

MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION FOR TRIBAL CHILDREN

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The aims and objectives of the paper is to understand the problems associated with languages among the adivasis, to discuss issues relating to the educational needs of adivasi children in tribal schools, plan educational programmes that are more appropriate to tribal children and community members and promote tribal languages and tribal culture in their habitats. There is a need to work with the tribal communities and for the tribal communities and to shift from the stage of advocacy to the stage of empowerment. The paper also tries to explore the intricate relationship between tribal languages, culture, society and literature for the development of STs in a pluralistic society like India. However, the main focus of the paper is to analyse the importance of multilingual education in tribal schools, the position of the tribal languages in India, innovations in the development of tribal languages and education, identifying current problems and issues and to suggest suitable measures in helping tribal children to bridge the gap between the home language of the tribal children and the state language by sustain multilingualism in tribal schools.

Who are Scheduled Tribes?

Scheduled tribes are communities who are notified as STs under Article 342 of Indian Constitution. They are based on the following characteristic features. Primitive traits, geographic isolation, distinct culture, shyness to contact with other communities at large and economically backward. There is a positive change with regard to the population growth, rise of literacy level, better sex ratio, and reduction of poverty level when compared to the general sections of population. But in the case of tribal population the situation remains underserved. The main issues concerning the development of the tribal population at present are: 1. Lack of awareness regarding the specific problems of STs and always clubbing them with other disadvantaged groups, 2. low level of human development index as compared with the rest of the population, 3. poor infrastructure leading to low capacity of the economy in tribal areas to effectively absorb institutional finance, 4. inaccessibility of tribal areas and tough terrain, mostly forests, 4. non-marketability of social sector programmes lead to increased vulnerability in liberalised economy and 5. food security in spite of food production. The adivasi children should be exposed to the natural environment. They should be provided with adequate education. It is a regrettable fact that adivasi children were deprived of their basic rights. Rehabilitation of adivasis through education of their children is not taken seriously. In fact, the tribal children were made victims in the name of development. Tribal children have lost touch with their language, culture, traditional life-style, ethics and values. If the situation continued, they could be completely kept out of the

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boundaries of their environment. Implementation of the right to education act, Scheduled tribes and other forest dwellers recognition of rights) Act (Forest act the only panacea to restore their basic rights such as education. Tribal people are still innocent. Majority of them are yet untainted communities. The adivasis should make all efforts to make use of government schemes. They should not violate the rights of their children. They should prevent migration of their children; wear them away from dropout of schools, using narcotics. Tribal panchayats should perform protective role that anyone is noticed with the violation of their child rights, they should bring it to the notice of the government. Children of adivasis had lost their rights to live in forests because of projects and research works that required their relocation. The adivasis could not make use of the 25% reservation quota under the RTE Act to get admission in private schools. The government is supplying adivasi children with learning materials such as school bags, uniforms, notebooks, pens, textbooks and other materials. They should make use of such opportunities. The government should implement RTE act in Tribal villages very rigorously.

Extracurricular activities help academic performance of their children. Tribal children should get more involved in the extra-curricular activities and sports. The importances of the activities contribute for the overall growth of adivasi children. Extra-curricular activities help tribal children to grow and learn. Tribal children become more active if they are involved themselves in the cultural activities. They will get better in academic activities by actively participating in the extra-curricular activities. Tribal children should be awarded with multi-talent award, Yekalavya award, Komaram Bhim award, Elwin award, Haimendorf award, Birsa Munda award for the talented children in the tribal schools. If the school encourages culture specific curricular and co-curricular activities in tribal schools hundreds of children will actively participate in such programmes with enthusiasm and enjoy the performance. Various tribal dances, sports, games and other programmes keep the students in the schools, further help to arrest the dropout rates in tribal schools. Tribal children get balanced education through such type of activities in their schools.

