L2

e Learning Odia			written Reading and writing L2 (Odia)	writing in L2	L2	
Third Language Learning English				Oral L3 + written L3	Oral L3+ written L3	Reading writing and comprehension in L3

(\* ECCE language education has not yet been started in MLE)

MT: Mother tongue, L1: first language, L2 (Second language: Odia), L3 (English)

### **Training of teachers of Pilot MLE Schools:**

It is widely acknowledged that good teachers are important to good education. Most countries have established teacher-training institutions to supply teachers to their schools. However, these institutions are normally structured to prepare teachers to teach only in the language of wider communication. Multilingual Education or mother tongue based education is adopted, but it is hard to get resource institutions who can deliver the goods based on the principles of language education. Therefore, teachers and DIET lecturers were trained as Master Trainers on MLE in the curriculum development and material development programs.

A fifteen days teacher training program is prepared for class I and another 15 days training program for class II teachers by the State MLE resource group. The training module is sound in terms of spelling out the basic principles of MLE theory and practice. Medium of training is also in tribal language so that the teachers also will have the confidence that training can also be imparted in their languages. This also gives them voice to express.

### **Monitoring and Assessment of MLE Schools:**

A monitoring team is constituted at the district /Block/CRCC level to assess the day to day schooling of MLE pilot schools. The BRCC and CRCC are oriented on how to monitor and assess the classroom transaction effectively so that the children can learn meaningfully. Besides reading and writing, fluency of children, exposure of children in discussion and dialogue with the peer group, updating weekly writing files, and reading of Big Book and small Book are monitored.

### **Success of MLE**

Children got back their voices to speak in their language. This is the great recognition to the children's learning. This has resulted in very less dropouts and more fluency in speaking and reading. Students are not afraid of the classroom and school. They spend more time in school than ever before.

### **Class Room and Children:**

Children find their classroom with many known pictures, materials, and words, numbers and stories painted in the classroom walls. They look the walls, recognize the words and its Odia alphabets and learn new languages by using alphabet chart, alphabet book, number chart and number book. Daily lesson plan is flexible and instead of distributing the time to forty minutes per subject, it has been divided in-to

two track systems where from 10.30 A.M. to 12.00 A.M. the children learn new academic skills like writing alphabets, words, and learn arithmetic for correctness and accuracy. This time also is divided into small units for writing, reading letters, words and sentences, counting number and writing numbers and so on. Then from noon to 4.00 PM the inputs on interpersonal communicative skills are given through language teaching, storytelling and games. Moral education and health education is also inbuilt in the daily lesson plan.

### **Teachers:**

Teachers find a well designed model for teaching helps them to follow the process than adopting traditional method. Teachers in MLE schools, including the resource persons have found the model very much useful for child centered learning. They find the result of reading and writing process very much useful for the children to show the achievement. Children are able to read the letters from the sentences and count the identical letters. Besides, they read the whole sentence understanding the meaning of the text. They also correlate the story with their life experience and tell their peers. Mother tongue has helped the children to understand the content. In the first two years of learning, children from Class I and class II have been able to read and write with meaning and able to identify the letters from the sentence which is a major breakthrough in the language teaching in MLE schools. As a whole, teachers revealed their teaching interesting and meaningful for the children. They revealed their own potentials as a teacher to perform meaningfully while teaching. They found how child centered teaching makes the teachers child centered.

### **Community linkage with Curriculum and Schooling:**

While preparing the curriculum, the community took part in sharing their knowledge on the seasonal and cultural themes which was ultimately used as the curricular theme. Teachers from the same community shared the instructional materials which was a type of recognition to the knowledge of the community. The elders of the community expressed their wisdom on putting more themes like ethno-medicine and ornaments. They also came to school to see how their stories and themes are taught in the classrooms. This was a major transformation among the tribal communities who saw that their knowledge is used in the schools. The stories and songs of the text were discussed in the family and villages. Women and grandparents also enjoyed in discussing the texts which is close to their mind and heart. People became closer to the school than ever before. Community response on MLE schools is that their children are now more interested in classroom than ever before. They feel that their children are now regular in school and there are hardly any dropouts.

### **Effect on Other Children of Other Class:**

While children of class-I were taught in mother tongue on MLE approach, children taught in other classes were fascinated to their mother tongue education. They used the Big Book and Small Book for reading. They were also interested to learn in their mother tongue. Attention of elder students to their younger ones was felt in those schools. Elder children also sing the song and tell the story from the text books of MLE.

### **Response of the Resource Persons:**

Resource persons feel empowered through the theories and methods of MLE approach which is highly child centric, contextual, and result oriented. They knew

about the methods of reading, writing, and the skill of preparation of curriculum and instructional materials, and write training modules adopting multiple strategies. This is a major shift from the uniform monolingual paradigm to bilingual and multilingual paradigm.

MLE is adopted in 544 schools out of 19,345 schools with linguistic diversities. Now the state is venturing for another 500 schools to introduce MLE in 2012. Odisha is the only State in India where Tribal education under multilingual approach has been adopted and about six South East Asian Countries have visited this program.

### **Conclusion:**

Tribal Education in Odisha has witnessed many successes and failures. The education of tribal children in their language is a new area of intervention. Like any other new program, unless it is witnessed, experimented and validated with the desired results, the mainstream culture never approves it. But once the good result is shown many people adopt it. However, education of tribal children advocated by the tribal or nontribal practitioners had to go through a 'loving struggle' for cooperation to establish that they also have wisdom to discover the truth from the life and making meaning from the local to feel the global from the land that they survive.

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## Language Maintenance in the Context of Industrialization and Development: The Rourkela Case-Study

**\*Seemita Mohanty**

### **Abstract**

*There are a few endangering tribal languages getting alienated from the native culture mostly due to economic reasons of livelihood leading to loss of ethnicity among the minorities. This has been attributed to the impact of market-driven industrial culture to which the minorities are getting assimilated. Efforts are being made to protect and develop minorities' language by developing agencies, including the Governments, remain inadequate. The hegemony of state language further marginalises the language of the minority communities in the field of education. Hence it is presumed that a collective effort of field social scientists and humanists, linguists and speakers of endangered languages can effectively influence the formulation of national language policies for development.*

### **Introduction:**

In contemporary India, region, religion, caste and language are the issues that have been the genesis of many battles and upheavals. Power struggles between political parties based on the above mentioned issues are a regular affair in today's India. Among these four issues, language is arguably the most notable, for if languages die, then, a complete way of life that existed since mankind has existed, would die with the language. The later generation of speakers of such languages would then lead a life impacted heavily by the dominant culture and language, striving hard to assimilate into the so-called developed society without realizing that what they have lost in the process is not limited only to their language but also to a complete way of life. Language endangerment today is a major issue in India, but, unfortunately, very little effort is being made -to protect our languages. Also, it is an established fact that minority languages, particularly tribal languages, are more prone to extinction. Modern cultures, encouraged by emerging technologies and widespread industrialization, are rapidly intruding into the lives of these once-isolated people with drastic effects on their way of life and on the environments they inhabit (Krauss, 1992).

Destruction of lands and livelihoods, spread of consumerism and western values, pressures of assimilation into dominant cultures, and deliberate policies of repression directed at indigenous groups are among the 'factors threatening the world's biodiversities as well as its cultural and linguistic diversity.' David Crystal, the noted linguist, in his book *Language Death* (2000 :93) has used the term 'preventive linguistics' to describe the branch of linguistics which provides information about the world's endangered languages and enables linguists and policy makers to take steps to preserve them or even to revitalize them.

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Preservation of our tribal languages become essential not only for the survival of our ancient cultures, but it also plays an important role in providing information on the values, beliefs and understanding of a person's origin. Industrialization without any doubt brings in faster growth of national income, alleviation of poverty, and reduction of income inequalities, leading to an improved quality of life, in general. Without industrial development, and its by-product urbanization, the whole world would still be in the dark ages. It is yet to see a development that embraces the inclusive growth of all the stakeholders is hardly seen in India. A major case in point is the recent confusion and controversy surrounding the Vedanta Resources group which tried its best to disregard all norms in trying to mine bauxite on a forested hill considered sacred by the ancient Dongria Kondh tribe of Kalahandi district of Odisha. Thankfully, it has been stopped in time by the India government.

### **Statement of the Problem:**

Language endangerment is the culmination of complex internal and external pressures that induce a speech community to adopt a language spoken by others (Crystal, 2000). These may include changes in values, rituals, social, economic and political life resulting from trade, migration, intermarriage, religious conversion, military conquest or because of development in the name of industrialization. In their study of contact-induced language change, American linguists Sarah Grey Thomason and Terrence Kaufman state that in situations of cultural pressure (where populations must speak a dominant language), three linguistic outcomes may occur: first - and most commonly - a subordinate population may shift abruptly to the dominant language, leaving the native language to a sudden linguistic death. Second, the more gradual process of language death may occur over several generations. The third and most rare outcome is for the pressured group to maintain as much of its native language as possible, while borrowing elements from the grammar of the dominant language (replacing all, or portions of, the grammar of the original language) (Sharp, 2008).

Cultural anthropologist Wade Davis points to the dangers of 'modernization' (often cited as reason for economic development) and globalization as threats to indigenous cultures and languages throughout the world. He argues that just as the biosphere is being eroded by these forces, so too is the 'ethno-sphere' - the cultural web of life. Dorais (1995) suggests that when people are faced with a choice between a dominant business language and a traditional language, they always lean towards the dominant, intruding language, even when they appreciate that their local language is significant to their contemporary, cultural, collective identity - that is, to the way they perceive and define their own place in the world. That was one of the findings of Louis-Jacques Dorais in his studies on language attitudes and behaviors in the early 90s in Canada's Eastern Arctic, in Igloodik, Nunavut, and Quaqtaq, Nunavik. Elias (2008) is of the view that the transition from a local traditional indigenous language in which one feels at home; to a dominating language and culture that embraces modernity, involves a redefinition of *the self*. There is an 'irresistible force' on ethnic speakers and cultures to identify as moderns and to deny their ethnic identities, the languages of business and commerce are adopted and languages that express a different world view 'become secondary or are abandoned.'

Along with the accompanying loss of culture, language loss can destroy a sense of self-worth, limiting human potential and complicating efforts to solve other problems, such as poverty, family breakdown, school failure and substance abuse (Crystal, 2000). After all, language death does not happen in 'privileged



communities.' It happens to the 'dispossessed and the disempowered,' people who most need their cultural resources to survive. Many minority communities associate their disadvantaged social and economic position with their ancestral culture and language. They have come to believe that their languages are of no use anymore and not worth retaining. Speakers of minority languages abandon their languages and cultures in the hope of overcoming discrimination, to secure a better livelihood and enhance social mobility for themselves and their children.

Experts have maintained that endangered languages are not necessarily languages with few speakers (Krauss, 1992; Crystal, 2000). Even though small communities are more vulnerable to external threats, the size of a group does not always matter. The viability of a language is determined first and foremost by the general attitude of its speakers towards their heritage and culture, of which their language may be considered as the most important component. In this respect, the intergenerational transmission of the language, i.e., teaching the children the heritage language, is the most important feature of language vitality. But it is being seen more and more that today's younger generation; due to the impact of urbanization and to a certain extent due to the influence of popular culture (TV, cinema, internet, music, computer and video games, etc.) is moving away from their own culture and language and trying to adopt the culture and language of the dominant community. The need to assimilate into a so-called 'superior' culture is so high that the younger generation is readily agreeing to forgo their age-old traditions and culture, which ironically has given them their unique identity. This effect is being seen even in a 'safe' language like Odia, so the effect on tribal languages of Odisha can very well be gauged from this. According to Krauss (1992), as many as half of the estimated 6,000 languages spoken on earth are 'moribund', that is, they are spoken only by adults who no longer teach them to the next generation.

The 2001 Census of India has 6641 raw returns of mother-tongues and they have been further rationalized into 1635 mother tongues and 1957 names which are treated as 'unclassified' and relegated to 'other' mother tongue category. The 1635 mother-tongues are further rationalized into 122 mother tongues by following the usual linguistic methods for rational grouping based on available linguistic information, and grouped under 22 Scheduled languages and 100 Non-scheduled languages. The census report also states that mother tongues having a population of less than 10000 on all-India basis, or, were not possible to identify on the basis of available linguistic information, have gone under 'others'. Therefore, as per the latest census report a good number of 'languages' recorded in the Indian census could not be classified as to their genetic relation, and so are treated as unclassified languages.

