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Community and Schooling in India: Some Sociological Issues[#]

Yogendra Singh*

Abstract

We aim at exploring the dynamic relationship that exists between communities and the schooling processes in India, its historical evolution and its contemporary structure and emerging contradictions. Needless to say, to understand this phenomenon a focus upon the changing concepts of community, both in sociological and formal senses of the term, is required. A clarity on comprehension of this relationship and the exploration of its changing patterns would bring out how the relationship has been governed by India's cultural traditions, local and pan-Indic, and its changing political economy in which communities have been embedded through history. These forces have defined the nature of the linkages between community and schooling processes in India. Schooling is a vital component which defines the shape of cultural, economic and political developments in a society. It is also shaped by these factors in its own process of growth and institutionalisation. India is no exception to this reality. These factors tend to spill over and begin to enter into the domains of the issues of cultural and social identities and the pedagogy of schooling. These also deeply influence the nature, quality and the reach of schooling and its institutionalisation in a society. We attempt to explore its facets as these have evolved in India and have shaped the outcome of our educational policies. This leads us to examine the significant issues and the challenges that these throw up in the growth of schooling process in India, and also how the social and political economy of our country has been influencing it through history.

[#] Edited Version of the Inaugural Address delivered in National Seminar on 'Community and School Linkages' held at NIEPA, New Delhi

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Introduction

The community, education and schooling in societies have evolved and have undergone differentiation of forms and functions through history primarily because of the changes in the political economies of societies. There are several conceptual uses of the term community in social sciences. A distinction can be made between the various operational formulations of the concept of community, in terms of quality of relationships and those which locate it territorially in the social structure of a village. The Anthropological Survey of India, in its ethnographic mapping of communities in India, defines community not in a territorial but sociological term. It is conceptually used "as in ethnography, which is marked by endogamy, occupation and perception" (Singh K. S.: 1992: 23). The determinants of community in terms of these features come closer to the notions of caste, tribes and ethnic categories. On these criteria, the Survey finds that there are 4635 major communities in India which cut across religions, ethnicities and regions. The notion of community which has constituted the discourse on education, schooling and social and economic development in our country is generally located territorially --- in the concept of a village. The colonial scholarship on village communities did draw comparative distinctions between the Indian and the Western structural features of villages to justify several of its administrative and revenue policies; later, the national movement for Independence gave it a solid ideological form. The village emerged as one of the focal arenas for social, economic and educational regeneration of the nation, and in its social policy. The centrality of the Gandhian philosophy had a deep impact upon it, and its role in the field of educational planning and development has been widely recognised. To a large extent it has been built into the national agenda of planning for educational growth.

The notion of community defined in sociological terms is, however, at variance with the notion of a village community. The village comprises of several communities (as caste structures) which co-exist in a setting of interactive and reciprocal relationships based on customs, social, economic, cultural and political or a host of other ties which endow a village community qualities of structural solidarity, dialectics and dynamism. Traditionally, the village social structure was founded upon bonds of reciprocity, occupational specialisation, a variety of systems of patronage, which reinforced reciprocity within a scheme of power structure vested in the dominant classes and the village panchayats in which communities were represented. The power/influence that a community enjoyed in the traditional panchayat system depended upon many factors, such as the numerical strength, the significance of the occupational specialisation to the economy of the village, the ability of the village community to substitute the loss of occupational skill of a community/caste in case of conflict which remained unresolved by the village panchayat or in the nature of the dominant classes and the relative power of the parallel organisation of the caste panchayats, specialising in certain occupations which in most cases cut across the village boundaries. The traditional community social structure of a village was, therefore, a two-pronged: one, the structure of inter-community or caste relationships that existed within the village, and two: the relationships that were defined by the solidarities within a caste/community structure represented by the caste panchayats, which extended beyond the village boundary. This rendered the relationships of occupational reciprocity and obligations variously known as the *jajmani* or *baluta* systems of relationships (known in other parts of India by various other names) dynamic and attuned to a measure of social justice. The caste/community

panchayats performed several functions for the reinforcement and implementation of the customary laws, ritual practices, and other social and cultural practices and their codification. It also functioned as the strategic and tactical resource in situations of conflict for organised protests and resistance if the terms of reciprocity and exchange in occupational relationships became intolerable. It also acted as the body to accommodate the innovative aspects of occupational skills and norms of reciprocity arising out of changes in the economy and social structure of the villages. The caste panchayats also dwelt upon and defined the political responses to the power structures that existed or in regard to other changes that took in this domain.

The Village Community, Schooling and Boundaries of Knowledge

In order to deeply explore the changing role of the community in schooling process, we need to understand the traditional Indian villages and the ways in which they defined their relationship with the knowledge system. More recently, a distinction has been made between orature and literature as the two parallel co-existing systems through which knowledge was communicated, preserved, innovated upon and integrated within the economy and society of the traditional India, both in the urban and rural community structures. It also had a class character. The orature was predominantly the medium of knowledge patronised by the folk and the literature was monopolised by the elite classes, both in the urban and rural communities. The folk tradition of knowledge, about ritual practices, culinary art, folk art, technical skills in production of manufacturing goods and much of the elementary medicines based on herbs and materials for health care etc., were communicated and preserved in orature both in urban and rural communities. A good deal of it, both among the folk and the elite classes, was preserved primarily by women. Women were the carriers and innovators of knowledge in many fields as parts of the tradition of orature cutting across class divide. According to Potonein, orature remained the most important medium of knowledge system for a long time in India --- before the class domination of the elite (the landed aristocracy and priestly classes) took over and established, what he calls, the imperium of literature.

This character of the knowledge system in traditional India impacted deeply upon the processes and the institutions of education and schooling (in a broader sense). Most institutions of education and schooling in the skills and crafts and knowledge of the principles were located within the community and were grounded in its occupational specialisation. The processes of communication were generally informal, with some exceptions about rituals and rites and elite related training in pedagogy and practices (arts and sciences) which required organised formal system outside the community, and gave it a measure of formalism. The knowledge of practical skills, applications and improvisations took precedence over focus upon textuality, essentialism of categories, and little divide existed between theory and practice. In traditional urban centres where manufacturing took place in an organised form of guilds in India, community played a major role. This divide or differentiation in the institutional bases of knowledge emerged in course of time when technological and scientific innovations requiring new institutions for cultivation, innovation and application of knowledge became inevitable due to the economic and social changes, such as complexity of division of labour, due to differentiations within communities in the nature of traditional occupation and due to social and

occupational mobility. A transition from the agrarian and manufacturing based economy to the industrial mechanised form of economy, founded upon new formal systems of production and marketing, made this differentiation within communities and traditional forms of knowledge complete. Schooling as a formal process, with differentiated patterns of institutionalisation of knowledge system, is largely a product of this process of transformation in societies.

Nevertheless, the process of differentiation of schooling as formal organisation slowly emerged in traditional India. The specialised division of labour, particularly in the urban centres, increased the pace of separation between the folk knowledge system founded on the traditions of orature and the learning through the texts and literature for access to knowledge in arts, aesthetics, architecture, medicine, philosophy, literature and the basic sciences. These were increasingly formalised. This institutionalised learning moved slowly away from its base in the community-household practices or the community-caste guilds to specialised seminaries and institutions of learning with formal organisation and hierarchies of teachers and learners. This process also coincided with the emergence of forces of political consolidation through empires, enhanced complexity of economy and its trade linkages and sophistications achieved in manufacturing and production processes. We may recall that India and China together contributed roughly about 80 per cent of the gross domestic products of the world well up to the end of the early sixteenth century. It implied the existence of a developed institutionalised form of knowledge and skill that was required. Increased formalisation of knowledge, sociologically, led to significant changes in the power structure of the knowledge systems. Now literature and the literati rather than the folk-specialists gained the supremacy in the control of knowledge and its processes of institutionalisation. Major class cleavages emerged in the production, communication and uses of knowledge between the folk and the elite. Literature and written text became supreme and its imperium prevailed over the tradition of orature in the control of knowledge, its resources and access to it for the common people. This probably also led to the notions of difference between literacy and illiteracy in the domain of education. Those who were not conversant with the literary or textual traditions of knowledge could not read or write were categorised as illiterate despite their viable grounding in the knowledge system based on orature. Thus, educational process was firmly grounded in the structure of caste-class hegemony and urban-centric structures of power. It vested in the hand of the upper sections of society, the priest, kings and the magnets of trade and commerce.

This process also had implications for the governance of schooling, institutions of learning and the uses of its resources. The autonomy of the community, caste, guilds and other traditional institutions of education in the control of its structures and functions came to an end. The orature based form of knowledge system was marginalised and could exist only in the forms of folk culture, such as the riddles, proverbs, axioms and folk sayings, and songs and dances, which seemed to be useful to the lower end of the economic activities in agriculture, management of ecology and natural resources. Thus, through the process by which the literary tradition of formal education became ascendant in India and made access to education a privilege only of the limited upper segment of the society, it foredoomed the vitality of its growth and expansion as a strategic resource for the society as a whole. It also probably led to the stultification of the innovative élan in the domain of knowledge whose boundaries were continually expanding in the West where an industrial revolution was on the horizon. Unfortunately, the formalisation of literary tradition of knowledge in traditional

India from which the vast majority of the Indians were alienated came to be grounded into a feudalistic-priestly structure of power and its socio-economic domination.

Colonialism in India and the Educational Policies

It is not a mere coincidence that the onset of the industrial revolution in Europe, particularly England which brought about unprecedented changes in the processes of commodity production through the new innovative uses of mechanical power during the 16th century took place at a time when the processes of economic decline and stultification of innovations in the knowledge systems in India made it weak and exposed to submit itself to colonisation by the British. From the 16th century onwards we witness sharp and continuous decline in the gross domestic products in India which was no doubt reinforced by the colonial control over the Indian economy as much as its vulnerability due to shrinking of the élan and dynamism of its traditional knowledge base and its institutions. The Indian economy, largely based on manufacture, could not compete with the mechanised production of commodities in England, especially when the colonial fiscal policies defined the terms of trade and the same was rendered deliberately unfavourable to the Indian producers. This slowly destroyed the base of manufacturing industries in India, and led to large scale unemployment of skilled labour, artisans and traders. A massive exodus to villages from the small towns and cities took place and along with de-industrialisation pressure on land increased.

The educational policy of the British was focused primarily on pursuits of its colonial control on India, its economy and natural resources. To gain this objective, radical measures were taken for institutionalisation of new systems of governance together with a deliberate attempt to incorporate and accommodate the traditional institutions of governance in India --- within the system of colonial administration. The ascendance of the utilitarian ideology in Britain also contributed to the colonial policies of reform, based on civil principles of equality and access to the educational institutions including the schools. The role of teacher, admission policy, curricula and access to schools were accordingly defined and the state overtook the control of schools and schooling processes (with few exceptions, such the seminaries based on denominational or sectarian religious principles etc.) as well as its administration. The role of community in the governance and functioning of the schools, which even traditionally had weakened became further marginalised. The notion of community itself was ideologically confined to Henry Maine's construction of the Indian village which was devoid of sound rural ethnography. It lacked the sensitivity to the Indian historicity of the multi-layered structure and function of the community-caste organisations in India which we have discussed above. Moreover, the spread and reach of the schooling opportunities to the vast majority of Indians in villages, tribal regions and across castes and communities remained stagnant.

The British realised the strategic significance of education to an entrenchment of colonialism in India. Its main focus was upon the elite and on promotion of an ideological worldview through their access to higher education. The universal access of the vast majority of the Indian people to schooling and literacy had a second priority in this colonial statecraft. Opportunities were created, with support from a large section of educated elite in India, to establish colleges and universities based on the western pattern. The Indian elite wanted access to western education to gain access to the new sources of knowledge in

search of repairing of the lost initiatives in the domain of knowledge. It was not in consonance with the colonial objectives, where the goal was to co-opt the Indian elite in the colonial apparatus of governance. It was needed to promote the sustainability of the long term colonial social, economic and political goals. Thus, a historic hiatus was created between educational policy for national development through universalisation of schooling and literacy of the people of India, on the one hand, and on the other, the elitist policy in education by the British which focused upon providing opportunities and an access to higher education to the upper segments of the Indian classes. The role of the public schools and the missionary schools in various parts of India, which was promoted by the colonial policy, reinforced the elitist linkages and class biases in the colonial educational policies. Unfortunately, for various reasons, this hiatus has not been bridged even after sixty years of the Indian attempt for planned economic development.

