Community, Culture and Curriculum in the Context of Tribal Education in Orissa, India

Mahendra Kumar Mishra, Ph.D.

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'All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have the function of intellectuals in society.(…) There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded: *homo faber* cannot be separated from *homosapiens*" Antonio Gramsci

Two Programs under Scrutiny

This paper aims at exploring two community-based programmes adopted in Orissa as the outcome of 'principles' put in to 'practices', to ensure an equitable quality education.

One programme is "Multilingual Education" which 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 that how community knowledge can be the better instrument for cognitive development in classroom with a foundation of children's cultural contest, ad community's intellectual participation in school.

Another programme is "Srujan" (creativity) – a cluster approach to education 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 in school curriculum.

The Focal Theme of This Article

The focal theme of the paper is to establish that intellectual activity of the community can be more appropriate for the children who live in different cultural context where the parents and community as a whole can contribute their culture in shaping the education and learning of their children, thereby reducing the gap of school and community.

On Defining *Community* in Indian Context

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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 multicultural 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.

Territorial Aspect of *Community*

Indian sociologists define *community* on the basis of its complex social formation. Prof Yogender Singh, 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 **terrtorial**.

In Orissa, 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)

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3. Tribal and nontribal settlement: Tribal and non-tribal people live together and sustain themselves on agriculture.

Linguistically Orissa is a land of three language groups. These are

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

The Austro-Asiatic and Dravidian language groups constitute one-fourth of the total state population. But their language and culture are historically neglected both in social domain and academic domain.

Community as 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 the other.

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 the other. Learning takes place in the social context with purpose and meaning. Children learn many things from home, neighbours and society prior to their enrollment in the schools. They learn many things through doing work. Learning in tribal society is not a conscious effort; rather it is a by-product of a purposeful necessity.

Community as the creator and consumer of culture is found in tribal society. Diversity of culture in a society/state is the foundation of multiculturalism and multilingualism. People from different cultures and different languages live together and live within a 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)

Folklore and Community

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 collectively 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 is created and shared by the community.

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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; some define it from tangible and intangible heritage point of view. 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 Orissa. Residential schools were opened in tribal areas to mainstream them with the state education system which was designed by the upper class people for the tribal people to fit into their goal, than to fulfill the need of children of divergent socio-linguistic groups. Thus, Ashram schools also did not recognize the cultural and linguistic diversities.

Teachers were from the upper caste/class and were looking at the tribal people 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 other than their own. 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).

No Participation of the Tribal Community in Developing Their Curriculum

Schools in tribal areas are state institutions following the culturally-dominant curriculum and aim at mainstreaming all tribal children in 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 do not use tribal languages in the classroom for the comprehension of the tribal children.

Thus, both the tribal teachers and tribal children are denied using their language in classroom.

Unfortunately, there is a huge gap between the national goals and aspiration to maintain the cultural and linguistic diversities in the school system, and the practice that is adopted

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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 on uniform monolingual education that the state has adopted.

New Approaches

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 something 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 for 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 everything 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

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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 impart 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 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. Orissa, for example, has promoted Oriya 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 study 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 key in childhood, both of which can be distorted by an unthinking adult world."(NCF2005: 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 outside 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, do little towards the construction of knowledge by children and thus inhibit the child'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-centered education in a diversified 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.

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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 something 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 NCF2005 p.33)

Wilbur B Brookover and David Gottlieb say that in order to understand the community educational system and its integration into the total life of the community it is necessary to remember (1970:9), 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'. 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.

Challenges in Orissa

Tribal education in Orissa 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.

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- 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.

The Programmes in Orissa

The programmes taken up in the tribal districts of Orissa through Orissa 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 in 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 mindset 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 Orissa. The experiment of two major programmes in Orissa may be examined through some practices.

1. Multilingual Education

Multilingual education (MLE) 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:

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

Objective

The objective of the MLE programme in Orissa is 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.

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The curriculum aims at providing equal opportunity to tribal children for intellectual growth, cognitive development and socio-emotional development.

Incorporate diverse pedagogical methods and practices to provide a variety of learning contexts and ensure effective translation of the curriculum objectives inside the classroom.

Using 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.

Development of pedagogic competencies of tribal teachers and allowing them freedom in the preparation of curriculum, text books and teacher training modules

Strong community participation in MLE such that the community has decision-making powers and is supported by the state government.