Multilingual Education in Tribal Schools

India has widespread gross root multiculturalism. Indian ethos supports its diversity. Indian constitution has recognised the right to mother tongue education. Why India overtly geared towards the growth of multiculturalism only in the dominant languages and state languages such as Hindi and English? India has witnessed the difficulties that majority of the tribal children face on account of gaps that prevailed between the home language and school language. Indian constitution has recognised mother tongue education. Is our multilingualism healthy? Does it indicate shift to dominant languages and extinction of tribal languages? In order to honour our

constitutional vision and spirit there is a need to enrich tribal education, safeguard tribal culture and tribal heritage. The constitution of India with its underlining principles of equality and dignity for all suggested that there is no room for interventions on anyone behalf into any one's life. The constitutional vision is essentially of a society in which every community and every individual will be in charge of shaping his/her life with full dignity. Tribals in the country constitute the poorest category not merely in economic terms but also in all aspects of human development. They are deprived of access to quality education and health care, they are resource poor and their traditional resources of livelihood are dwindling, labour market discrimination and lower skills only afford them occupations with productivity and limited scope for diversification. Therefore there is slow pace of development among STs in India. STs are contextualised in the vicious circle of deprivation and poverty. The central question in the Indian context is even after recognising difficulties children may have on account of gaps between the home language and school language, and having a constitution that recognises the right to mother tongue, why should a country like India, which has wide spread gross root multilingualism and an ethos supportive of diversity, have its educational programmes overtly geared towards the growth of multilingualism only in dominant languages, state languages, Hindi and English why?

The UNESCO document 2002 stated that "the choice of the language is a recurrent challenge in the development of quality education. Speakers of mother tongues which are not the same as the national or local languages are often at a considerable disadvantage in the educational system". Minority languages and tribal mother tongues are totally excluded and ignored in India. How these languages should be made supportive in the inclusive policy of tribal education is the biggest issue in the development of tribal education. The UNESCO report, 1953 stated that, "It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his/ her mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he/she learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium.

Role of UNESCO in promoting Multilingual Education

UNESCO is committed to assist in creating a platform, to discuss creating concrete action plans for inclusion of tribal mother tongues and increases the number of languages especially in the initial stages of education and to enhance multilingual competence. It is also committed in promoting mother tongue education. The state and central government is facing many dilemmas in promoting multilingual education. But then it has to be taught in schools which are not the case in all minority languages. Why is it so? We need to ask this question to the central and

state governments and elicit information in this regard. Many countries are trying to promote number of languages but it is made out that the political and economic cost is enormous. We need to challenge this and ask for the socio-cultural cost that we will incur if we ignore these small languages.

Role of NCERT in Supporting Multilingual Education

National Council of educational Research and Training supported the issue of multilingual education in its draft National policies of education 1986, 1992,, 2000, 2005. The National Curriculum Frame Work, 2005 based on the 21 position papers specified its policy in the national Focus Group reports on the Problems of Education of SC/ST children with regard to teaching of Indian languages. Prominence is given to multilingualism, centrality of language in the curriculum, language across the curriculum and education of the disadvantaged groups particularly the tribal groups in India. The National Curriculum Frame Work, 2005 stated that learners own Mother Tongue should be used as the language of instruction, especially, in the earlier years of education. Tribal children acquire language informally and naturally from their environment including home. They bring their verbal reposition and language and culture as a resource to school. In tribal areas, the tribal language, the one which is the community identifies as its own should be used in instruction for all the subjects alongside the other languages at times. This is not the situation in most of the tribal communities. The national Focus Group Report on the problems of education of SC/ST children stated that: “the tribes are living under different conditions and depending on levels of cultural absorption and adaption however, several STs may not look to schools to teach in their home language. For many ST parents, the main advantage of schooling is that it gives access to new languages, new occupations and a new life and enables interaction with the non-tribal world. But wherever STs have been politically mobilised to celebrate ST identity, they have been clearer in their demand for education in indigenous languages”.

Role of UNICEF in Promoting Multilingual Education

UNICEF is an advocator of MLE approach in tribal schools. UNICEF strongly believes in multilingual education. It has a very critical role to play in the quest for universalisation of elementary education. UNICEF advocated that “given the heterogeneity in the complexity of the socio-cultural and linguistic context in India and accompanying patterns of social exclusion there is a need to involve the communities and experts to promote Multi lingual education.