Officially, some 310 languages are counted as 'endangered' in India. Among them, some 10 languages spoken by more than 1,000 speakers are said to have a better chance of survival. These include Adibhasha, Bakerwali, Beldari, Jatapu, Kanjari, Raj, Sarodi, Sohali, Subba, Tirguli, besides some others like Bare, Kolhati, Khasal, Inkari and Uchai that are spoken by close to 1,000 speakers. But there are 47 others claimed by much less than 1,000 speakers and 263 more returned during the census by less than five speakers that are difficult to verify.

In 1971, data from the census was distributed in two categories, the officially listed languages of the eighth schedule, and the other languages with a minimum of 10,000 speakers each. All other languages spoken by less than 10,000 speakers were lumped together into a single entry: 'Others.' This practice continues to be followed and as linguist Uday Narayan Singh comments, "The problem with Indian labels is that the 1961 census had floated so many mother tongue labels (1,652)

especially among the unclassified languages (the 'others') that it will have to be worked out as to how many of them finally survived – which is itself a gigantic task.

However debatable the methodology followed by the Indian census, particularly the 1961 census, linguists and activists have concluded that a fifth part of India's linguistic heritage may have reached the stage of extinction over the last half-century. In addition, the language loss is experienced not just by the 'minor' languages and 'unclassified dialects', but also by 'major' languages that have long literary traditions and a rich heritage of writings.

### **The Rourkela Case-Study**

Rourkela is located in the north-western tip of the Indian State of Odisha at the heart of a rich mineral belt. Girdled by verdant hills, surrounded by three rivers, the modern steel township has come up at Rourkela where not long ago existed a hostile forest full of wild life, and inhabited by a variety of primitive tribes such as the Munda, the Oraon, the Bhuiyan, the Bhumij and the Kharia. One of the most modern and largest steel plants of the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), built with Indo-German collaboration is situated here. It also has one of the National Institutes of Technology (NIT) of the country. Spread over an area of 48 square kilometres, the township is divided into sectors on the two sides of the beautiful two-way ring road. The mega steel works on one side of the hill-range and the comfortable residential accommodation in picturesque setting, asphalt roads, adequate educational, medical and recreational facilities which are amply provided in the township on the other side of the hill-range is a unique symbol of Indo-German friendship. It stands as a remarkable success story of industrial development in the midst of an area inhabited by the tribal communities who reflect an age-old civilization, representing a linguistic diversity that is perhaps not easily matched by any other place in the world. One of the objectives of such a study is also to find out the extent of interaction between these two strata of society that represent almost the two extremes. The name 'Rourkela' means 'Our Village' derived from *Rour* which means 'our' and *kela* means 'village' in the local Sadri language spoken by various tribal communities living here in the city. It is the lingua franca adopted by all the tribal groups of the city.

Sadri is a branch of Prakrit language and is regarded as a sister language of Odia and Bengali. It is spoken in the Indian States of Jharkhand, Odisha and the north of West Bengal, and in Bangladesh. While the Chero tribe of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar use Sadri as their first language, it has also become a lingua franca of all Jharkhandi tribal communities. Besides speaking their own mother tongue, the Oraon, Munda and Kharia communities speak in Sadri with each other in many parts of Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, North Bengal, Assam, Andaman and Nicobar and other part of India, where Jharkhandi communities reside. Most of the people of the Oraon, Munda and Kharia communities along with the Kisan, Bhuiyan, and Gond group that constitute the tribal communities of Rourkela, today speak it as their first language. Sadri language has played a cementing role among the various tribes of Rourkela. While the Oraons, Gonds, Bhuiyans, Mahalis and Kisans form a part of the Dravidian linguistic family, the Mundas and Kharias belong to the Austric linguistic family.

But as an after-effect of industrialization, local indigenous languages of Rourkela like Sadri, Munda, Kharia, Kurukh, etc., regularly have come into contact with the languages of the migrant population who come from all over India and majority of whom speak English, Hindi and Odia. The cosmopolitan culture of the city has been strengthened by the use of multiple numbers of languages. Gradually from

a Munda, Sadri and Kurukh dominated place, this place was transformed into a Hindi / Odia dominated zone. Today, English has also made rapid inroads into the vocabulary of these indigenous people, exactly as it has happened for their more affluent co-habitants from the non-tribal communities. As a result of the linguistic and economic restructuring of the place, folk / tribal culture, literature and language is facing an identity crisis today, and is unable to withstand the challenges of a rapidly developing techno-urban Rourkela. According to government reports, a total area of more than 30,000 acres of lush-green tribal land has been acquired till now for the purpose of setting up the Rourkela Steel Plant and the Steel Township, Railway Lines, Fertilizer Township and the subsequent Mandira Dam Project of Rourkela Steel Plant. The Rourkela ripple effect can also be seen in other parts of Sundargarh district, which in recent years has attracted ample investments in industrial and mining activities due to its rich mineral resources. Some tribal members have found employment in these industrial installations and there have been heightened economic activities in the area that has helped the tribal people financially and socially.

### **Methodology**

The tribal people essentially express their cultural identity and distinctiveness in their social organization, language, rituals and festivals and also in their dress, ornaments, art and craft. This study was undertaken to get first-hand knowledge and information on the impact that massive industrialization and urbanization has had on the linguistic diversity of the tribal dominated place that Rourkela was once upon a time. A study on the 'language contact' scenario would help in recording and maintaining the related data and also facilitate in preserving some of our endangered tribal languages by bringing forth the tragic dichotomies existing in these tribal communities that are corroding their original way of living.

The study was conducted among both the educated populace of the city and also among the working class populace living in various slum areas (*bastis*) of the city. A questionnaire based on the objectives and target areas of the study was prepared and used as the research tool, along with interviews and personal interactions. The questionnaire for eliciting information was prepared which was based on UNESCO's existing questionnaire on endangered languages accessed from the document on *UNESCO Program Safeguarding of Endangered Languages*, Paris, 10–12 March 2003, by the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages. The researcher modified the questionnaire as per the local context and needs. The important parameters included in the survey questionnaire were language use, language maintenance and shift, language identity, language contact, code-switching, attitude towards language use, language status and preservation. The questionnaire was prepared in both English and Odia for better understanding and access during data collection. Basically a qualitative study was undertaken to assess the reality of the situation. The base data were the various issues and problems experienced by the tribal communities regarding their ancestral languages within and outside the family and community life. Although the questionnaire was not divided into different stages, each question collected specific information.

The questionnaire designed for the study was subjected to a validation process for face and content validity. During the validation process of this study, copies of the research questions and copies of the questionnaire were provided to some well-known linguists of the State and a few language experts of the locality. These experts went through the research questions and the questionnaire carefully

to ascertain the appropriateness and adequacy of the instrument. The changes and modifications asked for by these experts were then incorporated into the questionnaire to make it better applicable to the local situation and hence, more suitable and effective for the study undertaken.

The informants were drawn from a fairly large cross-section of the community so that representative sample of all the local languages could be covered. Various kinds of settings were undertaken to study the changing attitude, if any, of the informants towards their language since the genesis of industrialization and urbanization in Rourkela. Data collected from the various slums and from the township areas were studied in detail to facilitate a comparative study of language contact and change. The sample size consisted of around 100 persons from various age groups of both genders, out of which 4 people belonged to the 5 – 15 age group, 55 belonged to the 16 – 30 age group, 23 belonged to the 31 – 54 age group and 18 people to the above 55 age group. There were 42 female respondents and 58 male respondents.

### **Key Findings**

Due to industrialization and economic development of the area the traditional Adivasi institutions are almost on the verge of breakdown. This has not only taken its toll on the language of the Adivasis but on their total culture and way of living. There is a tendency to undervalue and disrespect the rituals and traditions that carried different meanings during the past. The customs and practices that once united villages and communities together have started getting diluted and do not carry the same significance anymore. The younger generation has even started adopting to non-Adivasi culture and way of living, which has anguished the older generation for which they are unable to find any solution. They understand that their culture, of which language is a subset, is on the verge of extinction, yet, at the same time, they realize that by holding onto a primitive way of life and living they would be depriving their younger generation all the advantages that a modern and dominant culture brings along with it for the development of future generations.

Ironically, to one particular question of whether they are proud of their own Adivasi language, most of the respondents replied affirmatively, yet, at the same time, the younger generation is deliberately allowing their tribal languages to gradually die out by refraining from using the language in their speech. Sadri still plays a cementing role among the tribal communities by virtue of its being the lingua franca of the area, but it is mostly used among the illiterate poor of the area. The younger generation of the relatively better-off and educated Adivasis of the area hardly uses the language among themselves. Odia, Hindi and English have replaced Sadri and other local dialects of the tribes. The older generation is quite blasé about it and hardly there is any objection to it. The general tendency today is to adopt any language that is aiding in the economic uplift of the populace. Interestingly, while hundred per cent of the respondents replied in the positive regarding preservation of their tribal languages, the users themselves are hardly taking any measures to preserve their own languages. A few extreme cases have also been noted where people have changed their surnames to hide their tribal identities. Personal interaction with the older generation of Adivasis also elicited the fact that Adivasi languages were once 'pure languages'. Abuse terms got absorbed into their languages subsequently from Odia and Hindi. It is now a situation where young people have almost started hating their own culture, own language, with the pre-conceived notion that this is what that

is keeping them economically and socially backward. The will to preserve their languages remains only on paper.

## **Conclusion**

According to Crystal (2000), bottom-up initiatives are a top priority, for they help to form the ground swell of public opinion which can make governments act. In many parts of the world, vociferous activism on behalf of minority languages is absent or suppressed. Rourkela is one such example. For the tribal people the solution to most of their problems lies in the hands of the government. Their solution to their various problems is that government officers, NGO workers, priests, missionaries, etc; should be conversant in their languages, so that they are able to derive the maximum benefits from all the schemes that government and other organizations have reserved for them. But, these officials and volunteers who come from all over India and from abroad sometimes take the help of local bilingual people to get their message across and don't normally bother to understand the tribal language. Mostly, it is seen that a state of laissez-faire prevails among the people of the region. To counter this, maybe, a tribal people's movement which compels the government to make them a part of the decision-making process in reality, and not just as eyewash, has become the need of the hour. Unless there is wide-spread awareness among the Adivasis themselves and the will power to hold on to their culture and language, no amount of government intervention can help these people.

A collective effort is highly required from social scientists and humanists, and speakers of endangered languages themselves in the formulation of national language policies. In the educational sector, a number of linguists are engaged in implementing increasingly popular mother tongue education programs. 'So-called mother tongue education, however, often does not refer to education in the ancestral languages of ethno-linguistic minorities (i.e. endangered languages), but rather to the teaching of these languages as school subjects. The most common educational model for teaching ethno-linguistic minority children in schools still uses locally or nationally dominant languages as media of instruction' (UNESCO 2003). Teaching exclusively in dominant languages supports their spread, but at the expense of endangered languages, which the authorities should try to avoid at every level.

Last but not the least, the strategies could be for the authorities to ensure that officials engaged in implementing all on-going tribal languages development programs and plans should be made accountable for their actions so that some measure of success could be derived from all those policies and plans, otherwise the strategies would remain only on paper, and the reality would be something vastly different.