MLE in Practice

The MLE programme provides a platform for community participation in the implementation of mother tongue-based multilingual education in Orissa. From deciding which schools should be adopted for the MLE programme to training teachers on MLE the community members of each tribal group played 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 took off from discussions held in a workshop in which community members and the MLE teachers had participated. This is a significant departure from the manner in which the state-driven uniform curriculum is prepared.

Some of the questions discussed in the workshop were:

What is the bottom-up approach to education? Can you prepare some learning materials using the community's cultural resources? 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 give examples?

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

The community members as well as teachers agreed that their culture is at stake. They said that 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 hoped to regenerate their culture through school education.

Learning in the tribal communities is nothing but lived experiences. They always learnt by doing and knowledge thus gained was always 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 knew how to count, measure, and weigh. People counted by drawing lines on the wall or by counting the birds and animals, etc. They measured and weighed agricultural produce using the local measurement system. They divided time based on the works they do at different times of the day. They knew the annual calendar and seasons. They predicted rain and storm by looking at the moon. They learnt from their elders while helping them at work.

The teachers 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 in tribal area schools. These city people advocate 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 Oram MLE group.

Oram Culture in Curriculum

According to Gramsci,

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In 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 context their experience with school knowledge.

Teacher-centric *versus* 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 centered.

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 in to the curriculum, including those rooted in indigenous knowledge and skill systems. … There is need to develop critical multicultural texts and reading materials (NFG p. 29)

But it is always seen that traditional school teachers feel like down pour his knowledge in the mind of the student imagining that children don't know anything. So, teachers always impart the school knowledge among the children. They hardly feel that the children have also lots of experience in their mind 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 Oram children from the above view point it may be found that Oram children come to the school with a lot of experience with in his mind.

An Oram cultural theme used in Class I language and mathematics curriculum is Saharai festival. The Oram community observes this agricultural festival by worshipping their cattle. When the Oram 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'

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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 comparing, measuring and counting, songs, riddles etc. The teachers were guided by the syllabus prescribed for Class I mathematics.

Oram 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 textbooks'.

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?

Objective of the Big Book : Shared Reading, comprehension, individual reading, group

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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 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 have decided to have thirty important components of cultural themes and thus they have prepared thirty big books and 60 small books with sixty small stories of the community. Reading and writing becomes easier since the children now find the content familiar and hence are able to construct, deconstruct and reorganize their thoughts.

It was known that children in tribal areas were not accustomed to doing homework. But after this, non-literate parents have wanted to know about their children's learning to which they have contributed.

Each tribal community has 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, have been created by the non-literate elders.

Riddle 1.

    Sahe goad bastari akhi
    Kete Kukuda Kete Hati

Translation:

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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, sun and moon etc. Riddles on natural science and mathematics are more in tribal society which are visual metaphors that represent the wit and intelligence in 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 Programme

The second important MLE programme in Orissa 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

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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 quarreled.
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 wills 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 and 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

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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 fights 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 got to know that 'children construct their own knowledge' so children's experiences should be explored in the classroom.

Srujan Programme in Orissa

In Orissa 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 programme 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.

Routine village activities	Srujan activities
Children and the older folks take part in village activities	Community-school programme in SRUJAN – School children take part along with teachers and members of the tribe
Jati Mahasabha is conducted in which socio-customary issues are resolved	The platform of Jati Mahasabha is used to address social issues like literacy

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PRI members take part in routine village activities	PRI meet to discuss children's education
Village children play games, take part in socio-religious festivals, music and dance, work on the fields, collect forest produce etc.	School children take part in storytelling festival, traditional games, art and craft, music and dance in simulated situations.
Story telling – community activity and intergenerational	Story telling in school context (teacher, children and the community participate)
Children participate in traditional village games.	Traditional games introduced in school
Children participate in village art and crafts	Art and crafts introduced in school
Music and dance in socio-cultural context	Music and dance performed in school
Informal study of nature and human relations	Formal study of nature and human relations
Children learn by being part of normal everyday life	Discovery of village as children's project
Community myths and legends are local knowledge	There are community resource rooms in schools which generate community knowledge
Children observe and learn from their culture	Community culture translated into school curriculum through above activities.

The efforts in Orissa are just one year old and need to be concretized further.

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.

To Conclude

The experiments in Orissa in multilingual education and community-based school programmes like Srujan have thus given priority to child-centered 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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