Efforts made by Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore

CIIL is an apex body based on language joins in all moves that support linguistic diversity. CIIL is very much committed to work with the scheduled tribes for the development of their languages in turn their education. Its main focus is to build

up the pressure for equality and justice to all speech communities and use the collective wisdom with responsibility, to endeavour for a common vision of development of tribal languages are given at most importance. To plan language is to plan society and develop language is to develop society. The destiny of man is linked to the diversity language. Each mother tongue is a resource. There is a need to nurture linguistic diversity to minimise social disparity. Multilingual education with a strong mother tongue linkage is empowerment-one expands our vision and the other strengthens our roots. We want to live up to the trust and move forward in partnership with tribals' as leaders for they are the masters of their language regardless of their knowledge of literacy skills.

Knowledge of Language and Language of Knowledge

In Indian history, as and when a new idea unleashing social and cultural energy is about to be released the question of what should be the language of knowledge has surfaced. The issue of education of tribals is linked with the native knowledge of their languages. In some states, text books for adivasi children were prepared. Some adivasi children refused to learn by saying that they want to learn English. They believe that English is the language of knowledge. Some of the tribal parents questioned that "do you want us remain backward forever? There is a lot of confusion with regard to the status of tribal languages in relation to the knowledge in India. Therefore, first of all the pedagogic objectives must be clear. Focus on pedagogic mechanisms could wait. It is time to set the rules of grammar afresh. In matters of thinking, the intellectual capacities of adivasis are lower to that of the mainstream individual. One should not be a slave to western education, overcome the mainstream hierarchic pressures of tradition and progress in a new direction for the development of tribal education. Government of India is committed for the development of tribal languages, local languages, mother tongue and minor languages. Centralisation of all languages is the biggest problem. Decentralisation in economic field is very much popular. Decentralisation process is in the field of education is yet to gain momentum. Decentralisation in economic matters is happening but not in education. National and state curriculum frame works were created but how they go together is still a big problem in the country. The new middleclass is replaced with old middleclass. They have acquired lot of economic power. The economic power is influencing the educational schemes of adivasis. Some of them are even encouraging English medium schools in tribal areas. The government propagate that the adivasis should be integrated by promoting and encouraging variety of languages in scheduled areas.

How to Empower Smaller Languages in India?

India has a large number of languages. There is no breakdown in communication despite of its diverse nature of languages. It is like saying *Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye*

which means to be educated means to be liberated. There is a huge linguistic network functioning. The linguistic network system is running across language families and speech areas. There are differences and inequalities persisting with regard to minority languages. Minority languages are for freedom and faster growth. There is an urgent need to protect the linguistic rights of adivasis. They contribute a large share to enrich the linguistic heritage of India. Language, culture, society and literature are interrelated. They are the productive parts of the development process and all speeches such as social, cultural, economic and political. UNESCO's studies and documents have shown that multilingualism is an asset and mother tongue based education remains the best alternative in Indian tribal context. There is a need for greater affirmative action so that we could arrest the endangered and heritage languages from disappearing.

Use of Tribal Languages in Schools

The home languages of the tribal children are not used in tribal schools. In some cases the school language is completely alien language to tribal children. Most of the teachers do not speak or understand the childrens' language. So there is no communication between teachers and children. Even when the teachers come from the childrens' home, community, they often don't use the local language in teaching the curriculum as the textbooks are in the state language. Classes are teacher centred. Teachers' does all the teaching. Children copy from the chalk board or from the text book. Children in class IV and V read with difficulty and with little comprehension. They are unable to answer comprehension questions about what they read. No time is allotted for helping the children learn to understand and speak the school language. "This is not merely an issue of language. Non-tribal teachers often carry deep rooted biases about the tribal children and also are convinced that tribal parents are not committed to educate their children. This leads to vicious circle of low expectation and low performance in the school and low self esteem". There is an urgent need to take caution with regard to the poor quality of tribal schools and their language development as the government schools in rural areas and in particular in tribal areas provide a grim picture with regard to improvement of education in tribal areas. The concern for tribal education and tribal child the tribal schools provide a diverse situation.

How to improve the socio economic advancement of STs to bring them to the level of general population? How to conserve the cultural tradition of the adivasis to suit to their own genius?