School, Community and Secularisation of Knowledge

The colonial policy of schools in India, apart from other factors, was also deeply influenced by the European experience of secularisation of knowledge. The process of production, organisation and communication of knowledge slowly moved out of the seminaries and church precincts in Europe as the republican and industrial revolutions and reform movements in church gained momentum. The new schools, colleges and university systems emerged with secular (scientific and universal) notions in production and communication of knowledge and skills. It coincided in Europe with the breakdown of estates which represented feudal-aristocratic and church related values. The concept of knowledge was not only universalised but also democratised. Moreover, with the fast pace of growth in knowledge following technological and industrial changes, the traditional social base of schooling and higher education rendered a new organisational systems imperative.

In India, the British policy of establishment of schools was guided primarily by these values in tune with the utilitarian ideology which was a dominant force in Britain. It threw up most of the generations of British administrators of that time. It was assumed that secularisation of the pedagogy, personnel and administration of the schools would forge a civil and cosmopolitan ideology of schooling, overriding the community and identity orientations embedded in the traditional forms of education. It did happen, but could not totally displace the traditional community and identity based Indian focus upon education and schooling. Even though schooling got dissociated from community, and emerged as a formal organisation outside its scope, the community based schooling structures and functions persisted on a significant scale. This was because the evangelical movement to spread Christianity coincided with the promotion of a large number of missionary schools in India. Secondly, the British policies of Census operation rekindled community and religious identities by generating a feeling of anxiety and new self-awareness in relation to the state. Thirdly, the social reform movements and early British policies of a few measures of positive discrimination in favour of the 'depressed' communities reinforced such identity driven focus in education. The multiplicity of the ideological orientations in schooling often anchored in religious and cultural identities owes its impetus to these historical situations and policies.

The National Movement and New Ideology

The tensions between the principles of identity and secularisation in schooling and the focus upon the principles of equality, universal access and pedagogy, based on humanism and universalism etc., persisted during the freedom movement. The national leadership made new and major ideological contributions. Yet, interestingly, the 'village community' as a frame of reference in policies with regard to schools gained strength alongside the commitment to its secularisation. Gandhiji's ideas were primarily focused on the ideological nuances in which there was a structural revolution in Indian polity and the processes of empowerment of communities as well as administration and governance were decentralised. In it, the educational pedagogy and teaching were such that they helped in inculcating not only the values of the dignity of labour, empathy for local cultures and physical ecologies but also empowered the students to transcend the age-old feudal values which had been entrenched in their minds. The Gandhian policies, however, could not escape criticism and travails of identity politics which the national movement had generated. After Independence, a feeble attempt was made to integrate some of its principles within the pedagogy and practice in schooling, but the mainstream focus was not in consonance with this ideology.

The new ideology which emerged now was modelled on a vision of India closer to Nehru's worldview of modernisation. It reflected the commitment to radical economic and social reforms, commitment to new industrial technological policies, reinforcement of institutions of democracy and democratic political processes, promotion of national integration and sustenance of the processes of multicultural pluralism through the growth of a 'composite culture.' The schooling process, its ideology and organisation had to be orientated to these commitments. Planned development envisaged removal of illiteracy as well as access to primary education to all communities and classes on a universal basis. It was supported by introduction of policies of empowerment and positive discrimination in favour of the communities which were marginalised and poor. These policies harmonised with the development ideology. Several additional operational strategies were devised by the states and the union to speed up the expansion of education at the primary and secondary levels. To promote and reinforce it, new institutions at the central and the state level were established. The objective was to overlook, promote and rationalise the policies with regard to pedagogy, governance and management of the schooling processes.

Contemporary Challenges: Successes and Failures

The modernisation ideology as evolved since Independence and its implementation through the policies that were commensurate with its objectives have given us successes in several domains. Yet, there have been also major failures in achieving the objectives in certain crucial sectors of development. Sociologically, as we learn from experience that the processes of social transformation and modernisation of societies generate crises both in the situations of successes as well as failures (Y. Singh, 2000) owing to both achievement and non-achievement of the stipulated goals. In the educational field, India has achieved to a significant degree a measure of success in the expansion and growth of higher education (even though it now faces several new crises). Sustained democracy and social mobility leading to momentous growth in the size of the middle classes are another area of

achievement. This, apart from other factors, is a primarily contributor to the contemporary nature and scale of economic growth and expansion of the services sectors and knowledge based economy. But India has failed in its objectives of removal of illiteracy, access to quality primary and secondary level education to a very large section of population living in the rural and tribal areas, and to the children of the marginalised communities across the country.

There may be a few macro-economic reasons for this failure emanating from the nature of priorities rooted into the strategy of planning and economic growth promoted since Independence. A major failure has been in resource allocation. Sixty years after our freedom, we lag behind many Asian countries in the removal of illiteracy and providing quality education through schooling of our children. This is bound to dangerously escalate into a drag on long term economic growth and stability of our society due to the increasing divide or social contradictions between the rural and urban population and between the rich and poor. The symptoms of looming conflicts have added urgency to move faster in this area. What are the reasons for failure, and how should we proceed further, are questions that need to be analysed. How could the community organisation and decentralisation of educational administration and funding augment the realisation of these goals needs to evolved into new policy initiatives.

Changing Community Structure and Policy on Schools

The social, economic and political changes that have taken place since Independence have qualitatively changed the social structure and relationships within the village community. Due to intervention of the political processes which increasingly promote identities based on caste, tribe, region and religion etc., the village communities have become “political communities;” the bonds of inter-community relationships within the village have weakened and linear strength of intra-community bonds across the village have gained momentum. In some sense, this phenomenon is not entirely new, but its magnitude has now multiplied. Even during the past, castes and communities were organised into panchayats, across the village boundaries for each single caste or community, to promote their economic, political and cultural interests. Such ties now have been rationalised through political party ideologies and patronages. On the other hand, the village panchayats, as established now through the provisos of the Constitution, have a role representing all the communities within the village. Hence, in planning the educational policies for villages, this should be taken into consideration. It deeply affects the governance, utilisation of resources and administration of schools in villages. Secondly, the changing aspirations and initiatives of the villagers about the schooling of their children would also be affected by the pace of economic growth and modernisation. The dependence of the bulk of rural population on the land and in agricultural activities is bound to decline proportionate to the speed of inclusive economic growth, social mobility and developments in new manufacturing, food processing and other areas of economic engagements as more capital is invested and as the infrastructure in villages improves. Such changes have happened all over the world; even in India the roadside villages or villages in proximity with a city or town are fast moving from dependence of land to adopt other occupations.

These sociological realities may help in sensitisation of policies on schools in India. Of course, there exists no knowledge deficit in India as to formulation of policies and priorities.

Since Independence, several commissions on education and expert committees both at the centre and in the states have deliberated upon it and identified relevant policies. These provide enough scope for designing strategies for moving ahead in implementation of the schemes since most of them have remained unattended. Our first step should be to identify the major bottlenecks. Possibly, paucity of investment is a major lacuna. Here, the policy of public-private investment and establishment of synergy between the two may be helpful. The resources of the state alone may not be sufficient. This calls for suitable changes in the regulatory mechanisms about the establishment and promotion of the schools. This matter is crucially tied up with the initiatives emanating from the community, its concerns of identity and administration of schools. The policies should be flexible and adapted to the regional and local situations without surrendering the universal standards of excellence. This should reflect in the pedagogy of the school.

The school syllabus, modes of teaching, the quality of teachers should take into consideration the fact that the teaching empowers and enables the student for effective upward mobility in employment and pursuit of knowledge. The role of community leaders in promoting this policy even in identity based schools is indeed crucial. Needless to say, it calls for flexible and adaptive policy options and strategies. Thousands of madarsa schools deserve our attention for enhancement of the policies of inclusiveness and modernisation of schooling accommodating the community's concerns on issues of identity. There are many success stories of the modernisation of such schools in some regions of India. Indeed, the school pedagogy even in the identity based schools should not sacrifice access to skill and knowledge which are indispensable for students to cope up with demand that he/she would encounter in the world outside social mobility and success in all domains of life.

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Community Participation through Civil Society Organisation: Bodh's Model of Co-Governance and its Impact on Community Schooling in Rajasthan[#]

S. Srinivasa Rao*

Community participation in education has always been an important policy goal though it is indeed not a new concept in India (Govinda and Diwan 2003). For over seven decades, various policies, strategies and methods have been used in mobilising community's participation in transforming the educational landscapes in primarily the rural settings. While there have been attempts by the State to envisage a singular model of community participation through Community Participation Acts and accompanying guidelines framed by various state and central governments, given the diversity and the federal democratic structure of the country, multiple models began to take shape, each with its own vision, uniqueness, and strategy in the delivery. Though almost all states in the country had enacted specific legislation of community mobilisation and participation in education within their state legislatures, communities at the grassroots level have responded to such legislative arrangements differently and made those community initiatives unique – some working well and some not at all. In a way, each community responded in a unique way to the need for its involvement in shaping the educational futures of its children (Govinda and Diwan 2003).

The idea of 'community' in community participation has many meanings. The meanings of 'community' may range from a small homogeneous aggregate of population inhabiting a specific geographic territory as small as a habitat in a village to a huge heterogeneous collection of population covering the whole territory of a nation. As a result of this variation, the term community participation is 'perhaps the most misused and misunderstood word' (Ramachandran 2001: p.2244). According to Ramachandran (2001), any usage of the terms 'community' and 'community participation' will have to consider the specific context in

The Paper is drawn out of the fieldwork conducted in 2008-09, 2011 and 2016 in the project areas of Janpahal programme - Alwar district of Rajasthan. The author thanks Bodh Shiksha Samiti and, in particular, Yogendra ji, Surjan ji, and Prabhu Dayal ji of Bodh, for facilitating the fieldwork in its different phases. I have also benefitted from interactions with Anjali Noronha during the 2008-09 visit of the project sites

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which they are applied. However, broadly, there are three, if not more, main approaches to understand community participation in the Indian context. First, community participation is seen as 'the participation of the disempowered; those who have not had access - as a community, as a geographic area or as a gender' (Ramachandran 2001: p. 2254). Second interpretation states that the term 'community' is not homogeneous nor monolithic, but one that lends itself to multiple interpretations. According to Noronha (2003), 'If the term "community" is taken to mean parents, the background of the children determines the class-caste composition. If, on the other hand, "community" means elected representatives, their class composition would influence the nature of involvement' (p.99). In the latter sense, the community participation is through the Committees such as VECs, SMCs, etc., which are elected and/or nominated from within the entire community in a geographic area or that of the parents of the children attending a particular school.

The third interpretation of community participation is in terms of the way the community is mobilised through the means of civic or civil society organisations. Bhattacharya (2001) argues that the social capital of the community is embedded in these civil society organisations and, therefore the communities are mobilised for education through these organisations. Bhattacharya invokes Coleman's idea of social capital as a resource that gives people the ability to work together for common purposes. According to him, 'the ability to associate depends, in turn, on the degree to which communities are able to subordinate individual interests to those of larger groups and share reciprocal norms and values' (Bhattacharya 2001: p.673). There are other experiments which largely sprung up from the civil society or non-governmental organisations such as Bodh Shiksha Samiti which built the locally available community resources to mobilise communities for improving access and quality of primary education, which is what the paper discusses precisely.