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## Nature-based OLCHIKI and Santal Ethno-Nationalism

*\*Suresh Chandra Murmu*

*\*\*Jagannath Dash*

### **Abstract**

*Santal language has been one of their important ethnic-markers For centuries The hegemony of state language has impacted the Santali language, -the nature-based OL- CHIKI script invented by Pt. Raghunath Murmu, seems to be an essential part of tribe-caste contrast and continua. With the conscious assertion of language and documenting the social and cultural elements, it has further aroused a spirit ethno-nationalism and revitalized their social group cohesion through socio-cultural identities as a form of 'culture reborn'. Thus, at the pristine level, any development in tribal culture is nature-based that emerges spontaneously from within.*

### **Introduction**

The Santal tribal group is one of the very important tribal communities of India with its rich socio-cultural heritage. Santals are mainly concentrated in the states of Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal and Assam. They speak the language which belongs to the Munda group languages of the Austro-Asiatic family. Previously, all Santal writings were in the local Odia, Bengali, Devanagari or Roman scripts. Already there has been impressive number of works by foreign scholars and non-Santal writers on dictionary, grammar, collection of folklore etc., which are mostly intended for research purposes. Roman script was of extensive use for writing of most of the Santali books. But most of the creative literatures were written by the native speakers using either Bengali or Devanagari script. The use of different scripts for writing Santali has hindered the development and utilization of Santal language. This, in turn, has effectively marred the progress of Santali language and literature in several fields such as philosophy, history, religion, science, novel, prose, poetry etc ([Website.wesanthals.tripod.com/id43.html](http://Website.wesanthals.tripod.com/id43.html))

Pandit Raghunath Murmu (5<sup>th</sup> May 1905- 1<sup>st</sup> February 1982) from the village 'Dahardih' (Dandbose) in the present district of Mayurbhanj, Odisha invented "Olchiki Script" in 1925. When Pt. Murmu was studying in Gambharia L.P. School (1912-1913), in the beginning it was very difficult for him to understand the Odia medium of teaching. At one stage he decided to stop reading but his father *Nandalal* encouraged him to continue and kept on saying that nothing is impossible. For his upper primary studies he as admitted

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into Bahalda U.P. School which was 11 Kms away from his village. He was the house of Ananta Majhi, a Police Inspector in the village 'Banadungrī' with some of his friends. Pt. Raghunath Murmu was an average student and therefore he was being taught privately (tution) by a teacher named Madan Mohan. While reading history he came across about the Arya and Non-Aryan civilizations. He learnt that Non-Aryan were uncivilized and present Kolha, Kandha, Santal, Juang tribes etc have descended from them. He asked the teacher, "if we have descended from Non-Arya or Anarya people, then are we the people of uncivilized community"? The Teacher replied, "yes, you belong to uncivilized people". (Murmu, 2000). Like an arrow, it struck his heart and he was determined to do something for the Santal society and from that very day first of all started developing the script. Mr. Sauna Murmu, maternal uncle was his friend and advisor with whom he always discussed regarding the progress of his work. Sauna Murmu had continuously encouraged him in this epoch making work. He was so much so submerged in this work that few letters of the script were already developed while he was reading in the M. K. C. High School at Baripada.

Another very important of this script invention was the role of God Bidu and Goddess Chandan. 'BIDU-CHANDAN' used to come to him in dream and as Raghunath Murmu believed, with their supernatural inspirations and blessings he succeeded in his work (Ibid). In 1925 newly invented OLCHIKI script had its maiden display in a meeting (Mahasabha) which was organized at 'Chemenjuli' (Bihar) (Besra 1996). But at that time nobody had given any serious attention to it. Pt. Murmu did not feel perturbed by this.




















According to Pt. Raghunath Murmu 'Ol' means, "without creating any sound, only looking through eyes by drawing the picture of things in mind" and 'Chiki' usually prefers to pictorial representation."<sup>5</sup> The OLCHIKI script, also known as '*Ol Chemet*' (learning of writing, in Santali, '*Ol*' means writing and '*Cemet*' means learning).<sup>6</sup> OLCHIKI has 30 letters, the forms of which are intended to evoke natural shapes. These includes 6 (six) vowels '(Raha Alang)' and 24 consonants '(Keched Alang)'. OLCHIKI has 5 basic diacritics, and the combination of diacritics '*Mu Tudag*' and '*Gahla Tudag*' gives rise to another diacritic, called '*Mu-Gahla Tudag*'. According to famous Linguist Norman Zide, "The shapes of the letters are not arbitrary, but reflect the names for the letters, which are words, usually the names of objects or actions representing conventionalized form in the pictorial shape of the characters"([www.wikipedia.org/..Ol.chiki](http://www.wikipedia.org/..Ol.chiki) alphabet).












The great novelties and usages in Santali language are as result of the natural derivation of the forms for words, where, sounds generating out of actions or movements from animated or unanimated objects or sounds associated with living and their corresponding words are robustly approximated. Therefore, Pandit Raghunath Murmu tried to infuse this concept of natural formation of Santali words into OLCHIKI. When Pandit Raghunath Murmu devised the script, he carefully selected the shapes of the scripts from the nature the surroundings which are long familiar to the Santals, and is close to them. The selection of shapes for OLCHIKI letters is directly based on the shapes of objects or actions which the sounds for the letters represent, or with which sounds for the letters are in some way associated. Naturally, the sources for the shapes of letters were fire, soil, water, air and sky (as conceptualized in the Hindu literature as Kshiti, Up, Teja, Marut and Byoma) – an environment that surrounds the Earth. This is an indigenous concept and has multiple objectives. It greatly helped them to remember the letters easily as they are retrieved from the corresponding image of the nature. It can be observed that the shapes of most of the letters are either oval or round. This is due to the nature of



origin of letters, whose shapes are often derived from the shape of an object or action in the natural environment. For example, the word /AT/ means Earth and the shape of letter “O” /AT/ derived from the round shape of Earth. Similarly, /UD/ means mushroom and so it looks the shape of the letter “☄” /UD/.”(Website. wesanthals. Tripod.com/id 43.html).

Here is the list of symbols and meaning of all letters given in OLCHIKI Script & its writing system:

 /A/	shape of burning fire
 /AT/	Shape of Earth.
 /AG/	Shape of mouth during vomiting which produces the same sound as the name of the letter.
 /ANG/	Blowing air.
 /AL/	Writing. Shape of pen
 /AA/	The shape of working in the field with a spade.
 /AAK/	Sound of swan or shape of a bird.
 /AAJ/	The shape of a person pointing towards a third person with right hand (saying he).
 /AAM/	The shape of a person pointing towards a second person with left hand (saying you).
 /AAW/	Opening lips.
 /I/	Bending shape.
 /IS/	The shape of plough.
 /IH/	Shape of hands ups.
 /INJ/	The shape of a person pointing towards himself or herself with left hand.
 /IR/	The shape of sickle used for cutting or reaping.
 /U/	Shape of gourd used for serving food (serving spoon).
 /UCH/	Shape of a peak.
 /UD/	Shape of mushroom.
 /UNN/	Flying bee sound.

 /UY/	A dumb (Konda) cook while responding to someone by putting his both hands over his ears.
 /E/	Overflowing rivers changing course. Sliding of land, clay etc.
 /EP/	Taken from the shape when a person gives something to another.
 /EDD/	Derived from the word “Onday Nonday” means ‘there and here’. Using index finger indicating here and there.
 /EN/	The picture of thrashing grains with two legs.
 /ERR/	A picture of a path that turns to avoid an obstruction or a danger.
 /O/	Shape of mouth when sounding this
 /OTT/	The hump of a camel.
 /OB/	Curly hair
 /ONG/	Nasalized
 /OH/	Sign of pain.

As mentioned above, each and every letter of the OLCHIKI script has a meaning in the Santal language. Morphemes in Santal language derived from natural sounds such as- ‘sar-sor’ became ‘sade’(any sound), ‘huhu’ became ‘hoi’(wind), ‘hud-hud’ became ‘hudur’ (thunderbolt), ‘raat-rot’ became ‘rapud’ (breaking sound), ‘dhau-dhau’ became ‘dhagau’ (flame), ‘rar-ror’ to ‘raro’ (river having stone), ‘jhar-jhor’ to ‘jharna’ (river), ‘jhal-jhal’ to ‘jani’(a type of plant), ‘sorr’ sound became ‘sar’ (arrow), etc. Names of the birds and animals have also been derived from their sounds, for example; from ‘chened-chened’ it is ‘chene’ (bird), *kah-kah* became *kahu* (crow) [this one has little bit similar with the Odia word ‘Kau’ for the crow], from ‘koh-koh’ to ‘koh’ (crane), ‘tud-tud’ became ‘tud chene’ (a type of bird), from ‘renj – renj’ to ‘rerenj’ (an insect) etc. Few more may be added like ‘may-may’ became ‘merom’ (goat), ‘bheh-bheh’ to ‘bhidi’ (sheep) etc( *ibid*). Agriculture oriented morphemes are also present which are derived from feature of the instruments, for example ‘kanba’ (a part of plough) because of its ‘S’ like structure which is called ‘kalbung’ in Santali.

OLCHIKI is alphabetic, and does not share any of the syllabic properties of the other Indic scripts. Santali language contains some phonetics which is generally not used in English and neighboring Indian languages, and hence, learning of the correct pronunciations of OLCHIKI letters is very important. There is problem in the proper representation of Santali words with Indic scripts (Bengali, Devanagiri and Odia). Firstly, in Indic language, some phonetics like checked consonants /k’, c’, t’/ do not exist. If one attempts to suppress the inherent vowel of consonants /KA/, /CA/, /TA/ and /PA/ in any Indic script, it would only produce /k/, /c/, /t/, & /p/, respectively. Secondly, there is a difficulty of representing the Santal vowels. Currently, the Santali language does use eight or nine vowels that can be short or long nasalized, where as the Indic scripts provide only six vowels. By modifying the vowels of Indic scripts using diacritic marks, the Santali vowels can be represented to some extent, but when such vowels are used in the beginning of a word, they tend to approximate with

closest vowels of the Indic scripts. Thirdly, there no mechanism to represent the glottal stop of Santali sounds which Santals use very frequently (Website.wesanthals.tripod.com/id43.html).

There is also the problem with Roman script. Missionaries (first of all Paul Olaf Bodding, a Norwegian) brought the Latin alphabet, which was better at representing some Santal stops, but vowels were still problematic ([www.wikipedia.org/.Ol.chiki](http://www.wikipedia.org/.Ol.chiki) alphabet) . The Roman script cannot distinguish the short and long vowels. It is worth mentioning that the Santali long vowels are pronounced much longer than those of English, and other Indic languages. Another problem with Roman script is that it does not have any explicit mechanism to represent the glottal stop.

Therefore, to retain the beauty, specialty, peculiarity and sweetness of Santal language, there is need to use a script that can represent all sounds of the Santali language accurately and naturally appealing to all Santals, and it is definitely the OLCHIKI script that fulfils these requirements.

### **OLCHIKI and Rise of Santal Intellectual Capacity:**

In modern societies intellectuals do not form a clearly defined group. Traditionally, role of the intellectual has been that of the thinker and truth seeker. Intellectual life flourished under two conditions: the relative independence of intellectuals themselves, and the unique position they held in societies that were largely illiterate (Marshall1998). Invention of OLCHIKI script has definitely helped in the development intellectual capacity among the Santals. After its invention existing strong unity became stronger. Consciousness towards the preservation of rich and beautiful culture and also revival of the declining elements like Sarna Dharam has increased. Pt. Raghunath has written more than 150 books covering traditional songs, novel, short stories, religious sermons, myths and legends, books on Santali grammars, primary books for learning OLCHIKI, books on great persons in Santal society and Santal movement. Important books of Pt. Raghunath Murmu are *Oi Chemed*, *Lecture Serenj*, *Parsi Poha*, *Hor serenj*, *Hital*, *Bidu Chandan*, *Darege Dhan*, *Kherwal Bir*, *Sidu-Kanhu Santal Hul*, *Bakhen*, *Nel Jong Lagid Oi*. Gradually many educated Santals participated in the process of the development and spread of OLCHIKI script among the Santals of India. Intellectuals in Santal society can be divided into two groups; such as educated elites who became politicians later on and the second group is composed of traditional village eads (Manjhi), Pir Parganas and few gentle man from the Santal society. The first group was a medium to the people highly educated and well acquainted with rules and regulations of modern society. And the second group was the experts of the Santal society and culture.

### **OLCHIKI and Santal Ethno Nationalism:**

#### **Before Independence:**

With the childhood interest to do something for the society and continuous effort and hard working, Pt. Raghunath Murmu invented OLCHIKI script for the Santal language in 1925. Ol Guru Raghunath Murmu had first of all informed Sauna Murmu (Uncle of Raghunath) about his new creation and it was highly appreciated by Sauna. Sauna Murmu was the only person who continuously encouraged and gave psychological strength to Raghunath Murmu during hard times of the creation process. They finally thought of spreading it to the general public. Interesting part is that these two initially encouraged their relatives residing in different villages to learn the script.

In 1933 Pt. Raghunath Murmu was appointed as the head master in Badam Talia U.P. School in Mayurbhanj. His uncle Sauna Murmu was also a teacher in the same school. They started the work of development and spread of OLCHIKI among the Santal. Few important issues on which they planned to concentrate were opening of Santali schools, every child to be in the school, discussion with the parents of children, demand for govt. support to economically poor students and regarding the religion and literacy for the overall development of society and culture. Raghunath and Sauna started visiting different villages and through direct interaction with the people tried to make them understand regarding the importance of education and its future implications. Pt. Murmu was very contented and it hardly perturbed him during his struggle of language assertion.

In 1925 at Chemenjuli a well known village in Bihar a mass meeting on the rules and regulations of the Santal society was organized. Participants were village head (Manjhi), Parganas and Gentleman from the Santal society. Among those important persons are from Bisui Pir Mr. Lakhan Majhi, Kadon Pir Masang Majhi and Tento Majhi Fakir Majhi. Raghunath and Sauna had also participated in the mass meeting and Raghunath in his speech mentioned about the OLCHIKI and its requirement for the Santals. But unfortunately most of the participant did not appreciate at that time. It was very embarrassing moment for Raghunath and Sauna.