A conspicuous fact of Indian culture is the survival of tribal society and culture in the midst of rapidly changing society. In post Independence context of massive state supported expansion and democratisation of schooling and institution of positive discrimination policies to facilitate access, education has successfully

served as a key instrument of change and emancipation for the SCs and STs. It has brought them self respect and socio-economic advance raised consciousness and empowered their identity struggles. However, educational disparities between SC and STs and the rest of the population have been far from eliminated from poverty, unemployment and ill health are disproportionately located among them. Tribal's have suffered large scale land alienation and dispossession from natural resources and are reduced to economic and cultural service to non-tribal communities. Scheduled tribes appear to lag behind the Scheduled Castes in most of the states barring the north Eastern States, due to specific socio-historical factors. Curriculum has served as mediator of ideological dominance and hegemony, evident in the selection and structuring of knowledge, pedagogic practice and in weak and distorted representation of subaltern groups, culture and ideologies. It does not acknowledge cultural rights of STs who are denied their own culture and history, despite several policy documents, there is no imparting of education in tribal languages this includes even those like *Santhali*, *Bhili*, *Gondi* or *Oraon* which are spoken by over a million people, primary teachers are predominantly from non-ST background who do not bother to learn the tribal languages. The denigration of Scheduled tribe amounts to denigration of their world views and knowledge. There has been a shift from 'welfare based' to right-based' education. We should involve the children in decision making. Need for change of attitude among teachers from both tribal and non-tribal communities.

Core Issues in Multilingual Education

It is through language that culture and community relationships are established, history is passed from one generation to another, identity is developed, it is through language that we learn. The three language formula was an experiment solution to a language discord situation. It was not language accord. Every school going child learns a new language once they go to school. Mother tongue education is lacking all over the country. There is no part of the educational system that really plays attention to mother tongue education. Serious studies are lacking with regard to multilingual education in tribal schools in Indian context. There is a need to understand what kind of repertoire the tribal children bring to school. Then it will be easy to make better judgements on tribal languages. Government of India has not formulated a draft national policy on tribal languages. The policy statements made during 1970s were forgotten. The NPE 1986 and its amended version 1992 refer to Three Language formula of 1968. The Three Language Formula is deficit and deficient. The 1970 document published by the government of India stated that the three languages Formula is a strategy not a goal. The formula has no reference to mother tongues, classical languages, foreign languages and proximate languages. It has no reference to dialects and to pidgins and creoles.

The parents of tribal communities are also having a biased feeling with regard to multilingual education in tribal schools. The policies of the government to teach and educate tribal children in their mother tongue keep them backward, while other children are more privileged to learn English. The parents and tribals should be made to understand that mother tongue education at the primary level is done only to make the learning process easier for the child. The Constitution in its article 50 emphasises special provisions to sustain the diversity of the tribal population in India. However, in practice this is yet to be achieved. In real sense multiculturalism is not being practised. The agenda of the nation is over a period of time, smaller cultures eventually should be assimilated into the mainstream nationality. The agenda of the government should be that of *Vidya wohi Jo Viyukt Kare*, education which engages us in work, a knowledge which engages in more work relevant for life. The multilingual character of Indian society should be seen as a resource for the enrichment of school life. A renewed effort should be made to implement the three-language formula, emphasising the recognition of child's home languages or mother tongues as the best medium of instruction. These include the tribal languages.

Salient features of Multilingual Education in India

Is all well with Indian Multilingualism? Bilingualism at the gross root level is a maintenance strategy. Multilingualism is a positive force. It is a maintenance norm. Complementaries of languages helps early socialisation for multilingual functioning. There is now sound evidence from a variety of cultural settings supporting the positive role of bilingualism in cognitive development, which can be attributed to the meta linguistic and meta cognitive advantage of bilinguals and to the social context of bilingualism particularly in multilingual countries. As new findings from a number of different societies accumulate, bilingualism has come to be viewed as a positive social force promoting adaptive cultural relationships, pluralism and better integration. These findings have emphasised a fundamental distinction between dominant monolingual countries and the multilingual ones in terms of the very nature of bilingualism and its consequences. Positive maintenance norms do not ensure equality of status. Process of maintenance associated with marginalisation for indigenous minority languages. Relationship between language and power leads to multilingualism of the unequals. The voiceless minorities are suffering from the exclusion of mother tongues. The silent elites are enjoying the prominence of English. English is considered as killer language in Indian Education system. The myth of English language is that it is a superior language. English language is thriving at the cost of other languages. The hierarchical pecking order of the languages keeping the tribal languages in a disadvantageous position. If children are taught in school through dominant/second foreign language at the cost of their mother tongue. Subtractively, the school may participate in linguistic genocide,

through transferring the students linguistically to another group and prevent delay children's cognitive and academic growth. For instance, Bodo children in Bodo medium schools perform better than Bodo children in state medium schools.