State Policy and Practices of Community Participation in Education

As per the policy that evolved during the DPEP era, village communities had a very limited role in managing the village school. Policies prescribed the establishment of a School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC) or a School Management Committee (SMC) or Parent – Teacher Association (PTA), coordinated generally by the Headmaster/Headmistress of the school; these included a few members from among the parents of the children attending a particular school (GoAP 1998). The Sarpanch (elected head of the village panchayat) or other members of the community did not have much role in the running of the school. So, by definition and by operational principle, the governmental model of community participation had a very restricted use of the word 'community'.

As a result, this led to withdrawal of those members of the community whose children were not attending the school in their habitation from taking active interest in educational planning of the village, though they were concerned about the larger good of education of the children in their community. If at all these were involved by the school, the involvement was limited to procuring certain provisions such as land or financial resources that might help augmenting the school costs. It could also extend to the other tasks of supporting the school teachers by ensuring enrolment, attendance and retention of children. But these instances were far and few. There was limited or no authority to choose teachers, take action

on errant teachers, fix salary/promotion of teachers, define the locally relevant curriculum or decide school budgets based on local needs. In other words, there was not much role for the interested members of the community in the wider aspects of maintaining and bringing about accountability of the staff, teachers and head teachers, which therefore made the system redundant --- literally. Further, the educational bureaucracy did not leave its stranglehold on the running of the school despite clear policy stipulations that put community first (Sadgopal 2010; Wankhede and Sengupta 2005)

In many states, the focus and the thrust of community participation was on collecting community contributions and executing construction of new school buildings and additional classrooms (Ed.CIL 2002). The devolution of financial powers took place through a committee and this has become a vehicle for (a) political interferences; (b) dominance of the dominant families of the villages; (c) corruption and making money, even if it was very paltry. Firstly, the political parties have seen it as an opportunity to accommodate the disgruntled elements of the ruling party and village politics and to induct their cronies or family members to 'control' rather than contribute to the school growth. Secondly, the dominant family and its relations in the village exercise unchallenged say in matters like who could be part of the SMC and who could not and how shall the SMC work. In most of the cases, though the SMC Acts have recommended election to elect SMC members, the process largely remained one of nomination – a party or a family, in some cases, the head teacher nominating the members without even a process of consultation from among the members. Third, the entire method of instituting a mechanism of community participation became a sort of what we may call 'appointed committee of cronies,' whose interest largely lay in maintaining the hegemony of the 'power elite' of the village and also to pocket, through corruption, the grants allotted to the school.

In this model of community participation, the larger notion of community virtually became redundant and irrelevant. That is the reason why the District Primary Education (DPEP) or Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) models of community participation in a way failed. If we look at the traditions of community participation prior to the onset of DPEP which were mainly of philanthropic in nature and the post-DPEP governmentalisation of community participation, we note that the idea of state driven formation of a committee had no or negligible effect on the overall participation and ownership of the school and education in the habitation.

Moreover, the definition of community in the post DPEP era had restricted the meaning of community to 'parents' only. The involvement of representatives of the local village government or the PRIs got restricted to that of a spectator or of a mere honorary/ornamental authority. Their interests moved away from the school and educational governance. Further, the low participation of communities in the village schools, the decreasing priority of governments towards the education and the increasing trends of privatisation, rural government schools began to crumble. Teachers are not accountable to the village community and their children, but report to a series of bureaucrats. Curricula and budgets are based on centrally decided priorities rather than local needs and aspirations. This may be one of the major reasons for government's decision, post 2014-15, to 'close' the public schools with low enrolments or those not governed well in the name of school consolidation or rationalisation of teacher-pupil ratios or simply and indirectly withdraw from the provision of primary schooling at the grassroots level and leave the space wide

open to the private and market forces to occupy the provision of neighbourhood primary schooling.

Amidst all such gloom, educational governance therefore called for a reform from the civil society organisations. It necessitated innovations for new models from civil society organisations and the non-governmental organisations that are working in the field of rural education. For the purposes of this paper, we deal with one such case of community participation through a civil society organisation which primarily aimed to strengthen the governmental system of schooling by adopting a model of co-governance of schools with active involvement of multiple stakeholders like the community, panchayati raj representatives, parents, teachers and children. The paper aims to discuss the successful model of Janpahal or the community schooling programme of Bodh Shiksha Samiti in Rajasthan. The paper examines two aspects: the structure and systems of co-governance and the processes of community participation and their impacts on the community's educational opportunities.

Socio-Cultural and Educational Profile of the Janpahal Project Area

Bodh's Janpahal Programme was located in two of the most backward blocks Alwar district in Rajasthan. In all, there are fourteen blocks in the district with a total population of 2.3 million and a very low sex ratio (882). The region lies in the foothills of the Aravali mountain ranges and is characterised by a rocky and inaccessible rugged terrain. The main occupations of the people are agriculture, agricultural labour, and some traditional occupations such as cow, sheep and buffalo herding, and animal husbandry. Most parts of the district depend on the rain water during the monsoon for agricultural purposes. The farmers, who are mostly small or marginal farmers with even a bigha (less than one-third of an acre) of land, cultivate a single crop. In a few places like Govdi there is an abundance of groundwater, because of which even small farmers are able to take two or sometimes a third crop of vegetables.

The predominantly rural population of the district lives in close proximity to their farms and therefore the residential pattern is scattered rather than bound by certain geographic space and common area of living within the village. Sometimes the residence represents a joint family structure or some members of the same family or just a nuclear family. Usually, such a pattern reflects family grouping in terms of their caste or tribe or religious background. The residential arrangement of the villages in the region marks a distinct caste, tribe or religious clustering as a ghetto with distinct geographic boundaries and exclusivity.

The scattered living arrangement places restrictions on the community's access to school. In 2001, the literacy rate of Alwar district was 62.48 per cent, which is slightly above the state average for Rajasthan (61.03 per cent), but well below the national average (65.38 per cent). The district had a very low level of female literacy too (43.95 per cent), which is slightly below the state average (44.34 per cent) and much below the national average (54.16 per cent). But, by 2011, Alwar has become the fifth highest literacy district among all 33 districts of the state of Rajasthan with 71.68 per cent. In terms of female literacy rates too, Alwar made significant progress between 2001 and 2011. One of the reasons for sharp rise in the literacy levels in the district are often attributed to the increased

consciousness, awareness and demand for education due to the initiatives like Bodh's community schooling programmes, and also the Lok Jumbish and Shiksha Karmi projects of the past.

For instance, The blocks selected for Janpahal programme - Thanagazi and Umrein - reveal a very dismal level of literacy. In 2001, the literacy levels of Thanagazi (48.07 per cent) and Umrein (46.16 per cent) blocks fell much below the national, state and district averages, marking them as the most backward and underdeveloped areas within the country. The female literacy rates were also abysmally low (26.20 per cent for Thanagazi and 32.64 per cent for Umrein). The male-female literacy differentials were unusually high (over 40 per cent in Thanagazi and around 25 per cent in Umrein), which substantiates the gendered exclusion in educational provision within the family and community. Most girls are first generation learners and are not sent to school due to the practice of female seclusion, purdah (veil) and the child marriages.

The location of the Janpahal project in these two blocks is thus highly justified. Within these blocks, the focus of Bodh's intervention has been on the habitations without a school or were under-served by a school. This is important given the inadequacy of state schooling facilities and the nature of residential arrangement of the villages and habitations within the villages. Even in villages where some family clustering exists, there is further clustering of households in terms of caste, tribe and religious belief, often clusters of different castes or tribes or religions are exclusive.

Though the rules of social interaction have eased over the years among various castes, tribes and religious groups, some villages still practise restrictions in commensality, namely, rules of inter-dining within the village, though such villages seem to be in a minority today. The restrictions on freedom of movement for ex-untouchable castes within the village seem to have faded in many villages though. The conservative belief regarding pollution due to inter-dining however seems to affect the implementation of mid-day meal or nutrition supplement programme in the primary schools at the sites visited by the author. For instance, even today, some families of the so-called upper castes do not want their children to eat food sitting side by side with the dalit children in the school. However, such families are in a minority and represent a negligible number. But the point that is made here is that the practice of untouchability is still prevalent in the areas of the project.

Umrein has a few villages with predominantly Meo Muslim households. This particular group has been traditionally resisting modern education for its children. Even today, a predominant section of the community believes in the traditional religious education for its children. Girl children are deprived of any kind of education. Any discussion of modern literacy among the community evokes a very sharp rejection on religious grounds. Thus, the task of bringing children to school from such home backgrounds is an uphill task for the state as well as the Bodh educators.

Over the years, state/public schooling seems to have failed in most rural deprived areas where there was no consistent engagement with the community by the school management. This was also the case in Thanagazi and Umrein before Bodh began its work there. One of the major reasons for children not coming to school or dropping out, across the country, has been found to be the dys-functionality of the school and the perceived meaninglessness of education.

The villages visited by the author for the study are Mundavara (Talavrikh Nala), Sahodi ka Bas, Govdi, and Dahra. Each of these villages represents some unique socio-cultural

pattern in the region/project site. These sites were selected based on the social grouping within the village and the availability of Bodh's Community Schools (Bodhshalas) or the government schools where Bodh is associated with.

Bodh's Strategy of Co-Governance of Schools

As mentioned earlier, understanding the idea of a community is very complex in the Indian context. Community in the sense of Bodh's Janpahal programme may be understood as the groups that are living in a compact geographic boundary, and are sharing common features of social and economic life. Sometimes this includes a habitation and, some other times, include a cluster of such habitations.

Janpahal programme aims to evolve a system of community schooling that ensures universalisation of equitable and appropriate education with specific reference to the disadvantaged and government school system (Bodh Shiksha Samiti 2008). In order to achieve this objective, Bodh envisaged a strong component of community participation so that the demand and desire for quality education could be generated and sustained. The idea of creating a model of community school system by Bodh is the crux of the strategy to evolve sustainable and replicable model of school improvement and reform. Such a model is expected to generate demand within the community for the reform of the state run schooling system. The model of community school system under the Janpahal project clearly addresses the educational needs of children and communities that were not served so far by any state or non-state run school systems.

Bodh's strategy of community participation is achieved through a three-fold approach (Bodh Shiksha Samiti 2009: 39). First, it involved a committed, well trained, highly respected and valued core group of programme staff, who have internalised the values of working for the larger social good and respect for the community and children. The role of the cluster coordinators, block coordinators and the overall project coordinators who could live with the community and discuss issues of relevance to their educational advancement, is crucial to generate an atmosphere of trust among the primary stakeholders of the programme, namely, the parents of children of the school going age and also creating social capital among the community members. During the process of interaction with the community members, it was brought to the notice that the role played by this cadre of flag bearers of Bodh in the initial years of programme building was central to the entire initiative of the community participation. This cadre of programme staff engaged the community in a healthy interaction despite confronting initial resistance in accepting the idea of community participation or even to convince them for the need to send their children to school. The project staff through its persistent efforts could initiate planning for select sites for community school, making the community advocate the need to contribute to their own schooling facilities, raising community philanthropy for the larger good of the community, sustaining the interest generated among the community members to contribute to construct the school building or some sort of structures where the community school can run.

Second, the approach of Bodh involved a process of creating a cadre of individual teachers who are trained in working with the community, convincing the community that is either disillusioned or discouraged or deprived by educational initiatives of the past. The teachers of Bodh are lynchpins in the strategy to create an atmosphere of belief and faith in the schooling for a better society for their children. The ideas of an authoritarian teacher

are dismantled by the image of the Bodh teacher who works with children and their parents treating them with respect and as equals, and who is seen as someone who is good in the vocation of teaching. This was the major starting point for the community to sustain its participation in school activities and encouraging their children to attend school regularly.