Gradually Santals started realizing the importance of OLCHIKI script for the community especially Manjhis, Parganas and educated mass. This was like a booster for Raghunath Murmu and Sauna Murmu. Pt. Murmu realized that for the development of the script, it was utmost necessary to bring it in printed form. He was also concerned about the declining features of the rich cultural heritage due to impact of alien culture. In 1935 he invented wooden typing/printing machine for OLCHIKI script. Publication of books and periodicals in OLCHIKI was needed at that time for its development. Wooden printing machine was displayed in Baripada science exhibition in February 1939 and its representative was Sauna Murmu. Many visitors appreciated the machine and at the same time came to know about the newly invented script. On the second day of the exhibition Mayurbhanj King Maharaja Pratap Chandra Bhanj Deo, his ministers, few Britishers and school Superintendent visited the place. Sauna Murmu explained in details to the king about the machine, its inventor and OLCHIKI script. A beautiful poem was typed with that wooden machine in OLCHIKI script which was composed by Pt. Raghunath Murmu and the meaning was nicely explained by Sauna to the King;

*“Jaanaam aiyodoy renej rehon*

*Unigay hah-raa*

*Jaanaam rol da nidhaan rehon*

*Onatege mah-raang*

*Senaed-em mened khan*

*Parsi manang senaetaam*

*Parsi senae-m mened khan*

*Ol manang senae taam”*

**Meaning:** Even if your mother is poor, she is the only person, who takes care of you, Even if your mother tongue is not developed, you proceed and develop through it. If you want to develop, develop your language first. If you want to develop the language, develop your writing (script).

Gradually OLCHIKI was developing and spreading among the Santals particularly in eastern regions of India. People were not only learning the new script but also enhancing the sense of solidarity and consciousness for the society and culture. That was the time when Santals were facing lot of problems like poverty, land alienation, indebtedness and exploitations from the non-tribals and British authority. Formation of new state of Odisha in 01-04-1936 from Bihar was seen by few Santali writers as intentional breaking of the growing unity and solidarity of the tribal communities. But Mayurbhanj was not included in Odisha at that time and it was under the King's rule.

In 1939, Pt. Raghunath Murmu called a meeting at Bodam Talia village to form an Association named 'Ol Samiti'. At that time major changes like new state formation and change in political structure were taking place. In that gathering more than 5000 people participated. Important personnel chosen were President of Samiti: Sambra Charan Tudu (Mayurbhanj), Vice-President –Lakhan Majhi (Kaduani), Secretary – Dinu Murmu (Dahardih), Sunaram Soren (Hesla), Bhuglu Tudu (Soso), Baydanath Hansdah (Soso), Kusal Murmu (Khararda), Kasu murmu (Kulgi). The leading female participants were Jauna Murmu and Arpana Murmu. After the formation of Ol Samiti, they decided to write an application to Maharaja of Mayurbhanj and also a signature campaign in support of OLCHIKI script was conducted. When they met Maharaja Pratap Chandra Bhanja Deo, he asked them, why they need the tribal script? They replied that for the development of Santal language. He wrote on the application that, "I donot feel the need of this script."

Pt. Raghunath Murmu came to realize that most of Santal songs have been composed with the mixture of Bengali and Odia language. Traditional songs of Sohrae festival, Karam, Baha, Danta, Dasain, Pata etc. have the elements of neighboring non-tribal languages. In 1936 Pt. Murmu wrote a book "Hor Serenj" containing the traditional songs of Santals. Initially it was published in Bengali but later on in OLCHIKI script. Another instrumental contribution of Pt. Raghunath Murmu was a play "Bidu Chandan". This was being showcased by the artists of Dandbose (Dahardih) everywhere to convey the masses how God Bidu and Goddess Chandan helped Pt. Murmu in the creation of OLCHIKI. So this kind of effort was also being made by Santal intellectuals for overall development of OLCHIKI script and in developing awareness among the Santals.

In this process of ethno nationalistic movement, regular meetings, rallies and discussions were held in different regions. In 1942 at Dandbose Pt Murmu called a meeting during Raja Festival where people not only from Mayurbhanj but from Bihar also participated in huge numbers. Intellectuals from Bihar were Champai Murmu (Rajhdoha Bihar) and Muniram Baskey (JomJola, Bihar). On this occasion historic speech of Sunaram Soren regarding the importance of script in the survival of a language to the mass was very significant. Another important non-tribal from the palace of Maharaja was Dewan Khitish Chandra Niogi whose crucial advice to spread the movement from Mayurbhanj to Bihar, Bengal, Odisha and Assam was very useful. He advised the Santal intellectuals of Mayurbhanj to discuss the matter with the Santals of other regions and put the demand before the Govt. Muniram Baskey also formed an organization "Kherwal Jarpa Samiti" in Bihar.

In 1946 with the effort of Pt. Raghunath Murmu and Muniram Baskey, "Chandan Press" was established for publication of books in OLCHIKI script. First book published from this press was "Nel Jong Lagid Ol" written by Pt. Murmu. Then a monthly news paper "Sagen Sakam" was started. One important book by Raghunath Murmu was "Ol Chemed" which had been published for easy learning of the script.

Another monthly news paper “Adivasi Sakam” by Jaypal Singh (who founded Adivasi Mahasabha in 1936) started from Chandan Press.

### **Pt. Raghunath Murmu and His Disciples:**

Raghunath Murmu left teaching profession on 06-02-1946 and completely dedicated his life for the OLCHIKI script and preservation of Santal society and culture. He started visiting Santal villages of Odisha, Bihar, Bengal and Assam with his chelas (disciples). They were showcasing Bidu-Chandan play, singing awareness songs composed by Raghunath Murmu, making and encouraging people to draw wall painting in the theme of OLCHIKI script and related to Santal culture.

Lakchar Serenj (Awareness song):

#### **Song -1**

*“Ol menah taamaa  
ror menah taamaa  
Dhorom menah taamaa*

*aamhon menaam.*

*Ol-em aad leray*

*ror-em aad leray*

*Dhorom mem add leray*

*aamhom adoh.”*

**Meaning:** *You have script, you have language*

*You have religion and you are there.*

*When you lose your writing, language*

*And religion, you will be lost forever.*

#### **Song- 2**

*Aamaah orah lagid, aamaah duar lagid*

*Jahain da bae neled, aamgem neled.*

*Aamaah jati lagid, Aamaah dhorom lagid,*

*Jahain da bae nenel, aamgay nelmay.*

**Meaning:** Nobody will take care of your house, you have to. Nobody will care for your caste/tribe, religion but you have to take care of it.

### **After Independence of India:**

India got independence on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947 from the British rule and from that day, the state of Myurbhanj became an independent unit. Mayurbhanj was not included with the state of Odisha and Bihar. Then in 1948, started the formation of different groups, some claiming amalgamation with Odisha and some wanting to keep the state independent. By September Maharaja saw that the administration had become chaotic and the ministry divided in this issue. Sri Sarat Chandra Das went to Delhi with Maharaja Pratap Chandra Bhanjdeo on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1948 and the Maharaj signed there the instrument of the merger. Officially the state of Mayurbhanj merged with Odisha on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1949.

Merging of Mayurbhanj with Odisha was opposed by most of the Santal leaders including Sunaram Majhi. Formerly Santal leaders' demand was in favor of independent Mayurbhanj. While the negotiation of Congress leaders of Odisha proved unavailing, Sunaram Soren felt convinced that if Mayurbhanj would cease to remain a separate entity, than its merger with Bihar would serve the cause of the tribal population better. Sunaram's arguments touched the tribal people in every nook and corner of the state making their agitation more popular and vigorous. It is very interesting to note that movement of OLCHIKI was expanding and development was

getting political back up . Santals were using the political rank-path to fulfill the desired goals. Somehow, it was being diverted towards the act of state formation (Das 2010).

In 1964 “Adibasi Sawnta Seched Lakchar Semled” (Adibasi Socio-Educational and Cultural Association) was founded with its head office at Rairang Pur, Odisha. This organization has several sub-branches in different parts of Odisha. With the effort of ASECA an OLCHIKI press named “Semled Press” was started in 1966 for the publication of books and periodicals. In Bihar also ASECA was founded at Chakulia in 1966 (Regd.No. -33/66-67) with its own press called “Marshal Press”. Later in the states of West Bengal (17-6-1967) and Assam (November, 1981) ASECA was founded and started seriously the work of script and language development.

Gradually with the opening of Santali printing press many Santali writers started writing on different aspects of Santal society and culture. Writers are not only from Odisha but also from the states of Bihar, Bengal and Assam. Exams were conducted by ASECA Rairang Pur. Finally in 1992 govt. Odisha appointed OLCHIKI teachers in 30 schools. In course of time several Santali Organizations and associations came in to existence all over India. Mention may be made of All India Santal Council (AISC), All India Santali Writers’ Association, Santal Bhasa Morchha, All Odisha OLCHIKI Students’ Union, All India Santali Welfare and Cultural Society, All Adibasi Students’ Union Assam, Adim Owar Jarpa Bhubaneswar, Raj Gal Mahila Samiti Bhubaneswar, Kherwal Itun Asra Jhargram etc. Many literary and cultural societies have already been established to promote art, literature and culture through this language all over India. Around 200 hundreds magazines and journals are published (weekly to yearly). Many books are being published in their own personal efforts. About 500 writers are engaged in promoting this language and literature. Santali language has also found a place in mass communication media, The All India Radio, Kolkata relaying a daily news bulletin in its half an hour program and other cultural programs from Cuttack, Jamshed pur, Ranchi, Chainbasa, Bhagalpur, Dumka, Keonjhar, Baripada and other centers. Doordarshan Kendra Kolkata is also relaying half an hour Santali program once in a week.

On 17<sup>th</sup> December 1999, many leaders of the important Santali Organizations gave a Memorandum for inclusion of Santali language in the 8<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Indian Constitution to Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Bajpayee. In 22 December 2003, Santali language has been included in the 8<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Indian Constitution. All India Sahitya Academy, New Delhi included Santali language in 08-07-2005 and awarded the Santal writers for outstanding contribution. State of Jharkhand has given the Santali the second state language status in 19-8-2005. Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) Mysore has also undertaken the project translating the books in to Santali language. OLCHIKI script was added to UNICODE Standard in April, 2008 with the release version 5.1 (Unicode Range: U+1C50-U+1C7F). Translations work of the Indian Constitution in to Santali is being done by the Santal experts. So every possible effort is being made especially by the educated class of Santals society to preserve, revive and develop OLCHIKI script, language & culture.

### **Conclusion:**

However, Santali, as a language, is as old as the Santals and its year of origin cannot be dated back, as a script, it is a recent development. As the Santals and OLCHIKI script exist in an ambit of Hindu or Caste fold surrounding, they are not free from the outside impact. Therefore, all its implications and development are only to be deciphered in the context of the contemporary Indian or Odia society and culture.

This may be an essential part of tribe-caste contrast and continua. Santals are speaking in Santali since time immemorial, but the development of its script brought in a kind of consciousness and arouses a spirit, which made the Santals a conscious linguistic social group. It furthered the process of reviving all its vanishing cultural traditions. By the help of the script, written documentation of the social and cultural elements are possible which ultimately united the Santals all over the nation and a kind of ethno-nationalism evoked in the whole process. It also mitigated the problem of their socio-cultural identity. By revivalist attitude, Santals came out as a community or culture reborn. However, such a process of transformation has no artificiality in its formation. Like that of the OLCHIKI script, all its developments are nature-based, emerged spontaneously from within. It is definitely a turning-point for the social anthropologists, linguists and sociologists.