Place of English in Tribal Schools

English ranges from first, second and third language across the school curriculum in the country. Language is learnt when language learning opportunities are created. Very often the school curriculum is a restrictive frame work. Implementation in the classroom is even more restricted. Emphasis should be on input rich environments ranging from available language in the community, to language which is introduced in the classroom through print, media in situations like storytelling, narration etc. Language is learnt at the initiative of the child, in his/her own pace, not because somebody else is telling the child to do something. Therefore, assessment has to be geared to what the child knows, and not on what is being taught. Education should not be a trap; children should be advised to learn their language. They should aware that their language is so important. For the growth of the children, cultural knowledge should not the only knowledge. They should not limit only to i

How to Plan for Multilingual Education in Tribal Schools?

Multi lingual education programmes enable tribal children/communities to achieve their educational goals. They will sustain over a period of time. It will act as a strong and supportive language for the tribal children and their parents and the education policy for the tribals'. Multilingual education promotes awareness at local, district, state, national and international level. Teachers can get pre-service training to promote multi-lingual education. Language Education curriculum enables learners to build a strong foundation and a good bridge between mother tongue and other languages.

Endangered Languages

In India, many of the tribal languages are endangered. 97 percent of people speak only 4 percent of world's languages. Only 3 percent of the world's people speak 96 percent of its languages. So if nothing is being done, 90 percent of world's living languages would pass out of use very soon. Of 6000 living languages in the world only 10 percent of the world's total languages can be classified as 'safe'. The languages have a very large number of speakers and official state support. How to protect endangered languages? Several measures are suggested to protect tribal languages which are as follows; 1. Tribal people should increase the prestige of their language by speaking their languages among the adivasis, 2. They should understand and promote the wealthy treasure of their languages over the dominant communities' languages. This will enable to increase their status and authority,

3. adivasis should legitimise their power in the eyes of the dominant community. The Universal declaration on the rights of persons belonging to ethnic groups emphasised rights of learners to be taught in their mother tongues. Tribals' should write in their own language. They should be trained to make use of electronic technology. A strong presence of tribal languages should take place in the educational system.

Efforts Made so Far to Promote Multilingual Education in India

North-Eastern Region: In the North-Eastern Region the tribal vs. non-tribal is primordial. Ethnic conflict is a part of everyday life. Empowerment of some of the tribes like Tibeto-Burman is visible. Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya are having more than 80 percent of tribal population. They have showed a strong bond for mother's tongue education. Church has played an important role in the spread literacy among the different tribal groups but questions traditional cultural practices and beliefs of adivasis. Angami in Nagaland (Tenyidie), Mizo in Mizoram, Khasi and Garo in Meghalaya are taught up to post-graduation studies. However, there is a dearth of original literature. Transaction is a major source of material production.

Arunachal Pradesh: 60 percent of the state population belongs to adivasis. The state has more than 24 tribal languages. However, there is no proper support to develop their languages. Most of the tribal languages are not part of their education system. In schools tribal children are taught in English and Hindi at all levels. Tibetan language is being taught for some of the Buddhist tribes. Church has an important role to play. Educational development in the state is very slow. State requests the intervention of the central government and NGOs intervention for the support and intervention for the promotion of tribal languages.

Assam: Nearly 13 percent of population are tribal's in the state of Assam. The state officially using Bodo language. After a long struggle, Assamese script was rejected. Now Devanagari script is widely used in the state. Bodo-language is included in the 8th schedule of the Indian Constitution. Mishing/Mirmi is used presently in the schools as the second language in the roman script. Karbi/Mikir is also used in schools. Rabha speakers are experiencing shift. Assamese language is gaining prominence. *Dimsa*, *Tiwa* and *Deori* are not yet taught in schools. Some wanted Assamese script but others wanted Roman script.

Nagaland: The state has recognised 17 tribal languages. Tribal languages are used in state run tribal schools. But the total support is lacking from the side of the government. English is considered as the official language. Among AO community, there is 100 percent literacy recognised. Problems of orthography still continuing. The state government had set up literature committees for the promotion of tribal languages in the state.