Third, at the most fundamental habitation level, Bodh has created community structures to strengthen the community school system and to strengthen community participation in the management of government schools. The setting up of Village Education Development Committees (VEDCs), in Bodh's strategy, makes the process of community participation a sustainable model of democratic governance of schooling. Prior to Bodh's initiative, the School Development Management Committees (SDMCs) existed in all government schools, along with the Village Education Committees (VECs) of the village level panchayati raj institutions (PRIs). However, as mentioned earlier, these structures were either dysfunctional or have been dominated by the communities and individuals who had access to power. As a result, such structures did not catch the imagination of the common community members to be part of community planning initiatives for better schooling of their children. In a way, this lack of faith in the government structures was what was responsible for poor school enrolments of children from disadvantaged home backgrounds in the project area. The community members noted that they had expressed all these concerns to Bodh programme teams as well as teachers when they sought their involvement in the setting up of community school in their habitation.

How did the Strategy Work?

As the sites selected for setting up of community schools (Bodhshalas) were mainly inhabited by the socially disadvantaged caste, tribe or religious minority groups that were barely literate or were almost non-literate, the composition of the School Management Committee mattered a lot. To a large extent, the members of SC, ST, OBC and religious minorities are included in the SMC. An important aspect of the strategy was also to include a member/office bearer of the village panchayat as a part of the VEDCs.

In addition to the VEDCs, there are committees such as the Cluster Education Committee and Block Education Committee that are intended to involve the larger panchayati raj institutions. These committees are expected to create awareness of quality education in the catchment area (Thanagazi and Umrein blocks) as well as the Alwar district as a whole.¹

Bodh has developed a system of co-governance of government schools in which there is real involvement of the PRIs, larger community, parents and the teachers. The Janpahal programme established Gram Shiksha Sabhas (GSSs) at the village level to involve communities and PRIs, and thus made rural schools functional. All members of the village community and teachers of the village schools are constituted into the Gram Shiksha Sabha (GSS or Village Education Assembly). PRI, Bodh and relevant education department members are also part of the GSS. The GSS is the primary forum for preparing and monitoring action plans for the village school which generally met every three to six months.

¹ Due to the restrictions on women in this area, it has been difficult to get women to participate in mixed forums. It is with a view to enhancing their participation that Bodh has also created separate forums and is involving local women as mother teachers.

The VEDC as the representative group of the GSS actually implement and follow through on decisions of the GSS. The VEDC typically includes the Sarpanch, a few other members of the PRI, teachers of the school and key leaders of the community. The VEDC meets every month at an appointed date to consider issues in school functioning and resolve and implement solutions.

The VEDC is federated at the cluster and block level to share the learning and advocate for changes relevant to all. A Cluster Education Committee (CEC) is established with the most enthusiastic representatives from the VEDCs in the cluster. The Cluster Resource Coordinator of SSA is also invited to CEC meetings. The CECs² meet once every quarter to share the learning and experiences and to discuss common issues that are plaguing all the schools in the cluster.

A Block Education Committee (BEC) is established with representatives from the education department (typically Block Education Officer or District Education Officer), political representatives (local Member of Legislative Assembly), members of state PRI administration, some VEDC and CEC members and representatives of Bodh. The BEC meets once every six months as a platform for different people to come together on issues common to the entire block and evolve action plans for the educational improvement of the block.³

VEDC meetings are being held every month meticulously in all the 43 villages with good attendance. About 80 per cent or more of the people invited do turn up. If attendance is low because of some unplanned event, then the meeting is re-scheduled to some other day. Members of different castes and from different dhaanis (sections) of the village do participate in these VEDC meetings.

Meetings are facilitated by a Bodh facilitator, but at the beginning of each meeting a Chairman is selected by the group. The Chairman's position is typically rotated amongst different members of the group in order to create a greater sense of ownership amongst members and prevent domination by one person, one caste or one political orientation. At the beginning of every meeting, the Bodh facilitator lists out the issues in the school functioning, and then teachers and community members add to the list. Once the meeting agenda is agreed, each issue is dealt with one by one. Meetings typically last for about two hours and detailed minutes are maintained of the deliberations and decisions.

² The 35 panchayats of Thanagazi block are broken down into six clusters and 11 Panchayats of Umrein block into two clusters. Each cluster meets by rotation in one of the villages of the cluster in order to ensure participation and equality of ownership of all members. The CEC meetings are largely forums for exchanging the best practices of what VEDC members have done. In some cases they have acted as pressure groups for resolving differences in one of the VEDCs.

³ There are two BECs – one for Thanagazi and the other for Umrein. The Umrein BEC is very active and through its efforts the Block Panchayat Pradhan and the Zila Pramukh have jointly sent a proposal to the state government to give public funding for the community schools and in a sense transition them into government schools with a co-governance structure. They have also asked for Bodh to be the academic resource support agency for all government schools of Umrein Block. This proposal is under negotiation and the Principal Secretary (Education) also visited the schools in November 2008 to take stock of the situation. It is ample proof of the strength of the process and the model moving towards decentralized co-governance. BEC also acts as a review agency of Bodh's programme and makes suggestions, specific focus areas and resolves any impediments in implementation or expansion.

Issues discussed at meetings are varied. Some of the issues discussed include:

- (i) Enrolment of all village children in the school, reasons for non-enrolment of some children and how those parents can be persuaded to enroll their children
- (ii) Availability of adequate classrooms for the school, community contributions to build more facilities if inadequate, government plans for building classrooms, toilets, etc
- (iii) Status of various facilities in the school such as water, electricity, furniture, electrical fittings, learning materials, etc
- (iv) Availability of adequate teachers for the school, regular attendance of teachers, the practices and attitudes of teachers towards children, etc
- (v) Attendance of children at school, especially from lower socio-economic status, girls and lower castes; measures to improve attendance, resolving issues of parents because of which they do not send their children to school, etc
- (vi) Achievement levels of children in the school, reasons for non-achievement, action plans for teachers, parents and children themselves.

VEDC meetings have become forums for resolving the issues of school functioning. Multiple points of view on the same issue are discussed largely amicably because of intervention by the Bodh facilitator. Despite deep-seated prejudices amongst teachers about the communities and scepticism of teachers by the community the VEDC gradually helped build trust and understanding. Though members of different castes or political orientation may not normally have opportunities to engage on the VEDC platform,⁴ they all come together and resolve issues reasonably and amicably, thus raising the issue of good education to a level of consensus. Members volunteer to contribute money or time to monitor school functioning, increase enrolment or attendance, speak to senior education department officials for resolving issues, etc.

All VEDCs have opened bank accounts for collection of proceeds from the community. The bank accounts are opened in the joint names of the members and are operated jointly. The proceeds are distributed based on the decisions taken at the GSS and VEDC meetings.

Bodh has additionally been participating in PRI meetings at different levels to emphasise the education agenda of the community. Participation in Panchayat Samiti meetings has helped Bodh sensitise members to the importance of equity and quality of education. The Panchayat Samiti signed an MoU with Bodh to be the academic support agency for all government schools in the Thanagazi block. This demonstrates not only their confidence in Bodh but also a gradual acceptance of the education agenda amongst the PRI representatives at the supra-village level.

⁴ Majority of the capacity building of VEDC functionaries is achieved through actual work of the VEDC rather than through formal capacity building sessions. Facilitators are skilled at weaving into the process of the meeting relevant facts of government programmes, best practice case studies of solutions followed in other similar situations and communicating attitudes or changes in behaviour that are expected from members. As the members attend meetings gradually new patterns of behaviour seem to develop amongst group members to actively collaborate and solve problems rather than blame each other or get into unconstructive blame games.

With all these initiatives, a collective understanding of issues is built at the village, cluster and block levels. From a situation of apathy or helplessness, as a result of the engagement in VEDC and other meetings, teachers, PRIs and community members gradually develop a more detailed understanding of the problems and constraints. For example, teachers are able to more effectively understand why parents are not able to send their children to school during certain months and thus empathise rather than blame. Parents, on the other hand, are able to empathise with the long distances teachers are required to travel because of which they reach the school late, and thus are not blaming them any more if they are 15-30 minutes late. Thus a collective ability to find solutions, contribute and resolve problems is built through this model of community participation.

As a result of the engagement on issues, suitably facilitated by a Bodh facilitator, communities and teachers have slowly started evolving solutions that are acceptable to all and started acting on them. For instance, where teachers were complaining that children were going back home during lunch hours and not coming back on time, parents have resolved to either send lunch with the children in the morning or make sure that children eat quickly and return to school. Where water is not available in the school, parents have offered by rotation to ensure that a pot of water is supplied every morning.

The minutes of the Gram Sabha and VEDC meetings suggest that, in the beginning, the issues discussed were more of the availability of classrooms and teachers and enrolment of children. Then they moved on to the attendance issues, quality of schooling facilities such as availability of water or teaching-learning materials. And finally in some places these institutional structures seem to have discussed issues such as parental roles in supporting the child, children's learning levels, teacher development methods, etc.

The process is very inclusive and provides a platform for people of different castes, socio-economic status and political orientation. People from both the upper castes and lower castes are facilitated to sit together and collaborate to find solutions. People, who during elections are fighting tooth and nail, are facilitated to sit together to discuss school related problems. By building an environment of transcending differences for the sake of "our" children, the facilitator is able to build a grassroots platform for wider collaboration.

One drawback that has been noted in the case of Bodh's model is that the participation of women in the VEDC meetings is low. The local culture does not easily permit men and women to sit together to resolve problems. Efforts to get more women involved and participate in VEDC meetings have met with only moderate success. It must be appreciated that in view of the extreme disadvantage of women in the area (as indicated by the low sex ratio and high differentials in literacy), such participation is an uphill task. To expand the participation of women in the VEDCs, separate women's group meetings were started by Bodh. At these meetings in the absence of men, they are able to more freely participate in deliberations. Such social change as is envisaged is a generational one – but has begun in some ways. Conscious attempts to strengthen women's voice in the VEDC meetings would render the women's empowerment agenda much more successful.

The current format of Bodh makes the VEDC seem like a parallel structure to the SDMC – the statutory government structure and thus causes confusion at times. The confusion is caused since some government money and decisions are channelled through the SDMC and other decisions are channelled through the VEDC. In some cases, though the activation of the VEDC has meant that the SDMC started functioning in a more disciplined way. Often the VEDC meeting is also reported as the SDMC meeting by the Headmaster. Non-integration

with the government structures could lead to antagonism by senior officials at a later date and impair the programme. Bodh's endeavour, however, is not to overlook or neglect the Government structure, but to inform policy and practice better by trialling a different and more inclusive model, well-validated through its implementation in Janpahal. In fact this inclusive model has the potential to inform policy not just locally but in a much wider arena at the state and national level.

Further, respective roles of the CEC and BEC have not yet been clearly defined and members are not chosen by election. Some members of these bodies including the VEDCs have very clearly analysed the limitations of election as a way of constituting bodies. According to them, those chosen by election would also have against them those that lost the elections and therefore it might be difficult to elicit their cooperation. Hence informal methods that throw up people by consensus are able to draw more inclusive involvement from all stakeholders. While members seem to participate in the CEC and BEC meetings, the extent of decision making and the authority is not yet clear. Also members of these federated structures are currently being chosen by Bodh facilitators, a practice which may not be sustainable in the long run.

Impact of Bodh' Model on Community's Attitudes to Schooling

During the focused group discussions with the community in the villages visited, it was found that there is deep appreciation of Bodh's Janpahal programme. As one community member puts it, "Janpahal is a varadan (God's Gift) for the marginal groups in my village." The fact that the community in several villages got together to raise additional funds through contributions is an example of community's resolve to join Bodh's efforts through Janpahal. Besides monetary contributions, the community contributed land for school buildings, constructed additional classrooms, donated buildings for using as school premises, etc. The community has also contributed by paying periodic or daily visits to the school which led to their involvement in school maintenance and monitoring tasks. This has generated a sense of ownership of the school. The community also engaged in keeping track of children's learning and question teachers if there are any doubts. In some schools, a corpus fund is created for school through the VEDC (in the case of both Talavriksh Nala and Govdi schools).

In Govdi, community contributed around Rs. 150 per child towards the school's infrastructural development. This amounted to about Rs. 40,000 per year. The decision to contribute was unanimously taken in the VEDC. The VEDC uses the money generated by the community in digging a borewell, beautifying the school premises, covering the rocky surface with matter to make a safe playground for children, paying for electricity connection of the school and also pay electricity bills every month.