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# Tribal Language Movement and Development Intervention in Mayurbhanj District of Odisha

\* **Laxman Kumar Sahoo**

## **Abstract**

*Language being the vehicle of culture, medium of communication and creates identity among the people is significant from anthropological point of view. In the era of globalization language shift and loss became a challenge to maintain the ethnic boundaries of tribal communities in India. Tribal people speak their own language and for the preservation of language developed script. Tribal communities to preserve their indigenous identity from language point of view carried out movements/agitations and bargained against state and central Government in different time periods. In this context this paper highlighted tribal language movements in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha taking into account the historical aspects and its development prospects in recent time. The paper also argues that if development intervention applies to all tribal languages of state then the tribal children of the state will get immense benefit from the state Government.*

**Key words:** Language, Movement, Development Intervention, Tribal Communities, Tribal Culture, Government, Mayurbhanj, Odisha, Education

## **Introduction:**

Language is one of the ethnic markers which plays very important role in maintaining the ethnicity. This has been quite important when one looks at the maintenance of ethnic boundaries by different ethnic groups. Ethnic platforms based on language criteria have been playing significant role in maintaining and projecting the numerical as well as the political strength of different communities. Bargaining process made by different ethnic groups over the time has been quite visible. In case of tribal communities such bargaining whenever made against the state and state crafts during the era of feudatory states, British rule and in subsequent period seems to be in favour of preserving ecology economy, life and living of the tribal communities. A few such movements organized in the state by different tribal and non tribal communities were paik uprising of Khurda in 1817-24, Kol Rebellion in 1821, Khond Rebellion of Ghumsur in 1835, Surendra Sai Rebellion in the year 1840, 1857 to 1864, Bhuiyan Rebellion in 1891-93 etc.

In this context historically the chhotanagur and santal pragana region of the newly formed Jharkhand state have significantly contributed. The Contribution of different ethnic

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groups living in this region in making the tribal movement processes in the country as significant, (Upadhyay and Pandey, PP:157). Few major rebellions by communities like Kol, Santal, Munda have spread over Jharkhand and some tribal dominated districts like Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Sundargarh of Odisha.

### **Objectives**

The basic objective of this paper is to trace the history of tribal language movements in district and to highlight the development interventions made by the state to preserve the linguistic identity of tribal communities in one hand and in other to impart education to tribal children in their mother tongue.

### **Data Sources**

The data for the paper have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. In order to collect primary data from different categories of respondents, the paper adopted case study, life history and interview techniques. The secondary data relating to various aspects of tribal language movement and its development perspective have been collected from books and journals.

### **Mayurbhanj District and Tribal people**

Mayurbhanj is a land locked district with a total geographical area of 10,418 sq.km and is situated in the northern boundary of the state with district head quarters at Baripada. The district lies between 21<sup>0</sup>.17' and 22<sup>0</sup>.34' North latitude, 85<sup>0</sup>.40' and 87<sup>0</sup>.11' East longitudes. The district is bounded on the North by Midnapore district of West Bengal, Singhbhum district of Jharkhand and on the West by Keonjhar district and on the East by Balasore district. Mayurbhanj, one of the tribal dominated districts of Odisha has been declared as the fully scheduled district of the state. With four sub-divisions Baripada and kaptipada being part of the plain areas, Bamanghati and Panchapirha are the hilly tribal dominated region of the district. Out of 26 blocks, the tribes are more concentrated in Jashipur, Khunta, Bijatala, Jamda, Tiring and Thakurmunda blocks where the population varies from 70 to 80 per cent of the total population of the respective blocks. The tribes constitute 56.6 per cent of total population of the district. According to 2001 census Mayurbhanj houses 30 tribes. The major tribes inhabiting in Mayurbhanj are Santal, Kolha, Bathudi, Bhunij, Munda, Gond, Saunti, Hill Kharia, Mahali and the minor tribes are Birhor, Lodha, Kisan, Holva, etc (on numerical strength basis). Santal is the largest tribes of the district scatteredly concentrated all over Mayurbhanj. The primitive tribes like The Hill Kharia, Birhor and Lodha deserve special mention in the district. According to 2001 census the total population of Mayurbhanj was 2.2 million, out of which the scheduled tribe population was 1.26 million.

The census report of 1931 of Mayurbhanj follows the classification suggested by Sir Edward A. Gait in 1901 that the languages spoken in the ex-state were classified into the following five district groups: i) Indo-Aryan family, (ii) Munda family, (iii) Dravidian family, (iv) Language, foreign to India, (v) Gipsy language. In 1951 census report 23 languages were enumerated as mother tongues in the district, but in 1961 it was 24. Odisha is a tribal dominated state with the largest number of tribal communities (62), representative of major linguistic groups like Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic and Indo-Aryan. Linguistically Austric and the Indo-Aryan language groups are dominated among the tribal population of Mayurbhanj. Tribal communities like Santal, Munda, Ho, Hill Kharia, Oraon, Mahali, Kol, Bhunij speak their own language. Rests of tribal communities of the district are speaking Odia and mixture of languages. In Mayurbhanj, three tribal communities developed their own script,

namely Santal, Munda and Ho. Out of which Santali language was constitutionally recognized.

### **History of Tribal Language Movements in Mayurbhanj**

Mayurbhanj district has witnessed a couple of rebellions organized by different tribal communities. A few among them were Larka kol Rebellion of 1825-27, Bamanghaty uprising of the Dharua tribe in 1848, Rebellion of Arjan Singh in 1857, Bamanghaty Rebellion of 1867, Adibasi uprising in 1917 and Tribal unrest in 1948-49. All these movements/ uprisings/ confrontations by the tribal communities in different time periods were by and large based on language and region platforms and they were against the Suppression/ exploitation of tribal communities (Mishra: 2011)

### **Santal Language Movement**

Tribal movements in Mayurbhanj district can be traced from the post independence period. Since post independence period Santal tribal people have been continuing their language movement for Santal solidarity. Santal is one of the most advanced tribes of India mostly concentrated in Eastern part of India. Their movement for solidarity through language had started from 1949. The inventor of Santali script OLCHIKI (1941) Pandit Raghunath Murmu is the epitome of language movement in Mayurbhanj district.

The total number of speakers of Santali language according to 1931 census was 258,911 whereas in 1951 their number reduced to 246,528. In 1961 census the number of persons having Santali as mother tongue was 269, 067 as mentioned in the district Gazetteers of Mayurbhanj. The Santali language has been divided into Northern Santali and Southern Santali with some variations between the two. The Santali as spoken in Mayurbhanj district belongs to the Southern groups. Santali has been registered by a total number of about 4.3 million persons accounting for 55.4 per cent of the total Austric speakers of India. Santali is considered to be the most important Austric language as well as a remarkably uniform one. It has reached a much higher stage of linguistic development than any other tribal language (Kochar, 1970:24).

Looking at the language movement of Santal tribal community in Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal, Government of India included Santali language in the 8<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the constitution of India in the year 2003. After getting constitutional recognition, Santali language has got place in Sahitya Akademi, Central Institute of Indian languages, National Book Trust, National Translation Mission, Union Public Service Commission, West Bengal College Service Commission and School Service Commission. Therefore, there is lot of scope for research and employment in Santali language, whereas the people of Santal tribe in Odisha are lagging behind in this language. Santal people of Mayurbhanj have been demanding to introduce Honours and pass subject in Santali at under Graduate level under the degree colleges of North Odisha University, further to establish a department of Santali language in North Odisha University, Baripada. All India Santali writers' Association had submitted a memorandum to the then Vice – Chancellor of North Odisha University, Baripada in this regard in 2009.

### **Ho Language Movement**

Ho tribal people of Jharkhand have been continuing their language movement since 1957 under the leadership of Lakho Bodra. Ho language movement owes its origin to Singhbhum district of Jharkhand state. Ho script is known as “Orang Chichi”.

The script introduced by Lakho Bodra consists of 31 letters. Lakho Bodra, a Ho, was born in Paseya village in 1923 near Chakradharpur in the district of Singhbhum, Jharkhand. Adi Samaj (A Social organization) of the Hos was established by Lakho Bodra in 1954. Adi Samaj had organized many movements under the leadership of Lakho Bodra and the main focus was to promote and preserve Ho language and script.

Hos are mainly concentrated in Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal. In Odisha particularly in Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts Hos are largely concentrated. Besides these places Hos also found in Balasore, Jajpur, Dhenkanal, Sundergarh, Khurda, Sambalpur, Deogarh and Angul districts of Odisha. According to 2001 census Ho language speaking population in Odisha was 10, 45,820. In the district Gazetteers of Mayurbhanj it has been mentioned that Ho mother tongue population in 1931 was 110,500, in 1951 was 117,483 and in 1961 census was 117,550 in the district of Mayurbhanj.

In Odisha context the Ho language movement had started in 1974. But after 1990s the language movement of Ho tribal people assumed significance particularly in Mayurbhanj. Two young Ho Leader namely Kayera Singh Bandia and Manoranjan Tiria significantly contributed towards Ho language movement in Mayurbhanj in Particular and Odisha in general. Another Ho leader Kanda Charan Biruli was also involved with Ho language movement. Kayera Singh Bandia was born in Kanakumra village under Kaptipada Block of Mayurbhanj. Kayera Singh Bandia, a commerce graduate from MPC College, Baripada also completed Post Graduation in Ho language from Ranchi University, Jharkhand. In the year 1996, a social organisation known as “Adi Sanskruti and Bigyan” was established at Jhinkapani, Singhbhum of Jharkhand to promote and preserve Ho language and script. The “Adi Sanskruti and Bigyan” organization had also replicated by Kayera Singh Bandia at Sarat, Mayurbhanj in 1996 to promote and preserve Ho language and script in Odisha. He had also established another organization “Orang Chichi Teachers Training and Research Centre” at Sarat, Mayurbhanj in 2001. Kayera Singh Bandias’ significant contribution towards Ho language movement brought him to limelight and Government of Odisha recognized him as one of the experts in Ho language and script and a resource person too. In the year 2010 Government of Odisha felicitated him and conferred “Adibasi Prativa Samman”. Kayera Singh Bandia is at present serving as the State president of Ho Language Development Council.

Manoranjan Tiria another Ho language movement leader was born in Tilakuti village under Raruan Block of Mayurbhanj district. After graduation in Arts, Manoranjan Tiria completed P.G. Diploma in Journalism from IJMJ, Dhenkanal. He was the central member of Adibasi Ho Samaj Mahasava (Chaibasa, Jharkhand), the largest social organisation of Ho people in India. Manoranjan Tiria had established Mayurbhanj district wing of Ho people’s social organization known as “Adibasi Ho Samaj Mahasava” in 2011 to carry out language movement in Northern part of Odisha. Manoranjan Tiria had also established another social organisation known as “Adibasi Ho student’s union” in 2007 to unite Ho students to join in language movement. He was one of the members of expert committee on Ho language constituted by Government of Odisha in 2010. At present he is serving as the president of Mayurbhanj district “Adibasi Ho Samaj Mahasava”. Both Kayera Singh Bandia and Manoranjan Tiria had organized different movements/agitations at different places in Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts of Odisha from language point of view. The agitations were held in 2001 at Barbil in Keonjhar district, in 2002 at

Baripada, in 2003 at Rairangpur and Karanjia, in 2004 at Karanjia, in 2006 at Bhanjaka and in 2007 at Jashipur. Further leaders of different social organizations of Ho tribal community of Mayurbhanj district, Odisha state and Jharkhand state constituted an All India Ho Language Action Committee in 2011 to intensify language movement and pressure Government of India to include Ho language in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution of India. The All India Ho Language Action Committee and its president Kanda Charan Biruli and General Secretary Kayera Singh Bandia had organized a two days All India Ho language conference at Rairangpur during the period 01.09.2011 to 02.09.2011 to discuss various things of Ho language and script under the auspices of Sidhara Susar Akala (A Social Organisation of Ho community).

### **Munda Language Movement:**

Munda, another tribal community residing in Mayurbhanj district, owes their origin to Chhotanagpur of Jharkhand state. They migrated from Chhotanagpur and settled in Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Jajpur districts of Odisha. They belong to Mundari speaking language group.

In 1931 census, the Mundari speaking persons were shown as 683. According to 1951 census, the number was 20,918 and in 1961 it increased to 58,383 as mentioned in the district Gazetteers of Mayurbhanj.

It was the European missionaries who first began the study of languages of the Munda(ri)s in the nineteenth century. Mundari was written in the Nagari script. Father Hoffmann had compiled the 13 volume Encyclopedia Mundarica (1930-1941) in English, (Halder, 2000, PP: 28-29).

Rohidas Singh Nag of Salbani Village in Mayurbhanj district is the inventor of Munda script "Mundaribani". Rohidas Singh Nag was born on 5.2.1934 in Salbani village, Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. It was in the year 1949 Rohidas Singh Nag studying at class –III invented Mundari script and wrote the alphabets on the wall of school with the help of clay. In the year 1953, Nag was a student of class –VIII invented 35 alphabets of Mundari script. Further, Nag simplified Mundari script and in the year 1980 total 27 alphabets were selected for use. In 1980 Rohidas Singh Nag brought to the knowledge of the then Chief Minister of Odisha Shri J.B. Pattnaik on the development of Mundari script and submitted a memorandum to recognize Munda language constitutionally. In 1999 Rohidas Singh Nag with others submitted a memorandum to the then president of India and appealed for constitutional recognition of Munda language. Mundari Samaj Sawara Jamada (A Social Organisation of Munda community) has been demanding to incorporate Munda language in the eighth schedule of the constitution of India, to air Munda language through All India Radio, further to establish a department of Munda language at North Odisha University, Baripada for higher studies.