Meghalaya and Mizoram: The state is offering a strong support to *Khasi Garo and Mizo* languages. Tribal languages are standardised. They have succeeded

in orthography. But the problem of dialects needs serious consideration. Mizoram is one of the most literary states in the country.

Manipur: The state has several tribal groups comprising of one third of the population with widespread Christianity. Literacy practices in mother tongue are rather weak. Some tribal languages are taught at high school level but not at primary level. Two Naga Communities Mao and Tangkhul offer reasonable support for these languages.

Tripura: The state has undergone a dramatic demographic change since partition with tribals reduced to minority status on account of increasing Bengali population. *Kok Borok* language of the dominant tribal group is recognised as associate official language but the support for the language is rather weak.

Central India: There are several large and many small tribal languages belonging to three language families-Indo-Aryan, Dravidian and Austro-Asiatic (Munda Group). The adivasis are marginalised. Their languages are still marginalised. There is apathy from all quarters towards inclusion of tribal languages in schools. Many tribal languages in central India are endangered. The government had adopted wait and watch policy. The state is fully submerged in Hindi. The entire region needs serious attention with regard to the development of various tribal languages and Multi lingual Education in tribal schools.

Chattisgarh: there are 16 districts in Chattisgarh out of which 7 districts are dominated with tribal population. Out of 146 blocks, nearly 88 blocks are filled with adivasis. Hindi is the medium of instruction in the schools. The local tribal dialects, languages have no place in the school curriculum. Literacy practices are not taking root in these languages. There is a need to initiate programmes and workshops to sensitise and start the multilingual education in schools.

Madhya Pradesh: the state has 82,000 primary schools and 27,000 upper-primary schools. Bhili and Goandi with several varieties are spoken. They are not included in formal schooling. Over 2/3rds of Gonds use Hindi as mother tongue. Assimilation is causing language shift and language loss at alarming rate. The tribals' are not interested to be taught in their mother-tongue. Why do you want to teach us and our children in our Mother tongue only? asked some of the Gonds. No agency made any attempt to create awareness among the tribals' about the importance of education in mother tongue. Proper road map with regard to how to go about, what to achieve, the vision of the whole multilingual education programme. Bhili language was totally neglected. Similar languages like Korku are completely ignored. The overall attitude of tribal people remained good with regard to English and Hindi. Parents, local organisations, community members should be mobilised to start multi-lingual education in tribal schools.

Jharkhand: The state needs a more clear policy for sustaining diversity: The state needs a more clear policy for sustaining diversity. Hindi remains the dominant language. Santhali has been included in the 8th Schedule of Indian Constitution.

However, Santhali is still to take a firm root in the domain of education. Mundari and Ho are taught along with Santhali up to post graduation level but not taught at primary level. Oraon speakers are moving towards Sadari-the link language or Lingua franca. Indigenous writing systems obtain but not supported in schools. Some realisation has spread and few genuine attempts have been made to strengthen mother tongues. Devanagari is also used for writing the tribal languages. The situation is marginally better than neighbouring states. SSA has prepared primers in five languages and distributed the same.

East-West and South: States like Orissa, Gujarat, and Maharashtra have sizable tribal population with peripheral and marginalised status. Orissa has as many as 62 tribes speaking over two dozen languages belonging to Austro-Asiatic and Dravidian tribes but with very little support at school. Gujarat and Maharashtra have different tribes many of them speaking varieties of Bhili. Some attempts are being made as a token attempt to include the Bhili language to assimilate and submerge into the state language. Gondi is also spoken in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. The State of Andhra Pradesh has created a hope for tribal languages. Other states like Karnataka and Kerala have also ignored their tribal languages if not their speakers. The overall picture with regard to promotion of tribal languages and tribal education is very dismal. Several smaller languages are considered as endangered.

Andhra Pradesh: The government of Andhra Pradesh has realised the importance of mother tongue education for adivasi children. In fact, the state has neglected the issue of mother tongue language teaching learning in schools for a long time. Now different agencies are coming forward to work with the communities.