An interesting aspect of the schooling in the village is that Bodh had initially run its community school at the same place as the private school, Durga Public School. With the setting up of a Bodhshala, the children started migrating from the government school to the Bodhshala. As a result, the government school was at the verge of closure and at that point it was decided to close the Bodhshala as it was not the policy of Bodh to work at cross purposes to government schools. The children in the Bodhshala were transferred to the government school and one Bodh teacher was placed along with the government school teacher.

Due to shortage of teachers, children started dropping out of the government school. It was this vacuum that the private school had exploited to its advantage. In Dehra, Bodh's decision to close down its own school and merge it with the government school was not seen positively by the community members. With the merger, the situation in government school further deteriorated as there were now a hundred children in all classes but only two teachers (one government and one Bodh teacher). As a result parents started withdrawing their children from the government school and placed them in the private school. When community members were asked, it was unanimously felt that Bodh school was the best when it was there but now they were forced to withdraw their children from government school and place them in the private school.

In Thanagazi and Umrein, communities viewed education as a tool to attain the qualifications for making a child employable in the lower level jobs in the state or non-state sectors. Their aspirations are to educate their children up to class X level, which is a terminal stage for secondary school education. Going beyond that stage depends upon God's will, they say. It is observed that the community even today practises child marriage and when a boy or a girl attains the age of 13 – 16 (age by which a child reaches class X), the family begins to plan for the marriage while education becomes the second or no priority.

One encouraging aspect in such a gloomy scenario is that the community members seem to have begun to appreciate the importance of basic education for their girl children, as they feel that educated girls are preferred by prospective grooms and their families. The provision of schooling to a certain level at least is seen as desirable or even essential for boys as well as girls. As a parent from the Scheduled Caste background puts it, "Education is crucial for both boys and girls. Times have changed. Today, having no education means that you are making yourself a laughing stock for other people. Basic education gives the child and an adult some minimum amount of respect within the community."

However, religious barriers posed some constraint in the way Bodhshala or even the government schools were seen, particularly in the case of Janpahal, in Meo villages of Umrein block. Though there was a visible change in the way a segment of Meo Muslims began to perceive modern schooling through Bodhshalas, another significant segment of the same community had serious reservations about modern education, particularly because it entailed children to sing and dance together (of Rhymes and other cultural activities!). However, with the Bodh teachers' gentle way of persuasion, the community has seen that there is nothing wrong in this kind of education. As a result, all children are encouraged to attend the school.

Perceptions of Quality of Community Schooling

Broadly, community views Bodh's Community School as a synonym for good quality schooling. In a region such as Thanagazi or Umrein, where basic schooling was a distant dream for many social groups, the most widely offered definition of quality school is as follows: "Quality is defined as an ability of the school to attract the children to school, create an interest in them for self-study and retain their interest in what happens within the four walls of classroom or the boundaries of the school." According to a parent, "the Bodhshala attracts children to school voluntarily. We don't tell them to attend school. Children don't even mind skipping their breakfast or meal if it slightly in order to reach school in time. Such is the influence of Bodhshala on the children."

Interestingly, the community's references to quality education are intertwined with how it perceives private school and the government schools. Often, the community members referred to the government schools as of 'poor quality' and private schools as of 'good quality.' One of the reasons for this seems to be the shortage of teachers in government schools and, at the same time, their presence in private schools. For them, if there is no teacher in a class, the children do not get focused on their learning and their attention is drawn towards playing within and outside the classroom or even skipping the school for a day or forever. This is one of the reasons why parents withdraw their children and admit them into the private school.

Further, sending children to private schools by paying fees to the extent of Rs. 1200 to Rs. 5000 per annum, depending on the class into which a child seeks admission, is also a matter of prestige and dignity for many parents. Another construction of good quality schooling among some parents seems to be dependent on the extent to which a school enforces discipline, even if one or another child is made to experience corporal punishment at school. The issue of corporal punishment is not resolved in the community perception – some parents advocate it while others are quite against it. Interestingly, in some other cases, corporal punishment seems to have failed to deter the people from economically weaker social classes and castes from sending their children to private schools.

The quality of Bodhshalas is best expressed by a parent who said, "Earlier, even if we told the children to study after they have come back from school in the evening, they used to run out of home to play with their friends. But, now with Bodh's teachers, they come home after the school, eat, and then take their books for self-study. Our child is better behaved at home now than before." Most importantly, according to the community, attitudes towards the education of girl children have undergone a sea change. One grand-parent with four grand-children said, "I did not send my daughter to school, but the times have changed today. I tell my sons and daughters to send their children to school."

While the author is conscious of the limitations in making definitive statements about the impact of Janpahal on the social change through a very short duration study, it was thought pertinent to make a brief mention of some of the impacts of Bodh's model of co-governance, as testified by the community. As discussed earlier, almost all the children attending the Bodhshalas or even the Government schools are first generation school goers/learners. There was a strong desire for the parents living in such geographic isolation to send their children to school, but they do not want their five year old child to walk two or three km every morning and evening to attend school. According to Banjara⁵ (SC) families which inhabit stretches of a few tens of kilometres across the hilly and rocky terrain, younger children cannot negotiate the distance along with buffaloes and other animals such as stags, etc. This is a serious challenge for Bodh's Janshala to address.

⁵ Banjaras are the migrant communities in various parts of Rajasthan and were traditionally cow and sheep herders. However, in recent times, they have taken to settled community life and only the male members migrate, leaving behind their women, children and elderly in the settlement where they built their homes. According to a Banjara, there are 36 different types of Banjaras in all, they all engage in different occupations and have different ways of life styles. This aspect may be of sociological relevance, which needs further investigation in order to take education to their door step.

A parent in Mundawara (Talavriksh Nala) spelt out why Bodh's Janpahal was important for the community. According to him, "Janpahal offered a hope that our children can become white collar employees one day." Further, he offered an interesting explanation: "In our generation we were non-literates and we are making efforts to get our children study up to class X. Even if the present generation gets schooling up to class X, they will see to it that their children will go beyond that stage. They will ensure that their children attend colleges and universities. It doesn't matter if it takes another generation to bring our community and village out of the darkness of ignorance and illiteracy." Further, a parent noted, "My child now makes me learn alphabets at this age. I get motivated to read and write when I see my child read and write so passionately." The community thus aspires to initiate a cycle of social change through the quality schooling initiative of Bodh. Social mobility over a couple of generations is what seems to be the goal which motivates the poor parents and community members to work for and through Janpahal.

Breaking Caste, Class and Religious Barriers?

Bodh's Janpahal seems to have had a definite impact on the way the members of different castes, tribes, minority groups and social classes interact. The enthusiasm to come together through monthly meetings, irrespective of the caste and communal affiliations of the members, has created an atmosphere of cooperation among people at the sites visited. The entire enthusiasm was due to their zeal to get good quality schooling for their children. A parent from the Balai (SC) family in Talavriksh Nala described the impact of getting together through Janpahal as following: "We sit together, laugh, discuss, and dine with each other at the school, which was unthinkable a few years ago." However, this cannot be generalised for all the villages in the region, as in other villages such as Dehra, caste groups at different levels of the hierarchy have only now begun to sit together. Though the so called upper and Other Backward Castes may sit together with Scheduled Caste members for a discussion of the school related matters, they do not dine together. As a member of Yadav (OBC) caste in Dehra argued, "How can we reject the dictate of our elders who laid out certain rules of our interaction with the lower caste members?"

The common public spaces such as walking through the streets inhabited by upper and intermediate castes, temples, village community meeting place, schools, etc.' are now open to members of the lower castes, which is a major change in the way social groups interact in the village. Another aspect of the change is that members of the lower castes (Regar, Balai, Chamar, etc.) have now shifted to the so called non-polluting occupations such as weaving laces, carpets, etc., instead of their earlier traditional occupations in which they dealt with the skin of the dead animals or leather works. This change may or may not be directly attributed to Bodh's programme of community schooling or its model of community involvement, Bodh's Janpahal's achievement, however, is that it had provided a very healthy space for different castes and community members to come together through VEDCs, parent-teacher meetings (PTMs), and also by keeping teacher's contact with the community on an everyday basis by living in the very same community with which he/she works. This facilitated a sense of partnership and ownership of the school.

It may be said with some certainty thus that educational reform has become an issue for the community in its everyday life. The awareness generated by Janpahal has created a political demand for quality education, which is reflected in the way the community placed

school related issues before their elected representatives in the panchayat or block or district or state legislature. This has led to a demand by the District Panchayat to the State Government for increased partnership with Bodh and public funding for community schools to be run under co-governance by the community, the PRI and the Bodh.

The community also felt that it could now influence the government if something went wrong with the present model of Bodh's community initiative. The idea of government takeover is not liked by the community at all places. They say they need Bodh for some more years to crystallise the changes in their villages. As one parent puts it, "Even if the government takes over the Bodhshalas, we will not leave Bodh. In fact, we have a school in our village for the first time because of Bodh. It never caught the imagination of the government to set up a school for us all these years."

It is too early to document the changes occurring in the quality of life of the community that has occurred as a result of the Janpahal programme. To take an instance, it was stated that in one village the children asked their parents to stop playing cards in the village. The same issue was raised by members of the VEDC and was discussed at length. The outcome of the VEDC discussion was to enforce a ban on playing cards at public places in the village. The parents say that it has certainly improved their family life, economic position and even their everyday interactions in the community.

Concluding Remarks

The three-pronged strategy of Janpahal --- (1) developing a sound pedagogical system for quality education, (2) evolving a new management system, that of co-governance by involving the teachers, communities, PRIs and department officials, and (3) involving the community in a very forceful manner --- has been successful in directing a failing government school system towards recovery in the Panchayats of Thanagazi and Umrein blocks, thereby reviving the faith of deprived communities in education. This has led to a phenomenal increase in enrolment, particularly of girls, their retention even into the upper primary stage and improvement in both teaching and learning processes and outcomes in government schools.

Overall, the community participation in the Janpahal programme has generated a sense of ownership of the school among all sections of the community, irrespective of their caste, tribe, class and religious identities. The positive side of the initiative is that it has certainly generated a demand for quality education in the areas it is working. A situation has arisen whereby the community is now raising the issues of quality, teacher responsiveness, and infrastructural development before the government as well as the Panchayati Raj institutions.

One of the reasons that Janpahal has been able to effect a high level of change in about a hundred communities within a few years is the robust structure built on the principles of democracy and integrity. Here, each participant is viewed with equal respect and value – whether teacher, student or community member; no one is looked down upon or blamed for anyone else. Behind this structure lies a rigorous system of recruitment and self-accountability which encourages a career path towards leadership roles for those interested in and capable of it. This is what distinguishes a Bodh teacher from a government school teacher and makes the community hold Bodh members in awe.

Finally, if Bodh is to get out of the community's dependence on it, it will have to reflect on what makes Bodh what it is, and transmit its ideas and understanding to other civil society organisations so that the latter may replicate the same. As Ramachandran (2001) argued, community participation is not a "one-time affair" (p.2248) and "sustaining meaningful participation demands vigilance" (ibid). With the changing times and contexts, it is all the more necessary to maintain the community's vigil so that the state system of education does not lapse into redundancy amidst challenges of privatisation of even primary education --- a threat that is looming large in states like Rajasthan and other educationally backward states of India.