Different social organisations have felicitated Rohidas Singh Nag. In 1996 Academy of Tribal Dialects and Culture (A Research Institute of S.T and S.C. Development Department, Government of Odisha) for his significant contribution to tribal language and culture of Odisha in general and Munda language and culture in Particular. In 2004 by Bharat Munda Samaj and in 2010 at Balangi Mahostava in Baripada, he was also felicitated.

## **Tribal Language and Development Intervention in Mayurbhanj**

Tribal communities are mostly confined to forest and isolated regions of India. They have distinct art, culture, worldview and language of their own. There is a gap between tribal and modern language. Poverty and language gap leads to illiteracy among the tribal people. Again national and regional languages dominated over the tribal language designated tribal languages as minority languages of India. Therefore, the tribal communities living in different regions of the country are lagging behind in educational achievement as compared to non-tribal people. For the balanced development of all sections of people in Indian society, it is imperative to bring the tribal communities to the forefront of educational revolution and mainstream of national development. Education imparts knowledge, creates self identity, makes a sense of confidence, courage and ability among the tribal people of India to know and overcome their problems associated with exploitation and deprivation, and avail socio-economic and political opportunities extended to them.

Quality education begins with the mother tongue. A Strong foundation in the mother tongue ensures effective education and high levels of proficiency on many languages. Education in the mother tongue is guaranteed in our constitution and recommended in the National Curriculum Framework, 2005 and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. Keeping in mind constitutional obligation, in the year 2003, the Government of India under its Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Programme approached states with substantial tribal population to introduce mother tongue based MLE for tribal children.

Odisha as a state with varied linguistic situation has adopted Multi Lingual Education (MLE) in principle and in 2006-07 tribal languages were selected based on their educational need, social demand and gap of home and school language. The languages are Santali, Saora, Koya, Munda, Kui, Kuvi, Oram, Kishan, Bonda and Juang. Multi Lingual Education (MLE) in Odisha is a new area of intervention to address the issues related to education of tribal children where the teachers and community have their sharing. Multi Lingual Education (MLE) using mother tongue in early years of their primary classes and gradually shifts from mother tongue (L1) to state language (L2) and then to national or international language (L3). There are three aspects of MLE...

- (i) It provides a strong foundation and a good bridge for the children to shift from one language to the other within five years and acquire competency in all languages,
- (ii) It is the curriculum and instructional material which comes from the cultural context of the community in which the child is a part of it,
- (iii) The teachers should be from tribal community to prepare the curriculum and text books.

Based on Multi Lingual Education (MLE) principle, the state has responded positively to the demands of tribal communities of Mayurbhanj district and adopted accordingly. Government of Odisha, introduced OLCHIKI in primary school level and in college level too to bridge the language gap between tribal society and modern society. Under Sarva Shikhya Abhiyan (SSA) programme Santal children are provided education in their own script OLCHIKI. In Mayurbhanj district 100 schools in 2007-08 have adopted OLCHIKI under Multi Lingual Education (MLE) to impart education to Santal children. This is a part of the effort to redefine and reassert their ethno-cultural identity. In response to Ho language movement in Mayurbhanj and Odisha, Government of Odisha had constituted an expert committee in 2010 to

assert the Ho language and script, and its use by Ho tribal people. The committee found that Ho language meets all criteria for the inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of our constitution. Then Tribal Advisory council recommended Government of Odisha to take up the issue with central Government. Simultaneously under Sarva Shikhya Abhiyan (SSA) programme in 2009-10 in Mayurbhanj district 10 primary schools have adopted Ho language to impart education to Ho children under the Multi Lingual Education (MLE). In response to the Munda language movement in Odisha, under Sarva Shikhya Abhiyan (SSA) programme 30 primary schools in Mayurbhanj district in 2007-08 have adopted Munda language to impart education to Munda children as a part of the Multi Lingual Education (MLE).

### **Conclusion**

Language as one of the ethnic markers has played a significant role in different movements/uprisings organized by tribal communities of Mayurbhanj. Language/dialect of different tribal communities of the district has been playing visible roles in the construction of ethnicity of different tribal communities living in the district. Understanding its importance three major tribal communities like Santal, Ho and Munda have developed their script in different time periods. The importance of these scripts has been well recognized by the state. The state and the educational planners have understood the importance of these scripts at primary level of education, therefore the Multi Lingual Education (MLE) introduced by the state has incorporated the tribal languages in the education. The findings of pilot testing processes of multi Lingual Education (MLE) may be implemented for the educational development of all tribal communities. This will not only help the maintenance of ethnic boundaries of the tribal communities but also provide opportunities for the tribal children to internalize the development process of the state.

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# Sustainable Development in Tribal Odisha: Critical Areas of Concern and Need for an Integrated Development Agenda

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## Abstract

*In spite of inhabiting a region considered to be endowed with bountiful reserves of a variety of high-grade mineral resources, the Tribals of Odisha continue to endure some of the worst forms of social tribulations including illiteracy, food insecurity, landlessness etc. Although the large number of development interventions undertaken by the Welfare Governments (State and Center) ever since independence have helped in improving the development scenario to a certain extent with the literacy rates registered by the Community in successive Census of India Reports (1951 to 2001) increasing at a steady pace and the population of Tribals languishing Below Poverty Line (BPL) gradually reducing with the passage of time but, most of the objectives stipulated by independent Development Interventions have either not been attained or have been partially achieved which has resulted in an abysmally slow pace of rather inequitable development in the regions inhabited by this vulnerable section of people. Apart from providing a brief background of the Tribal scenario of Odisha and assessing their performance in respect of certain vital Development Indicators, the present paper on the basis of an empirical study has come up with a list of 11 findings which highlight the critical issues in Tribal Development before using them as a reference to draw an Integrated Development Agenda for the sustainable development of the community in the form of a list of recommendations which have been proposed at the end of the paper.*

**Key Words;** Development Indicators, Integrated Development Agenda, Odisha, Scheduled Tribes, Sustainable Development, Tribal Development

## 1. Background of the Study

Accounting for approximately one-tenth of the Country's total population and one-quarter (Census of India 2001 Report) of the population of Odisha, the Tribal brethren continue to languish in poverty and counter some of the worst forms of socio-economic tribulations. Along with Odisha which is regarded as the homeland of Tribals, the States of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and most of North-Eastern India are home to a

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substantial fraction of the Country's total tribal population. Apart from being home to 62 different Tribal Communities, Odisha owns the dubious distinction of domiciling 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) which is the largest in the entire Country. The Tribals of Odisha are found to be thickly concentrated in the mineral-rich Western Districts of the State which are characterized by a plethora of socio-economic adversities ranging from economic destitution in the form of abject poverty, food insecurity, lack of adequate connectivity to social apathies such as highly restricted worldview, lack of awareness on essential aspects of social life, illiteracy etc.

To annul the enduring phenomenon of hardships of the Tribals of the State, the Welfare Governments have initiated a large array of developmental programmes intended to bring about an overall improvement in their Quality of Life (QoL). For this purpose, interventions in the form of dedicated institutions for Tribal Development and Programmes/ Schemes/ Projects proposed for registering speedy progress in specific areas of concern such as health, education, livelihood etc. were formed, commissioned and implemented at different levels. Although, some amount of progress has been made since independence with regards to the performance of this vulnerable section of population concerning some vital parameters of development but, the pace of progress has been exceedingly slow and rather sluggish with the fruits of the welfare initiatives launched by both the State as well as the Central Governments not being equitably distributed amongst the target beneficiaries and the stipulated targets/ objectives not being met within the predetermined deadlines.

## 2. The Tribals of Odisha – Key Development Indicators

The Census of India Report 2001 records the Tribal population of Odisha to be in excess of 80 Lakhs which accounts for roughly 22.13 percent of the total population of the State. This section of the paper has been used by the author to provide an overview of the performance of the Odishan Tribes concerning some vital development indicators. The indicators of progress analyzed in the succeeding paragraphs with the aid of appropriate tables encompassing statistical data drawn from credible sources including the Census of India and the Agriculture Census from 1961 to 2001 have focused on the critical areas of demographics, education, workforce participation etc.

**Table 1 Scheduled Tribe (ST) Population Profile – Comparative account of Odisha and India (Absolute Figures)**

Year	Population		Growth Rate (In Percentage)		Sex Ratio	
	Odisha	India	Odisha	India	Odisha	India
1961	4223757	29883470	-	-	1016	987
1971	5071937	38015162	20.1	27.2	1007	982
1981	5915067	51628638	16.6	35.8	1012	983
1991	7032214	67758380	18.9	31.2	1002	972
2001	8145081	84326240	15.8	24.5	1003	978

Source: Census of India

Apart from the other deductions pertaining to the demographics of the STs of Odisha that can be drawn from the above table, the most striking feature is their sex ratio in the State which has been constantly recorded in favor of the female population. This is a welcome trend as it reflects that the socio-economically backward Tribal people are culturally much more evolved than their non-Tribal counterparts who have registered a progressively declining sex ratio in favor of males in successive Census Reports owing primarily to the heinous practices of sex determination, female feticide and female infanticide which is rampant especially in the Northern States of India with specific reference to Punjab, Haryana and Delhi.

**Table 2 ST Literacy Rates in Odisha and India – Including Female literacy Rate (In Percentage)**

Year	Literacy Rate		Female Literacy Rate	
	Odisha	India	Odisha	India
1961	7.4	8.5	1.8	3.2
1971	9.5	11.3	2.6	4.9
1981	14.0	16.4	4.8	8.0
1991	22.3	26.6	10.2	18.2
2001	37.4	47.1	23.4	34.8

Source: Census of India

A detailed examination of the figures mentioned in Table 2 reveal that although the literacy rate of the ST population of Odisha in general has increased more than 5 fold but, the pace of growth has been significantly slower as compared to the National scenario. Similarly, the ST female population of the State continues to record an appallingly low literacy rate which is significantly lower than both their National counterparts as well as the overall ST literacy rate of the State and Country.

**Table 3 Work Force Participation Rate (WFPR) of STs – Comparative account of Odisha and India (In Percentage)**

Year	Odisha	India
1961	53.8	-
1971	34.8	38.6
1981	49.4	49.8
1991	49.4	49.3
2001	49.0	40.4

Source: Census of India

The above-table reveals that the WFPR of Tribals in Odisha is appreciably higher than the STs of the rest of India. However, it is relevant to state here that the WFPR of Tribals in Odisha has reduced from 53.8 % in 1961 to 2001 with the 1971 Census of India Report recording the same to be lowest at 34.8 %. An increasing rate of WFPR of Tribes reflects their assimilation with the mainstream society concerning their association with the organized work sector.

### 3. Review of Literature

The approach to reviewing the existing literature pertinent to the present study was based on identifying the relevant Books, Research Papers etc. and

meticulously reading for tracing any information which could be vital for the Research Paper and accordingly interpreting them to bring out logical conclusions from the same. During the course of the grueling review of literature, 17 Research Papers, 2 Research Reports, 6 Books and 8 News Paper Clippings apart from a few Internet Web Links were examined by the Researcher-author. The succeeding paragraphs have been used to highlight in brief the theme of a few Books and Research Papers relevant to the present study which were reviewed during the course of the literature appraisal.

**3.1 Out of this Earth: East India Adivasis and the Aluminium Cartel:** This Book published by the Orient Blackswan Publication House in 2010 has been authored by Felix Padel and Samarendra Das. The Book presents an empirical insight into how Corporate Houses with special reference to the Aluminium Industry in their endeavor towards profit maximization are disregarding Tribal interests and violating the obligatory framework meant for protecting the human rights of this vulnerable section of people. The Book goes on to accuse even the Government of being in a tacit agreement with Industrial Players to bend the laws of the land in exchange of monetary sweeteners which is furthering their evil conduct causing irreversible damage to local ecology in general and the Tribals in particular.