Karnataka and Kerala: Both the states have many tribal communities. Both the government has showed very little prominence to the promotion of the tribal languages. In the state of Karnataka, primers were prepared on Jenukuruba (*Jenu-Nudi*) and for Sologa tribal children (*Soliga Siddhi*). The government of Kerala started a project on environmental literacy with the mother tongue component. The government has not made serious efforts to support mother tongue education in the state.

Orissa: In a multi cultural, multiethnic and multilingual society, using a culture-free textbooks or adopting a common curricula is largely based on the dominant language environment challenges the efficiency and competencies of the children of different groups. The cultural context and the common curriculum content in a language other than the mother tongue of the children is not only a consideration in any learning system but also it is a serious threat to cohesive cognitive development among children. The state government of Orissa has prepared primers in many languages and even conducted some studies on tribal languages. Since 1996, to till date many activities have been done in tribal areas. Some of the major

activities in this direction are 1.linguistic mapping and survey, 2.commissioning up of an agency for protection of tribal languages and dialects, 3.training up of tribal teachers and 4. Gathering of experiences of teachers working in tribal areas. The state government has appointed teachers from the local areas in Koraput district especially from the tribal communities to develop *Kuvi* dialect. This experiment was started in 33 centres. Over a period of two years the government has achieved 12.3% increase in the literacy level among tribal children. The government should take the initiative in the process of development of tribal languages. State should develop a vision for the promotion of tribal languages in tribal education.

Gujarat: the state has the largest tribal population of 14.76 percent. Out of 224 blocks 45 blocks are filled with tribal population. There are 3351 clusters out of which 749 clusters belongs to adivasis. There are tribal schools in 45 blocks. Dang is a rural district having cent percent tribal population. Glossaries, dictionaries were prepared in *Dangi, Bhili, Panchmali* and in *Rathoa*.

North India: Jammu and Kashmir: the state is giving encouragement only to the official language Urdu. Indigenous languages are totally ignored. Dogri and Kashmiri languages should be started from class-I onwards. Government policy with regard to tribal languages should be implemented seriously with commitment and dedication. The state is also having the nomadic communities (Gorjis/Gujjars). The government has not taken any serious efforts for their education. The government should have a clear cut policy with regard to the implementation of mother tongue education at the school level. The government should take up the issue of tribal languages and tribal education with at most seriousness.

How to Promote Conducive Environment for Development of Tribal Education and Tribal Languages?

The situation with reference to promotion of tribal languages and development of tribal education is far from satisfactory. This situation has to change. Systemic research must be conducted to demonstrate the importance of multilingual education in tribal schools. The government should find a proper route to succeed the mission by providing proper encouragement. There is a need to move beyond the experimentation. Government policies should reflect on the common concern and shared vision. The value of mother tongue education should not be under estimated. Tribal people should not be deprived in use of their languages at the cost of dominant languages.

Mobilisation of Support from Tribal Communities

Mobilisation of support from all sections of people matters a lot for the promotion of tribal languages and tribal education. The support from the adivasis including the community members, grampanchayts, gramsabhas should be taken into consideration in order to sensate the adivasi community members to fight with the

top level policy makers, autocrats, politicians, officials to accommodate the choices of the people. Apex educational organisations should come forward to take up this issue on effective lines. Leading role must be taken by SSA/NGOs/DIETS/BRCs/CRCs/Vocational educational institutes and the community leaders. The role of the mass media can be emphasised in this connection. This will bring a sea change in the attitudinal behaviour. The experiences and success stories in this endeavour must be culled out from their experiences and exposure to take positive action in order to derive proper plans.

Production of Culturally Appropriate Materials

Pedagogically, it is important that tribal children should learn their language in school. Language development will take place through development of concepts, observations and analysis. Mother tongue education promotes development of mind, use of communication and using what the child knows and experiences. It is advantageous to begin with what tribal children know. The national concept with regard to multilingual education is to introduce different languages at different levels. Children can read and write well if they are exposed to read, write, thinking, observing and expressing first in their mother tongue. Language should be taught together in a different manner. It should be treated originally but not mechanically. The materials prepared by different bodies for the children and the teachers must enliven tribal culture. Then only the material used in tribal schools will be appropriate. 1. Documentation of indigenous knowledge system in tribal languages to encourage non-tribal children to get into the knowledge and language which is known to them. 2. Teachers working in tribal schools should at least know their language system. This will enable the teacher to communicate better with tribal children. 3. Tribal children recruited by the government should be posted in their own locality. Teachers will use their language to make reading and learning more effectively. All tribal children in primary grades should get supplementary reading materials that are very close to their environment.