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Language Encodes Knowledge-System of a Civilisation: Don't Let it Slip Away[#]

Anvita Abbi *

Introduction

Knowledge societies are considered power societies. The ancient languages of the country, represented by tribals, contain immense knowledge. Ironically, their knowledge has failed to make them powerful as they have been subjugated by 'others' --- physically, emotionally, economically, and culturally --- for a very long time. Indigenous knowledge-system that underlies in the spoken language in general, is not only beneficial to the society at large, it represents a long historical path leading to the time-tested results. Our beliefs, our rituals, our value judgements, our cognitive abilities, our world-view — all are represented in the oral tradition which must be saved and sustained. Ancient languages provide information on ancient migration and peopling of various areas, thereby aiding to reconstruct the human history. The structure and words in language do not determine the shape of culture; instead, they record vast amounts of culturally relevant information and thereby the perception of the society and knowledge about the local environment and its sustenance. Language encodes knowledge of taxonomy, geography, ornithology, environment, calendric, numeral systems, navigational knowledge, boat building and, above all, the ways and means to sustain these over thousands of years. The loss of linguistically packaged information about ethnobiology and ethnobotany can have serious ramifications in future planning of the area and its dwellers. One can visualise the devastating effects on human society when these languages, which are transmitted through generations orally, would disappear from the face of this earth.

The present paper introduces the indigenous knowledge-system of Great Andamanese about their flora and fauna, about their concept of time and space which motivated them to protect and preserve their natural environment for thousands of years. The author wishes to stress that indigenous knowledge that is preserved in tribal languages should be written down and should form an integral part of course curriculum of school going children across the country. Instead of bringing tribes into the mainstream, we should make efforts to

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bring ourselves closer to them to learn from their ancient indigenous knowledge about human survival.

Wealth of Biodiversity

Richness of a country cannot be measured only in terms of its Gross National Product or the quantum of reserves in its banks but also by the diversity and multiplicity of its languages and cultures. Countries with a large number of varied languages and dialects, distinct language families representing a long diachronic evolution of different languages that coexisted for centuries, giving rise to sustainable and adaptable societies, are real indicators of richness of a country. Language ecology of the country shows us how languages develop, spread, interact, and decline as part of socio-cultural, political and environmental processes. Scientists have now proved (Maffi 2000, 2001) that (1) linguistic diversity and biological diversity are inseparable and (2) strongest ecosystems are things which are most diverse. This is because diversity contains the potential for adaptation. Uniformity can endanger a species by providing inflexibility and non-adaptability (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000).

Today, about 6,500 languages are spoken worldwide, and there may be as many sign languages. Almost half of them are endangered. A quarter of these languages have fewer than 1,000 speakers, and many of them are already moribund (no longer learnt by children). With more than 500 tribal languages of India which are still spoken but are threatened to be lost under the dominance of the Eighth Schedule languages, we are facing an enormous responsibility of describing this wealth of the country for the posterity. We cannot talk of linguistic rights unless we facilitate the speakers of these languages to use them for education. An important issue in front of us is to realise that depleting language use leads to depletion of knowledge-base of the society as it is the language alone that records and preserves the intellectual knowledge. Linguists believe that languages carry evidence of earlier environment, habitat and practices which may or may not be in the memory of the community. Loss of language, thus, translates into loss of biodiversity and comprehension of the ancient world-knowledge.

The fundamental question that we can ask ourselves is: When a language is on the verge of extinction, what dies along with the language? Is it its history, its culture, its ecological base, its knowledge of the biodiversity, its ethno-linguistic practices, or the identity of the community, or, all of these? Most definitely, it is all of these features which extinguish along with the extinction of the language. Languages are witnesses to the diverse and varying ways the human cognitive faculties perceive the world. Each language has a unique lexical stock and unique signification. Various manifestations of a language are ecological and archaeological signatures of the communities that maintain close ties to their environments. Hence language death signifies the closure of the link with its ancient heritage. As we move on, we will see how language death, in this case Great Andamanese language, has resulted in loss of language ecology and knowledge-base of one of the most ancient civilisations of the world. However, before we proceed it would be advisable to comprehend the beliefs that linguists hold which serve as the basis for language revolution of saving the dying languages.

Linguists' Beliefs

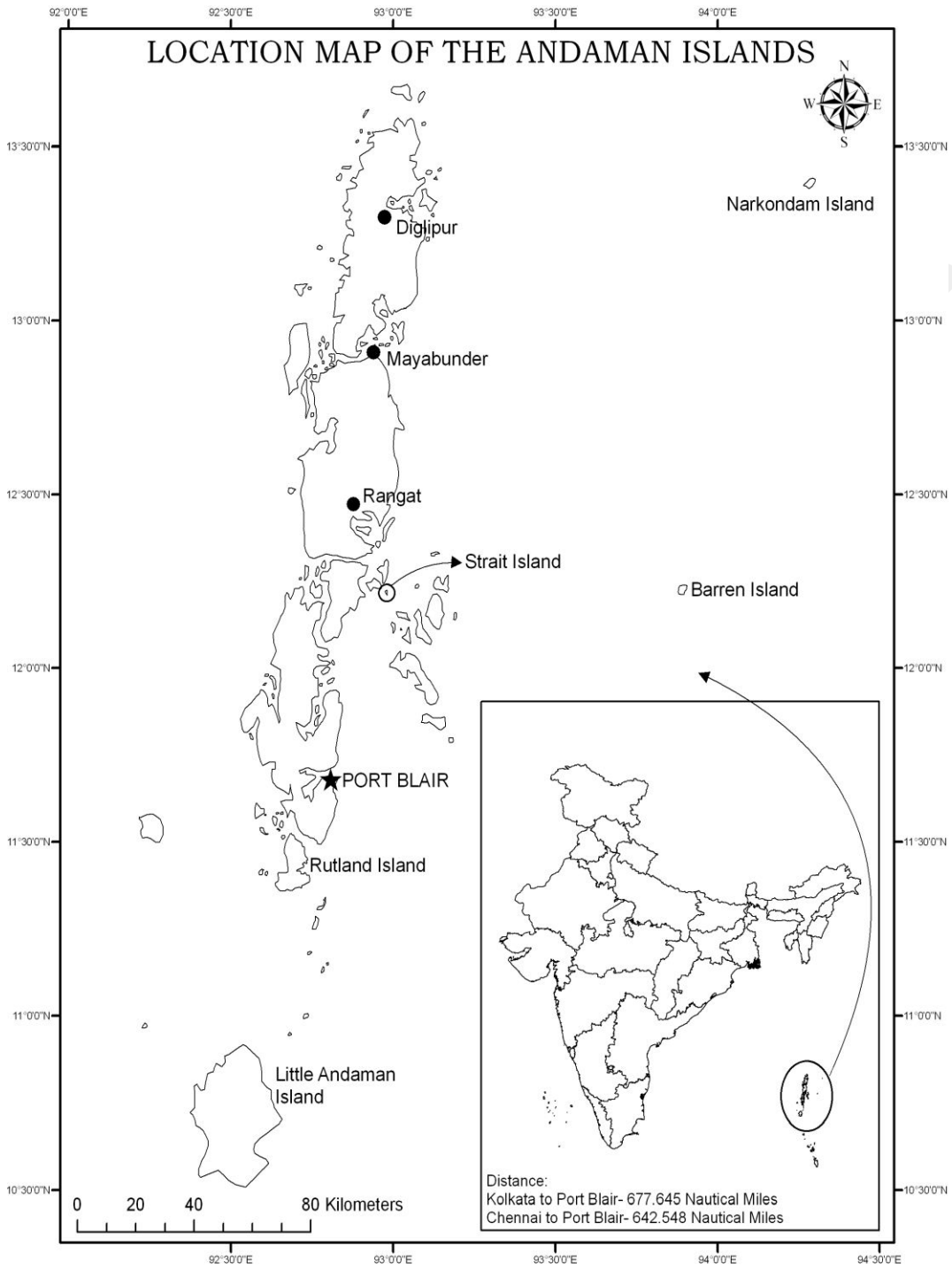
Linguists hold the following belief.

- (i) The loss of languages, cultural practices and indigenous ecological knowledge all reflect the breakdown in the relationship between humans and their environment. Therefore, seeking solutions for the sustainability of both human communities and the environment must recognise the link between cultural diversity and biological diversity (Maffi 2000).
- (ii) The challenge of maintaining, restoring, and perpetuating the diversity of life on earth is one of supporting and promoting the diversity in nature, culture, belief, and languages.
- (iii) These diversities are seen as intimately related to, and profoundly shaping, one another over the history of human presence and activities on the earth.
- (iv) Language is a window to the society. Cultural beliefs, values, knowledge, and behaviour patterns in relation to the environment are expressed in language. If intergenerational transfer of heritage language is absent, the loss of language leads to a loss of beliefs, values, and knowledge.
- (v) Loss of environment also leads to loss of language(s). Removal of indigenous environmental base of the various tribal societies force them to forget their language as it no longer serves the purpose of transferring indigenous knowledge base.

“This complex web of connections is pervasive throughout the globe, although at present it may remain more easily recognisable in indigenous, minority, or local communities that maintain close ties to their environments” (Skutnabb Kangas 2000). With this as a background, let us move on to consider the case of the Great Andamanese people and their languages.

About Great Andamanese

The Andaman Islands are a cluster of approximately 250 islands, running from north to south, and located southeast of the Indian subcontinent in the Bay of Bengal. The biggest Andaman island is known as Great Andaman, and the island approximately 100 km. south of it is known as Little Andaman. (See Map)



Indigenous tribes of the Andaman Islands are hunter-gatherers of the Negrito ethnic group (Kashyap et al, 2003). The tribes residing in Great Andaman and their various languages are known as the Great Andamanese. Another tribe that lives on the western coast of Great Andaman is known as Jarawa and speaks a language of the same name. Little Andaman is home to Onge and speak the language of the same name. Both Jarawa and Onge call themselves as ang and, hence, we will refer to their languages as Angan languages.

Great Andamanese is a generic term used for the amalgam of ten different but closely related varieties of the same language once spoken in the entire set of the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal. Great Andamanese constitutes the sixth language family of India (Abbi, 2006, 2008), the other five being Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman, Austroasiatic, and Tai-Kadai, all of them spoken in the mainland India. The research in population genetics indicates that Andamanese are the descendants of early Palaeolithic colonisers of Southeast Asia and are the survivors of the first migration from Africa that took place 70,000 years ago. The analyses of complete mitochondrial DNA sequences from two out of three accessible tribes, the Onge and Great Andamanese populations, revealed two deeply branching clades that share their most recent common ancestor in the founder haplogroup M1 (Thangaraj et al., 2005).

The results reported in the present article are based on first-hand language data collected in the field by me during the period of 2005–2009.¹ The Great Andamanese language family is represented by ten languages (Fig. 1), which can be grouped into three subgroups: Southern, Central and Northern. The present form of Great Andamanese (PGA for short) is a “koiné” or “mixed” language and derives its lexical sources from four northern languages such as Khora, Sare, Bo and Jeru.