**3.2 Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives by Vedanta Aluminium Limited – Lanjigarh:** This Case Study was presented by Anil Ota in the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Green Business Strategy held at J.K. Business School – Gurgaon in 2011 and was published in the same year in an Electronic Book titled “Green Business Strategy”. The Case Study provides a pragmatic account of the community empowerment enterprise of Vedanta Alumina Refinery at Lanjigarh which happens to be the sole major Industry in the Kalahandi District of Odisha. Beginning with a historical perspective of the region’s hoary association with hunger, food insecurity and starvation, the Paper provides an illustrative account of the Social Responsibility initiatives being carried out by the Organization with special reference to the Dongria Kondhs (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group) who happen to be the most vulnerable section of population inhabiting the region. At the end, the paper highlights the implications of Vedanta’s CSR interventions in augmenting the overall Quality of Life (QoL) of the local Community encompassing its performance in the spheres of education, health and livelihood drawing statistical data from a report jointly published by the Asian Institute of Sustainable Development (AISD) and Xaviers Institute of Social Service – Ranchi in the year 2008.

**3.3 Kutia Kondh Development Agency (KKDA) – Lanjigarh: A Development Profile:** This Case Study was published in the Journal of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) in the year 2008 and was authored by Kalpana Pattnaik. KKDA – Lanjigarh is a micro project which was set-up in the 1980s to usher speedy growth and progress of the Kutia Kondhs residing within its intervention area of the Lanjigarh Community Development (C.D.) Block. The paper provides a perspective and comparative view of the development scenario of the Kutia Kondhs residing within the jurisdiction of KKDA – Lanjigarh by evaluating their performance with respect to certain key development indicators such as Land

Holding, Plant and Animal Resources, Socio-Economic and Demographic Composition, Health, Economy, Workforce Participation, Indebtedness, Literacy and Poverty. To provide a relative dimension to the study and exhibit the progress that the Micro Project has attained in the aforementioned parameters of human wellbeing, pertinent statistical data drawn from the SCSTRTI's socio-economic survey 2001 and 2007-08 were used as benchmark information. The paper highlights that while progress has been made with respect to a large number of Development Indices, the pace of overall transformation of the Community's QoL has been rather sluggish.

### **3.4 Dispossessed and Displaced: A Brief Paper on the Tribal Issues in**

**Orissa:** This paper by Kundan Kumar provides an insight into the socio-economic problems being countered by the Tribal People of Odisha with special reference to land ownership and their access to forest and other natural resources which are regarded as Common Property Resources. The Paper also extensively focuses on the ongoing mining and industrial activities in the Scheduled V areas of Odisha inhabited by a majority Tribal Population and the consequent breach of legislative enactments. By highlighting pertinent information relating to the forcible eviction and displacement of Tribals in the State and their consequent non-rehabilitation in a sustainable manner, the author emphasizes the need for the devising and ratifying of a credible Tribal Resettlement and Rehabilitation (R & R) Policy with special provisions to adequately address the livelihood and land ownership issues being countered by the Tribal people especially in the wake of industry-driven involuntary displacement in 21<sup>st</sup> Century India.

### **3.5 Development Projects and Displaced Tribal: An Empirical Study:**

This Book authored by Prof. (Dr) A.B. Ota was published by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) in the year 2010. This is a unique Book with regards to both its diverse content within the domain of Resettlement as well as the methodology adopted by the study on the basis of which it has been devised. To be precise, this Book has been formulated on the basis of rigorous empirical surveys undertaken on the sample Displaced and Project Affected Persons (PAPs) of four major Development Projects in Odisha such as the Upper Kolab Electric Project, Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) – Angul and Jharsuguda, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) – Koraput and Harabhangi Irrigation Project located on River Bansadhara. Apart from the outcomes of the study which highlight a large number of social tribulations which Prof. Ota observed to be countered by the sample population, the striking features of the Book include a dedicated chapter titled “Critical Issues to be Looked at While Setting up a Development Project – With Special Emphasis on the Tribals” which puts forth the imperative areas of concern that needs to be looked into while establishing a Development Project in Tribal areas and an analysis of the impact development projects and displacement have on the livelihood restoration of the Tribal people.

One of the most significant aspects of the present study is the astonishing synergy that one can observe in the outcomes of review of literature, the empirical survey as well as the long-ranging interactions that the author carried out with a large number of Subject-Matter Specialists belonging to the Disciplines

of Anthropology, Tribal Development and Agriculture. This stunning resemblance of outcomes generated by different techniques of study employed during the course of the empirical exercise including literature review, observation etc. not only rationalize and validate the findings of the study to be not merely based on the observations of the Researcher-author but also justify that the construal of socio-economic predicaments of the displaced by authors illustrated in their published works are largely similar and hence assume genuine importance.

#### **4. About the Study**

The present Research Paper has been originated on the basis of the outcome generated by an empirical study undertaken by the author with the principal purpose of assessing the critical issues of concern in Tribal Development in Odisha so that an Integrated Development Agenda can be recommended for the sustainable development of this vulnerable section of population. In fact, a large number of analytical and investigative exercises undertaken by Government-appointed Committees and Commissions, independent Researchers, Sociologists and Anthropologists in the past have demonstrated a variety of reasons responsible for the ongoing slow-paced development that the Tribal-dominated Western Districts in the State of Odisha are subject to; but the pity of the fact is that hardly has any of these studies focused on the relevant aspects of sustainability being integrated as a vital component into the proposed model of development for the STs and almost none have developed an Integrated Development Agenda on the basis of their findings for the holistic upgrading in their way of life. Under such circumstances, it was considered imperative to undertake a fresh empirical exercise in selected sample locations inhabited by the STs in Odisha with the aid of an appropriate Research Design intended to draw out the problems being encountered by the sample population in their own words so that the ground reality with regards to the actual issues being confronted by the STs could be focused and documented down before being used as a reference to address the critical issues in the proposed Integrated Development Agenda.

##### **4.1 Objectives of the Study**

Apart from identifying the key and critical areas of concern affecting the development prospects of the Tribal population of Odisha which serve as indicated earlier the reference for drawing an integrated development agenda for the Community, the study also focused at accomplishing the following broad objectives: -

- 4.1.1 Providing a succinct demographic sketch of STs in the State of Odisha
- 4.1.2 Evaluating the performance of the STs in some crucial Development Indicators such as Education, workforce participation etc.
- 4.1.3 Critically inspect and explore the key thrust areas of the ongoing programmes for Tribal development in Odisha

##### **4.2 Hypothesis used**

For the purpose of attaining the required literary maturity and gaining an appropriate level of knowledge concerning the present subject-matter, a large number of secondary reference material were reviewed in detail by the author the outcome of which form the foundation of the hypothesis on the basis of which the present study has been undertaken. To be precise, the present study has been undertaken on the basis of the following major hypothesis: -

- 4.2.1 The STs of Odisha as elsewhere in India lead a miserable QoL which is highly inferior as compared to their non-Tribal counterparts
- 4.2.2 The pace of progress in the Tribal-dominated Western Districts of Odisha is exceptionally slow
- 4.2.3 The anticipated objectives of most Tribal Welfare Programmes are either not being achieved or are being attained only partially
- 4.2.4 The large number of Tribal Development schemes being undertaken by the State and Central Governments only address issues and concerns of the Community in the form of snippets without any practical approach for holistic progress of the Tribal people
- 4.2.5 Sustainability has never been a fundamental feature of the Development agenda for the STs
- 4.2.6 The absence of a realistic Integrated Development Agenda has resulted the phenomenon of growth and progress in the Tribal areas to happen in an unorganized and random manner

### 4.3 Geographical Coverage and Sample

**Table 4 Geographical Coverage and Study Sample**

District	C.D. Blocks	Sample Covered	Population
Kalahandi	Lanjigarh, Kesinga, Thuamulrampur and Narla	50	
Koraput	Bandhugaon, Narayanpatna and Koraput	30	
Rayagada	Muniguda and Rayagada	20	
Malkangiri	G. Udayagiri	20	
Nawarangpur	Nawarangpur	20	
Total		140	

Source: Research Design

The present study was undertaken across 11 Community Development (C.D) Blocks situated in five Districts of Western Odisha. A total sample population of 140 individuals belonging to different age groups, professions and socio-cultural groupings were covered under the study. Simple Random Sampling Technique was used to select the requisite sample population from the universe in a manner that is free from any form of bias. Given below is a tabular version of the geographical coverage and sample population covered the study: -

### 4.4 Techniques used for Data Collection

A large number of Anthropological and Sociological techniques were engaged for obtaining the required information, facts and figures for the present study with the primary intent of ensuring that validity of the pooled data can be verified through cross-checking of the information obtained from various sources. The major techniques of data collection used during the course of the empirical exercise are as follows:

- 4.4.1 Case Study Method

- 4.4.2 Focused Group Discussion (FGD) Method
- 4.4.3 Interview Method
- 4.4.4 Literature Review Method
- 4.4.5 Observation Method (Participant Observation and Non-Participant Observation Methods)
- 4.4.6 Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)Method
- 4.4.7 Schedule Method
- 4.4.8 Transect Walk Method

#### 4.5 Data Analysis

Realizing the fact that most sample respondents covered by the empirical exercise were pre-literate or fared poorly with regards to erudition parameters upon whom no complicated device of research could be employed, it was considered prudent by the author to examine the collected statistics from a standpoint of quality rather than quantity and the same was done only after extensive discussions with reputed Tribal Researchers, Statistical experts, Sociologists and Anthropologists were carried out. The assistance of accessible research material was also sort for the purpose of exploring and deducing the collected data which forms the basis of the Research Findings and the Recommendations proposed at the end of the paper.

#### 4.6 Profile of Major Activities

The empirical study on the basis of the outcome and learnings of which the present Paper has been devised was undertaken along with other perquisite foundation and post-study work for the field exercise over a duration of 11 weeks. Given below is a tabular account of the summary of major activities undertaken during the course of the empirical study.

**Table 5 Profile of Major Activities**

Name of the Activity	Timeframe (In Weeks)
Interaction with Scholars and Subject-matter Specialists	02
Review of Literature	02
Formulation of Chapter Plan	01
Pilot Study	01
Selection of tools for data collection	01
Data Collection	02
Data analysis and Data interpretation	01
Formulation of the Research Paper	01
Total (In Weeks)	11

Source: Research Design

#### 4.7 Limitations of the Study

Like most other empirical studies undertaken within the broader domain of Social Development, even the present exercise suffers from certain unavoidable research predicaments which inspite of the sincere endeavor of the author at being addressed adversely impacted the study and its prospects. The major limitations of the study include the following:



- 4.7.1 A few Villages selected as Sample locations using the Random Sampling Technique could not be accessed owing to the ongoing left-wing separatist movements in the region
- 4.7.2 Some Tribal women did not authorize the employment of the interview technique as they were exceedingly introvert in responding to the questions being put forth by a male researcher
- 4.7.3 Lack of any means of physical connectivity forced the author to walk down to certain sample locations which led to stern time constraints as a result of which a few sample villages had to be left out of the empirical exercise

## **5. Key Research Findings – Critical Areas of Concern in Sustainable Development of Tribal Odisha**

While the need for development of isolated and backward regions within the Country was comprehended to be imperative for National progress by post-independent policy makers and legislators, the importance associated with sustaining the desired pace and nature of development could somehow never be appreciated. It would not be inappropriate to state here that this unfortunate trend of lack of bestowing the desired echelons of importance to the cause of sustainable development in Tribal Odisha or for that matter of fact other regions inhabited by forest dwelling Communities across the Country has resulted in the prevailing scenario where most development projects/ schemes/ programmes etc. intended for the welfare of the Tribes either stand failed or identify themselves to have only partially met their intended objectives. The findings of the study forming the crux of the present empirical exercise accordingly endeavor to identify the critical areas of concern in the Sustainable Development of the Tribal regions of Odisha as well as the Tribal population inhabiting such regions. The 11 major findings of the study are as follows:

- 5.1 Linguistic Barrier:** Almost all Tribes in Odisha either possess a language/ dialect of their own which is only used by their own community members as a mode of communication amongst themselves or speak a dialect which is different from the language spoken by the majority population in the region. Most Tribals neither speak nor understand the regional or national languages which are used as the medium of instructions in most schools including the ones located in Tribal-dominated areas. This language hurdle is not only reducing the effectiveness of the transfer of learning in case of Tribal children but is also acting as an impediment in the communication and interpretation of the welfare projects launched by the State and Central Governments aimed at augmenting the prevailing Quality of Life (QoL) across isolated and impoverished regions.
- 5.2 Lack of accessibility and infrastructural isolation:** The tribal-dominated Western Districts of Odisha account for some of the unscathed forest reserves of the State and are characterized by pitiable road connectivity and a resultant isolation of essential infrastructural facilities such as Clinics, Dispensaries, Hospitals, Educational Institutions, Post Offices etc. The recent surge in left-wing separatism in the form of Naxalism and Maoism has further deteriorated the scenario of connectivity and the prevalent infrastructural seclusion of the region. The state of affairs in much of the study area is such

that neither Government officers posted on duty are willing to join on duty nor are the wellbeing initiatives intended to boost the prevailing infrastructural set-up in the region being carried out leaving the inhabitants of the area suffer in absolute isolation resulting in absolute resourcelessness and severe food diffidence.