What Needs to be Reflected?

1. Primacy should be given to mother tongue education in tribal schools based on psychological, social and educational basis in order to develop economy and mobility of tribal children.
2. Language education is a complex theme. It provides quality education in tribal schools. Tribal communities must be encouraged to work with professional bodies such as SSA/CIIL/DSERTs/SCERTs/NCERT/DIETS/Ministry of Tribal affairs. They should lend their support to these organisations along with UNESCO/UNICEF in providing partnership to the state and central government organisations.

3. All the tribal organisations are intrinsically worthy to study and worthy to use in school domain. The government should nurture their growth by providing appropriate support. Endangered languages must be provided.
4. Mother tongue education must be prepared as a medium of instruction at primary level. It must be linked with other languages at school as well as with teaching of different subjects at different levels. Language must be linked with their culture.
5. Sarva Shiksha Abiyan should take initiatives to make efforts to reach all mother tongues to all communities.
6. Mother tongue education promotes self-esteem, emotional integration among various communities, and respect for diversity and improves equity and equality.
7. Selection of various languages for the preparation of school text books is a strategy to help the tribal community, parents and children for protection of their right. Teachers' must be fully equipped and organised to learn their languages and develop communication skills among tribal children. Tribal children must be encouraged to express their feelings, knowledge in the classroom without fear or favour. The authority of the textbooks must be checked. Weight age must be given to experiential learning in tribal schools.
8. Development of oral skills is an important part of all children. Spoken languages can become written language also with the creation of writing system and the same language can be written in more than one script.
9. Multilingualism is a resource and diversity. It is a priceless asset. Strategies must be followed to nurture mother tongue education in tribal schools.
10. There is an urgent need to promote sound research to characterise the problems of tribal people and emanate them from grave hindrances for their development.

The issue of multilingual education needs appreciation and absorption in many states. Two issues should be taken seriously, by the government with regard to multilingual education in tribal schools. 1. role of research, 2. educational planning, curricular planning and pedagogical reforms in context of tribal education. The present generation of tribal children has enormous opportunities for their development of their culture, language and traditions. Multilingualism is a cultural expression. It is nobody's creation. It is an achievement of tribal population. It will be a resource for tribal development but not a hindrance for their educational development. Language should not be treated as a subject. It should be considered as a means of thought, imagination something that the tribal's cannot forget their language, pedagogical and curricular reform should also address the status of minority languages in the country. The government organisations should work

with them for their development. The problems of tribal children should be addressed as a wider perspective such as problems of health, various subjects and their curriculum such as science, mathematics, culture, livelihood, occupation and land alienation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

India has entered into a matured phase of intellectual life. The unity of the country can be understood in the linguistic diversity. Linguistic diversity is an asset. Tribal culture should be understood in the context of pluralistic diversity of Indian life. Multi Lingual education for tribal children is the tribal philosophy of Indian life. Mother tongue education for the tribal children should be at the centre of national educational planning. The disparities in India must be minimised. The spirit of Indian Constitution is empowerment of smaller and marginalised communities. Based on the above analysis, a few suggestions can be made to improve the educational needs of tribal children: 1. language education must be implemented in tribal schools on priority basis. 2. The linguistic rights of STs must be protected by introducing Multilingual education in tribal schools, 3. materials prepared by the State and Central government organisations must be improved and the same may be implemented in tribal schools, 4. co-operative networks must be developed with government and non-government organisations to work with tribal communities 5. clear action plans must be prepared with regard to quality education in tribal schools, 6. baseline surveys must be conducted with regard to the educational status of various tribal communities 5. special training programmes must be arranged for tribal teachers, mandal education and mandal resource and school complex resource persons and district education officers (agency) for the protection and active implementation of multilingual education in tribal schools 6. pre-service and in-service training programmes must be organised for tribal teachers and teachers working in tribal schools, 5. Government should mobilise resources and provide capacity building for tribal teachers' 6. tribal culture specific curriculum and co-curricular activities must be introduced in schools, 7. Teaching learning materials such as glossaries, dictionaries, bridge inventories and other resource materials must be provided in tribal schools.

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