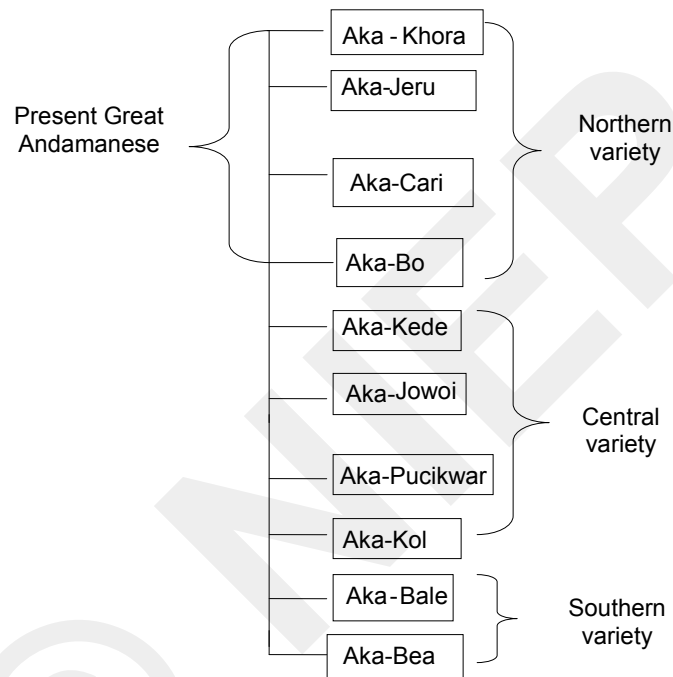
Till about three hundred years ago, the Great Andamanese tribes were spread all over the Andaman Islands, divided into ten different subgroups. What remains of an entire race is a mixed group of people comprising fifty-six members (mainly children), who are descendants of different subgroups. Once a diverse tribe with ten different language varieties, mutually understandable across geographical borders, the Great Andamanese people today are endangered population of fifty-six with only five heritage speakers left. Not only their number has dwindled to an alarming proportion, the heritage language has virtually been wiped out. Out of the five speakers left in the community no one speaks the language fluently. At best, they can converse among themselves within a restricted domain. The community uses a variety of Hindi called Andamani Hindi for intra-tribal communication as well for communicating with non-tribal people living in Andaman. A drastic shift in their mode of subsistence and lifestyle pattern has taken them away from their language as well as the cultural symbolism and semantic-pragmatic ontological constructs specific to their language. The Great Andamanese are no longer a hunter-gatherer tribe. However, one individual, Mr. Nao Jr. who was very well versed with the language and words, one with whom I interacted for a long time during my research and

¹ My fieldwork on Great Andamanese was financially supported by the Hans Rausing Endangered Language Fund, SOAS, University of London, under the Endangered Language Documentation Program for the project Vanishing Voices of the Great Andamanese (VOGA), 2005–9.

whom I considered my guru, informed me of the indigenous knowledge reported here. He died in 2009, leaving behind a legacy and much knowledge about the environment which never was unearthed.

Figure 1

Present Great Andamanese and Its Regional Varieties



The Nature of the Language and Culture

As stated above, the Great Andamanese is a moribund language which has ceased to get passed on from one generation to the other. Apart from the loss of language, the Great Andamanese also suffer from the loss of cultural heritage, loss of ancient practices and rituals, as well as loss of the art of narration. The few persons, who speak the language now, did not remember any native stories or folk tales. It was noticed that story telling as an activity did not exist anymore. Neither the mothers nor the old people of the community ever narrate any story to their children. The loss of mother tongue has very serious implications as the very genre of narration has been lost due to depleting domains of use of the language. Thus, the present generation of Great Andamanese never heard any story from their elders --- neither in their heritage language nor in Andamani Hindi. A thorough investigation of the linguistic behaviour of the Great Andamanese towards their own

language and culture presents a bleak picture and points towards a future when they will become a group of people who would totally lose their language and culture, and, hence, their symbols of identity. The case of the Great Andamanese language is a complex one because of dwindling population, low competence in the heritage language and linguistic variation within the few odd speakers. In such a scenario, the information on birds and their indigenous names and classification that I am going to discuss below is a treasure to be stored and cherished.

The Role of Music

It must be mentioned here that their traditional songs and the art of singing have not been lost. It was noticed that the female members of the community still remembered a few old songs, and they sang them for us. The number of male members who could sing these traditional songs was negligible as compared to the females. Hence, it was the female members of the community who had retained the treasure of songs, much more than the male members. This observation proves that the life of songs in heritage language is longer than the language itself. Songs in original language survive even when the language is no more in use. While the art of narration perishes in the process of language death, songs and singing are not as adversely affected. Music is a memory based activity and narration is language-use based, and this difference in their cognitive process has a serious impact on their retention, as exemplified by the Great Andamanese case.

I am now going to discuss the indigenous knowledge about birds that the Great Andamanese, especially one speaker, Nao Jr, shared with me. For details on this and to see the pictures of each bird identified by the tribes, readers may consult Pande and Abbi (2011).

Concept of Space

Space is a cultural construct that can be defined by the movement of spirits, animals and humans along vertical and horizontal axes. In the world-view of Great Andamanese, space and all natural elements in it (sun, moon, tide, winds, earth and forest) together constitute the cosmos. This factor strengthens the holistic view of the world of the Great Andamanese, where birds and other creatures are essential and interrelated. Not only the living and visible elements but also the presence of the ancestral spirits constitutes the concept of space. Interestingly, the Great Andamanese believe that all the objects of the world have distinct smell.² The only elements that don't smell are the spirits who protect them from destruction.

Concept of Time

The model of temporal categorisation is known as the honey calendar. It is based on the names of the blooming flowers of that particular time and the associated honey that the bees collect during the blooming of this flower (See Tables 1 & 2). This naming process is

² I recorded 18 different names of smell in this dying language. I am sure there were many more but got extinct by the time I reached the Island. For detail, see Abbi (2012)

related not only to the seasonal change but also with the flowers' inherent relation with the availability of honey. As pointed out by Radcliffe-Brown (1922:39), honey occupies a special place in the Great Andamanese pattern of subsistence and movement. Perhaps the Great Andamanese sub-categorisation of primary seasons into minor seasons is more closely related to the availability of honey and its taste or smell (Radcliffe-Brown, 1922:119). Interestingly, the Great Andamanese elders of the Strait Island claim to know the origin of honey, i.e., the specific kind of flowers that bees used in making the honey. They can identify this by tasting it. Blooming of each flower is then associated with the change of the season and hence the specific time of the year, i.e., calendar.

TABLE 1
Honey Calendar

<i>Name of Flowers</i>	<i>Associated Seasons</i>
Jilioro	Onset of summer
Tipoktolo	Mid-summer
phocho tolo	Intense summer
Ret cher	End of summer and
Rea tolo	onset of rains Onset of
Chokhorotolo	mild rains
	Heavy rains

The onset of rains is symbolised by the compound word “bamboo + rain.” Here no name of flower is mentioned. Sub-categorisation of primary seasons into minor seasons is closely related to the availability of honey and its taste or smell.

Man (1923:182) mentions that Aka-Bea people divided the primary season into twenty minor seasons named after flowers blooming at that particular season. Radcliffe-Brown (1922:118) provides a list of flower names which were used by the Great Andamanese as reference points of time. His list of flower-names in Aka-Jeru (north Great Andamanese language) and Aka-Bea (the south Great Andamanese language), and their corresponding blooming time form Georgian calendar is as follows:

TABLE 2
Bloomng of Flowers and Associated Months of the Year

<i>Aka-Bea Flower</i>	<i>Aka-Jeru Flower</i>	<i>Corresponding Time</i>
<i>Clilipa</i>	<i>Celebi</i>	Middle of November to middle of February
<i>Moda</i>	<i>Mukui</i>	
<i>Ora</i>	<i>Okor</i>	Middle of February to middle of May
<i>Yere</i>	<i>Jeru</i>	
<i>Pataka</i>	<i>Botek</i>	
<i>Balya</i>	<i>Puliu</i>	Middle of May to end of August
<i>Rece</i>	<i>Re</i>	
<i>Cagara</i>	<i>Cokoro</i>	
<i>Carapa</i>	<i>Carap</i>	
<i>Cenra</i>	<i>Torok</i>	September, October, and the first half of November
<i>Yulu</i>	<i>Jili</i>	

Girls are also named after the seasonal flower.

Empirical Classification of the Names of the Great Andamanese Birds

One may notice that specific names of birds in the Great Andamanese nomenclature often consist of contrasting sets which in turn have certain underlying meaning. Ethno-biological nomenclature is semantically active because the linguistic components of animal or plant names often metaphorically allude to morphological, behavioural or ecological features that are non-arbitrarily associated with their biological reference (Berlin, 1992). These lexemes have differentiating dimensions that are encoded in the names of taxa themselves. Pande and Abbi (2011) have classified various dimensions or attributes in the Great Andamanese bird names into ornithological and pragmatic categories based on their semantic properties. One bird name may have more than one attribute and such names are constructed by compounding. Let us see how modern ornithological category is represented in Great Andamanese.

- (i) **The primary attributes** of the denotata are size and shape of the bird or its body parts like head, beak, legs, tail, perch sites, loud calls and habitats where birds are seen. The identification of the attributes grouped under the primary group does not require indepth observation of birds and these features are immediately noticed by the observer. Our analysis of Great Andamanese names shows that 52 bird species are recognised by primary attributes.
- (ii) **The secondary attributes** of denotata essentially require indepth observations and higher level of ornithological understanding. The various secondary attributes are behavioural bird vocalisations (voice-related and onomatopoeic names), food and

feeding habits, nesting behaviour, movement, repetitive movement (particularly the Great Andamanese names of plovers, a quantitative category in typological classification categorised under the principle of iconicity), conjugal behaviour, and status whether residential or migratory. The habitats where birds are seen, an ecological aspect of bird life, are also included in this category. There are 66 bird species known to the Great Andamanese recognised by secondary attributes.

It can be inferred that the Great Andamanese have a keen sense of observation. Further, they also have named 18 birds by the habitats where birds are seen. This means that the Great Andamanese understand the ecological aspects of birds.

- (iii) **The Pragmatic Category** includes bird names with analogies drawn with human culture and human way of life, and relating to the human sphere of observations. It culminates in comparisons drawn with animate and inanimate objects. The Great Andamanese have related birds to their own lives by giving them the names of their ancestors -etic names (such as, Benge 'Andaman serpent eagle,' Kaulo 'Brahminy kite,' Phatka 'crow,' Mithe 'dove') or naming them as toponyms. They have also named birds by associating them with animate objects such as related species of birds or to other unrelated animal species based on some common character. They have also drawn analogies with shape, colour and other properties of inanimate objects known to them (harpoon, bark of tree, jewellery and human body parts). Birds are conceived as objects of beauty as in bemokatap (the one who has small waist) 'Andaman bulbul' or as life forms that arouse some kind of sentiment in the human mind. They are woven in folklore³ and culture and are perceived as warnings and omens. There are 26 bird species known to the Great Andamanese that can be included in the pragmatic category.

From the above discussion, it would be obvious that the Great Andamanese understand birds as life-form taxon, in a manner similar to that found among the Nage non-literate tribal community of Indonesia (Forth, 2004). Birds are also symbolically perceived on the basis of spiritual virtues, mythological significance, as portents or warnings. The categorisation of birds by the Great Andamanese is firmly grounded in empirically observed discernible similarities and differences of morphology, plumage, behaviour and habitats. It appears that the Great Andamanese do not construct order but they discern it, a principle stated by Starr and Heise (1969).

Some birds are considered as omens and others are perceived as warning signs. The owl, tropicbird, kingfisher, tern, drongo and some plover species feature in the list of culturally significant birds.

The Great Andamanese do not prefer birds as staple food or regular food, simply because birds are small in size and difficult to hunt in the dense and tall tropical rain forests. The experienced hunters among the Great Andamanese are usually males. Whatever they hunt is equally distributed among the people in their village. Birds alone do not meet the dietary requirements of the members of the community. Birds are not considered by Great Andamanese as mere eating objects but are looked upon as 'living objects with feathers' ---

³ Refer to the folk tale on birds Jiro Mithe by Anvita Abbi (2012)

tajio-tut-bec. The other reason why birds do not constitute their diets is because birds are seen as their 'ancestors.'⁴

Interestingly, although birds are not their regular food, the Great Andamanese recognise several species of birds.

The heightened perception of hues and shades of colour reflects in the names of birds. Great Andamanese recognise several species of birds after their prominent plumage colour or colour of a body part. The orioles (chereotutbi) are named after their yellow plumage where utbi means 'yellow.' The Orange-headed Ground Thrush (khaurekoch) is named after the orange plumage where koch means a 'wine-coloured fruit.' The Asian Koel (chereo) is recognised as a bird with black plumage where reo means 'black.' Parakeets (chorolo) are identified as birds with green plumage where chere means 'green.' The Andaman Crake buruko has red feathers like those of the red coral buruko or burku. The terns are called lacha, where lacha stands for 'white sea birds.' The Great Andamanese also recognise the properties of colour. The glittering nature of the plumage is recognised for species like Nicobar Pigeon and Emerald Dove miliidiu, where mili means 'shifting, shaking,' diu means 'to glitter/shine/sun.' Each picture of birds has a caption of Andamanese name followed by English names or scientific names for easy identification. See Pande and Abbi (2011).