**5.3 Identity Crisis:** Identity crisis is occurring in Tribal areas on two different dimensions. While on one hand, lack of any constructive endeavor on part of the welfare Governments has led to the disappearance of some of the most multihued aspects of the socio-cultural life of the Odishan Tribes, on the other, issuance of fake Caste Certificates to non-STs to garner the Constitutional and Legislative benefits that are meant for the tribal population is burgeoning the phenomenon of identity crisis with regards to the STs of the State. It is pertinent to mention here that Conservation -Cum-Development highlighting the need for preservation of the indigenous and colorful features of the Tribal people while simultaneously assimilating them to the mainstream should be the focus of all development interventions in Tribal areas because; the identity of Tribal people is the distinct encompassing the picturesque culture they possess and the distinguished styles of life they lead.

**5.4 Lack of continuity of Development Schemes/ Programmes:** Under the existing administrative arrangement, most plans and programmes for Tribal Development are devised by the Central and State Governments on an annual/ five-yearly basis. Over and above that, change of guard in the ruling establishment is often resulting in the vacillation of established Government Provisions for Tribal Development commensurating both the ideology as well as the election manifesto of the winning party. Perspective Plans with stringent provisions for its continuity for a longer period of time such as five or ten years aimed at the holistic development of this vulnerable section of the population so that a significant amplification in their QoL could be brought about should be the focal point of all Development Plans for the STs.

**5.5 Lack of Documentation and awareness:** There is a severe paucity of available statistical figures and documents pertaining to the STs in the State. Under such circumstances, it becomes enormously difficult to pool the massive chunk of data required for orientation before working on the modalities related to the formulation and implementation of developmental interventions in Tribal areas. It is also noteworthy to mention here that there is virtually no awareness amongst the people who are the intended beneficiaries of Tribal-centric welfare initiatives concerning their entitlements. To be precise, most people neither possess the requisite understanding of the provisions and objectives of the schemes that are intended to benefit them nor do they enjoy access to appropriate sources which they could refer to for comprehending the actual purpose of such welfare schemes.

Apart from the afore-mentioned factors which are considered to be at the core of the prevailing phenomenon of belated development in Tribal areas, some other factors that are contributing towards the unrelenting trend of sluggish progress and the non-attainment of a large number of objectives intended to be accomplished with respect to Tribal welfare in Odisha are as follows: -

- 5.6 Lack of adequate and appropriate skills for engagement in pursuance of non-customary sources of livelihood
- 5.7 Inadequate capacity building of key functionaries of the State and Central Government as well as of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)
- 5.8 Improper rehabilitation of a large number of Tribal people involuntarily displaced by development projects especially over the past two decades
- 5.9 Unbridled grabbing of land by non-Tribals resulting in dispossession of Tribals from the customary land rights
- 5.10 Non-commercialization of Tribal art and culture resulting in the prevalence of an exceedingly smaller market for such products
- 5.11 Excessive liquor consumption is resulting in high death rates and a range of associated social disturbances

The critical issues identified by the empirical survey to be as indicated earlier at the core of the slow-paced development in Tribal areas are the factors recognized by the Researcher-author during the course of the field exercise and hence cannot be claimed to be exhaustive. The list constituting of 11 issues mentioned above have been drawn by the Researcher-author both on the basis of the findings of his empirical survey as well as the outcome of some important studies undertaken by eminent Tribal Researchers and Investigators which have been published in the form of Research Papers, Articles, Case Studies and Books by reputed Journals and Publication Houses which were covered during the comprehensive review of existing literature that was carried out prior to the formulation of the Chapter Plan and selection of appropriate tools for the Study.

## **6. Proposed Recommendations – An Integrated Development Agenda for sustainable progress of Tribal Odisha**

The critical areas of concern identified in the key research findings which are acting as obstacles in accelerating the pace of sustainable development in Tribal Odisha have been used as the point of orientation while conceptualizing the proposed Integrated Development Agenda in the form of recommendations put forth in the succeeding paragraphs for steering speedy progress in the Tribal areas of the State keeping the element of sustainability as a fundamental ingredient in the suggested modus operandi for Tribal empowerment in the Study Districts of Western Odisha. In the genuine enterprise to recommend practically implementable suggestions in light of the problems being countered by both the Tribals as well as the Government in incorporating a sense of sustainability in the ongoing phenomenon of lethargic development in Tribal areas, the Researcher-author has come up with the following suggestions: -

**6.1 Promotion of the Four-Language Formula:** Multi-lingual education should be promoted in schools located in Tribal areas so that effectual transfer of learning can take place through the mechanism of a *Four Language Formula* encompassing the usage of the Mother Tongue of the majority Tribe, the regional State language, Hindi and English. While implementing this approach, care should be taken to guarantee that learning of all the languages under consideration should not be imposed upon the child at the same point of time and instead the languages should be introduced at

different phases considering the psychological evolution of the child. However, in case of schools located in Tribal-dominated areas where children belonging to various Tribal Communities study in a single school with each Community using a different language/ dialect for communication, an innovative strategy needs to be developed to suitably plug the fissure in the first language slot i.e. the mother tongue of the Tribe as there are more than one Tribal Communities as a consequence of which there is no unanimous mother tongue being spoken by all the Tribal children attending school.

### **6.2 Infrastructure Need Mapping and Engagement of Tribal Contractors:**

A comprehensive infrastructure need mapping needs to be carried out in all Tribal-dominated Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the State. The methodology for carrying out the proposed mapping should include consultation drives with the local population, review of best infrastructure practices being followed by Urban Planners abroad so that a sophisticated plan for the holistic upgrading of Tribal infrastructure using the GP – approach can be pursued. The primary reason for using the procedure of consultation with the local people is that through the application of this mechanism, a platform can be facilitated whereby the need of the people can be spelt out by them in their own language. The construction of the infrastructure facilities identified by the need mapping exercise should be assigned to local Tribal contractors through competitive bidding. The procedural requirements in the form of appropriate certifications and licenses should be in possession of the aspiring contractors for being eligible to apply for the contract of raising a specific infrastructure. This culture of using Tribal Contractors will not only help in incorporating a sense of belongingness within the Community but will also develop a sense of accountability amongst the people associated with the project.

### **6.3 Re-issuance of Caste Certificates embedded with Smart Card Technology to the Tribal People and Formulation of Stringent rules to curb its forgery/ duplication:**

Caste Certificates should be re-issued to all eligible Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) with the primary intent of legally obsolescing the Paper Certificates. The new Caste Certificates should be consistent with the *Smart Card Technology* in which the certificate is embedded with a chip which makes it extremely difficult to manipulate or tamper its content and curbs the possibility of forgery. Apart from the available technological assistance, the help of stringent regulations formulated to pronounce harsh punishments to fake SCs and STs should also be taken. This apart from guaranteeing legislative compliance with regards to extending Constitutional benefits to the desirable population will also help in assuring that the entitlements of the vulnerable people are only availed by them.

### **6.4 Mandatory Posting of Government Employees in Tribal-dominated areas:**

The practice of Government employees avoiding working in Tribal areas needs to be curbed. In fact, it is only because posting in Tribal areas is regarded as a punishment and hence, the creamy layer of public servants prefer enjoying the comforts of urban conglomerations in general and the Capital City of the State in particular, the Tribal regions are not being able to register the desired pace of growth. To curb the perennial predicament of lack of talent in administration in Tribal areas, legislative provisions making it

obligatory on part of all Government servants to be posted for at least a period of five consecutive years in Tribal areas should be devised and enacted. Additional sections in the draft legislative document making it possible to stimulate the Government Provident Fund (GPF) only after the abovementioned period of service in Tribal areas has been completed by a person should also be added as an appendage.

#### **6.5 Adherence to superior reporting standards and formation of a reliable**

**Data Bank:** The existing standards of reporting both of the areas of concern of the Tribal people as well as the ongoing development interventions in the Tribal regions of the State are appallingly poor. The Annual Reports being originated by various agencies and institutions of the Government engaged in Tribal Development are neither following any global benchmarks nor standards (such as the Global Reporting Initiative – GRI) which is averting a standardized configuration to the Government publications. For this purpose, a uniform standard for reporting including the aspects to be covered, the checklists to be verified and the design as well as content of the report should be laid down with the help of International Consulting Agencies engaged in best Reporting practices in the industry and the same should be rigorously adhered by all Government Publications. Similarly, an elaborate data bank constituting of all Tribal-related statistical facts and figures should be formed in electronic form for future reference by policy-planners, academicians, students, scholars and administrators. Availability of a constructive and elaborate data bank in electronic form will also facilitate researchers to take up large number of quantitative studies on the Tribals which in the process will yield findings which will be helpful for policy-makers to formulate/ design Tribal Development Plans commensurating the needs and concerns of the Community.

#### **6.6 Imparting customized Training Programmes to sensitize Tribals on critical social and political issues:**

During the course of the study, it was observed that most Tribal youths were neither conscious of the Government Schemes and Policies concerning their welfare nor were they attentive of the basic aspects of the contemporary social and political life. For instance, even the elected members of the Local Bodies such as the Sar Panch are not completely aware of the provisions of the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act. Similarly, the modern medical services being offered by the Government is still not being preferred over the customary medicines being prescribed by the Shaman – Tribal Religious Doctor. For this purpose, customized Training Modules should be drafted and imparted for capacity building in Tribal pockets of the State. The trainees of these programmes should comprise of the elected Tribal youths, Government functionaries posted in Tribal areas, members of the customary Tribal Panchayat Council. The composition of trainees prescribed in the previous statement will not only cover the scholarly or elected mass who are central to implementing key wellbeing schemes of the Governments (Center and State) in the region but will also help in disseminating the content of the Training Programme to the grass root level including elderly Tribal people, Tribal children, youth and women which might certainly bring about a sweeping social transformation over a period of time which will be holistic in its character and approach.

### **6.7 Comprehensive mapping of locally available Natural Resources:**

A genuine enterprise should be made by the Government to conduct an elaborate mapping of the locally available Natural Resources in different regions within the Tribal belt of the State so that they can be efficiently and sustainably utilized for both generating self-employment opportunities for the unemployed Tribal youths as well as can facilitate in providing alternative means of engagement for earning livelihood to the Tribal people. For this purpose, an inter-disciplinary team of experts should be drafted by the Government encompassing within its fold eminent professionals and researchers from the disciplines of Anthropology, Sociology, Ethno-Botany, Agriculture Sciences etc. Support services of accomplished IT professionals should also be employed as the offerings of Global Positioning Service (GPS) being made by them will help illustrate an unvarnished setting of the prevalence of natural resources in specific quantities and typologies in a particular location which apart from being technically accurate and undisputed will also assist in suitable planning and coordination for the efficient exploitation of the same.

## **7. Implications of the Present Study and Concluding Remarks**

The present study undertaken in the form of an empirical survey in some of the most isolated, inaccessible and separatist affected Districts of Odisha is probably the first of its kind as it addresses the key and critical issues in development of Tribal Odisha in light of the performance demonstrated by this section of population with respect to some key development parameters reflecting the general state of human wellbeing illustrated in the preceding sections of the Paper. The outcomes of the study and the recommendations proposed by the Researcher-author not only on the basis of the study but also by incorporating the interactions that he had with eminent Researchers, Tribal Developmentalists, Demographers, Agriculturists etc. are expected to be considered by the Government and Non Government Organizations (NGOs) operating in the sphere of Tribal Development in the appropriate spirit. It is also expected that implementing the recommendations which are regarded as pragmatic and are expected to display transformation in the area under study will definitely help in ushering the much needed speedy growth and development in these regions of the State.

Apart from the key findings drawn by the empirical exercise and the recommendations made by the Researcher-author, another significant contribution that this study is expected to make is to encourage young and curious research scholars to undertake further in-depth studies of even vast proportions by bringing under the fold of the study a larger sample population covering a greater number of Tribal Villages using a sophisticated research design aided by the application of a large number of techniques for obtaining the requisite information. Such studies will not only help in disseminating the development scenario in Tribal Odisha in general and amongst the Tribal folk in particular but will also help unravel the underlying factors responsible for the abysmally slow-paced development in the region so that the recommendations proposed commensurating the research findings can be used as reference material by the Government while formulating Tribal Development Policies, Legislations, Regulations, Programmes and Schemes.

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