Toromtubiyo - Red Munia



Phuro - Andaman Owl

⁴ I saw once Boa Sr. the eldest person in the community who was the last speaker of the Bo variety of the Great Andamanese language, talking to birds. When asked she responded that they (birds) alone understood her.



Mithe - Andaman Cuckoo Dove



Milidu - Coloeas Nicobarica



Chelene - Crab plover



Bolmikhu - Halcyon Capensis



Benge - Eagle



BemokaTap - Bulbul

The most important fact which came to light was that when compared to scientific names many Great Andamanese names for birds came very close to the scientific nomenclature. The following table is self-explanatory where the literal meaning of the names of the Great Andamanese birds is given in the last column while the meaning of the scientific names are given in the third column.

TABLE 3
Great Andamanese Description to Present Ornithological Facts

<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Latin Name</i>	<i>Meaning of Latin/English Name</i>	<i>Meaning of GA Name</i>
Pied Triller	<i>Lalagenigra</i>	Beautiful shiny black bird	Shiny plumage
Red Munia	<i>Amandavaamandava</i>	Bird found in Ahmedabad	Bird of salt habitat of North Andaman's
Storm Petrels	<i>Puffinus, Fregetta sp.</i>	Birds that walk on water	Splashing water surface like a waterfall
Plovers	<i>Charadrius sp.</i>	Plove substrate for food	Pointed object (bill) move to and fro
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numeniusarquata</i>	Bow-like beak	Foreigner with curvy beak
Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocitta sp.</i>	One who strikes the tree	Woodpecker
Orange-headed Thrush	<i>Zootheracitrina</i>	Yellow like citrus	Of vinaceous colour
Oriole	<i>Oriolus sp.</i>	Yellow bird	Yellow bird

Source: Adapted from different sources

The Great Loss of Knowledge-Base

If languages are repositories of human perception, human history, human civilisation and migration, then the depleting indigenous language speaking population of hunter and gatherers in the Andaman Islands signifies a large scale loss of knowledge-base. The contact between the Great Andamanese and food producing communities have led to loss of old cultural practices as well as diminishing indigenous vocabulary pertaining to specific hunting activities, local flora and fauna, medicinal plants and their uses, boat-building and diverse gathering activities. The present author believes that languages carry evidence of earlier environment, habitat and practices which are no longer in the memory of the community. Hence language death signifies the closure of the link with its ancient heritage. We will cite a few more examples from flora and fauna as evidence of what we have lost and what more we are going to lose.

Crabs

The Great Andamanese have several known varieties of crabs, each with a distinct name. The following list of thirteen types of crabs is no longer being identified by the younger generation. Consider:

Keo 'edible large crab;' taurotarakar 'a kind of sand crab;' phong 'large crab;' roxo 'a kind of crab;' kol 'small edible crab;' kaurob 'very tiny non-edible crab;' keyatto 'small edible crab;' kal 'small sea variety crab;' kae 'black crab found near the volcano in Barren Island;' le 'a kind of crab which is extinct now;' khurum 'medium size red edible crab;' munu 'a kind of crab;' korai 'a kind of crab with a shell,' etc.⁵

Leaves

Similarly, a variety of leaves and their uses and names known to the elderly people of the community are lost to the younger generation. Consider a few examples from our list of flora.

Ondech 'leaf used for wrapping the meat before steaming;' farako 'used for making thread;' en 'used for fishing as when these leaves are strewn in water fishes become senseless and float up.' The bushes of en are no longer in the Island as they have been washed away by the Tsunami in 2004; choro 'the juice of this is consumed to cure malaria and other kinds of high fever,' bana 'leaf that causes itching when touched,' botech 'a kind of leaf used for making tea in earlier times,' eletech 'leaf used as a mosquito repellent, or used as a plate for serving food, khibirtech 'paste of these leaves is applied on the body to ward off honeybees while collecting honey,' kot 'cane leaf used for making houses,' etc.⁶

The ecological knowledge of hunter and gatherer societies is deep and wide which is gradually being wiped out by loss of ecological balance on the one hand and loss of language on the other. A kind of seafish by the name of moroy which is believed to follow the movement of the sun is no longer known to people. A very telling example of loss of vocabulary in the realm of words pertaining to kinship terms and thus designating human relationships is the one which was used till thirty years ago is ropuch. The word refers to a person who has lost his/her sibling. None of the languages I have worked so far has any word designating this concept. Words for a person who loses his or her parents such as 'orphan' or the one who loses her husband such as 'widow' are common in every language but never do we find a word for a person who loses his/her brother or sister.

What We Need to Do

Because language is the link to the knowledge of ecosystems, specific nuances of ecological knowledge are also passed on when languages are revived and passed on to the youth. Hence, we should focus on the revitalisation of indigenous languages as a key to biodiversity conservation and knowledge. However, revitalisation may not work in the case of societies like the Great Andamanese where the will to revitalise is absent and a majority of the population has shifted to the dominant language of the region. In such cases an attempt

⁵ For details see Abbi 2011

⁶ Ibid

must be made to document the language to save the knowledge-base. Endangerment is a big issue in the present century. If we cannot revive the languages, we can at least document them, write descriptive grammars, compile comprehensive and preferably interactive dictionaries with sounds and pictures, record narrations, discourses and songs. It has been observed that language documentation exercise alone serves as a motivating factor for language revival.

We strongly advocate that monolithic global human culture is not good for human communities. However, as observed by many linguists and environmental experts, external forces are dispossessing traditional peoples of their lands, resources, and lifestyles; forcing them to subsist in highly degraded environments; crushing their cultural traditions or ability to maintain them; or coercing them into linguistic assimilation and abandonment of ancestral languages. We should see that no language disappears from this earth against the will of the people and as far as possible all languages should be transmitted to the younger generation.

Linguists Need Help

The task of revitalisation and documentation cannot be undertaken alone by linguists. We need help from others.

- (i) From the officials who claim to be the custodian of the tribes so that they can generate respect for the heritage languages among the tribes as well as among the non-tribes who interact with the tribal population.
- (ii) From the society in general so that indigenous languages and their speakers are shown respect and acceptability.
- (iii) From research organisations to channel resources in the direction of documentation and revitalisation of languages. These organisations can also serve to disseminate information at the national and international levels to generate interest in the knowledge-base of these societies.
- (iv) From scientists in the fields of genetics, biology and historical geography who can research on the evolution and spread of the human population of a region and thus link up their research with that of the linguists' findings.
- (v) From educationists to implement Reverse Education (see below).

It is understandable that the Government of India has a mammoth task at hand to educate the tribes and bring them into the so called 'mainstream civilisation.' Yet one must ask first: What good this will do? How far these exercises of bringing them into the mainstream will help in sustaining the linguistic diversity? How far will this help the tribes to improve their socio-economic situation? How far these exercises will aid in bringing fulfilment to the societies? Unfortunately, as far as other tribes of the Andaman Islands such as Jarawa and Onge are concerned, they are better left alone (Abbi 2006). Damage has already been done in the case of the Great Andamanese; hence it is they who should be brought to the civilisation of our kind. A very significant step could be to generate respect and honour in favour of these tribes and this can be done by the process of, so to say, reverse education. The knowledge-base that these tribal languages exhibit, discussed and exposed above in the paper, should be incorporated in the local school curriculum of the Islands.

Children of city dwellers should be made aware of the cultural life of their fellow tribes, their cognitive world, and their ancient heritage which has been sustained for thousands of years.

Depleting population, accompanied by low competence level of the language of those who claim to speak the language, makes the language loss faster than all apprehensions so far. In such a case all efforts of individuals, society and the government bodies should be to record and document the dying language in all its nuances for enhancement and preservation of the knowledge-base of the country. Reverse education is the only answer to sustain, preserve and bring respect to our heritage.

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Indigenous Knowledge, Participatory Film-Making and Postcolonial Reinterpretations for Local Audiences[#]

Tara Douglas*

Introduction

Local communities worldwide have consistently relied on first-hand knowledge to survive in their environment. For tribal communities that were dependent on the climate, on nature, the land and community cooperation, the indigenous knowledge that was transmitted by the elders – that is the knowledge of cultural traditions, the history of the community, social values, beliefs and rituals retold in stories from one generation to the next – guided each person on how to live in the circumstances where the reverence for nature and the supernatural entities that were believed to protect nature, was paramount.

In North East India, the expanded communication networks deliver unprecedented exposure to newfangled cosmopolitan visions. In the first instance the roads, railways and airports have brought physical access to the region, and by now the widespread entrance to the internet through personal mobile devices has amplified the reach of mass media entertainment to the more isolated areas. This pervasive form of recreation and distraction widely replaces the traditional storytelling and artistic practices. In the process, the knowledge that is embedded in the cultural narratives has become neglected and the younger generation is distinctly more familiar with imported cartoons such as *Chhota Bheem* (2012), *Kung Fu Panda* (2008) and Japanese Anime than with their own cultural stories.

The concept of the postcolonial is a practical framework that extends over and above the description of the period since Indian Independence, to identify and respond to the ongoing colonial practices that are implemented in the control of resources (Nkrumah 1965). For the purpose of communication, participatory media resists the marginalisation of local perspectives that do not find space in mainstream media, and even the popular format of animation can be appropriated from the position as a dominant language to reignite interest from the younger generation towards their traditions, and to reconnect us to indigenous

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knowledge. This project investigates the shift from their role as only consumers of the media, to establish animation as the method and tool to research traditions, decipher identities and enable us to tell our stories. By this pathway, participatory film-making is comparable to indigenous artistic practices that engage the community in collaborative interpretations and the transference of local knowledge, and to create audio-visual materials and insights in the form of new artistic representations. To manipulate the specialised technical processes of creating animation, the collaboration with media professionals in the workshop environment establishes learning that is a two way process.

The Tales of the Tribes

“In the beginning, Baradev, the supreme creator, thought of creating the world. He consults his helpers and decides that he shall create the world in 7 days. But he manages to complete it in 3½ days. While watching his creation – the animals and the birds, the forests and the rivers, he ponders over what to do with the remaining time. For the next 3½ days, Baradev starts collecting special ingredients from the animals and plants....”

The opening narration for the short film *Manjoor Jhali* establishes the scene for a metaphorical story about the creation of the peacock. The story, that also conveys the message about the merit of contentment, was chosen from the Pardhan Gond oral traditions of Mandla District in Madhya Pradesh for adaptation for the *Tales of the Tribes* (2017), a series of five short animated films produced by the Adivasi Arts Trust. For this experimental project, the media production was the method to collaborate with individual storytellers and artists in Central and in North East India: we set out to research their narrative traditions; revisit this archive of local cultural knowledge and then to represent it to younger audiences in a contemporary accessible form. Many of the folk narratives of the tribal communities of India are mythologies of origination that recount a primordial era when it was believed that humans, animals and supernatural beings cohabited and communicated with one another. Indigenous epistemology that is holistic and focussed on interconnected relationships challenges the positivism of the concept of a single reality that can be investigated from an objective standpoint. At this juncture, it is more productive to recognise the possibility for multiple viewpoints to disclose a more complete picture than to reject the tribal narratives on the grounds that they are not literally true.

In India, the category of ‘Scheduled Tribes’ that is recognised by the Constitution, Article 342 represents an underprivileged section of society (Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2012) comprising just over 84 million or 8.2 per cent of the total population (Ministry of Home Affairs 2011). The exclusive use of the term ‘indigenous’ for these tribal groups is disputed on the basis that the wider Indian caste society is also ‘native’ to the subcontinent. In the central belt, these people are collectively referred to as *Adivāsi* which literally translates as “original inhabitants,” a word with Sanskrit origins that was first used in the 1930s. However, the term is not universally accepted: for instance, in the North East region, *Adivāsi* only applies to the ‘Tea-tribes’ that were brought from Central India to work on the tea plantations in Assam during the colonial era. At the same time, the indigenous groups of the North East frequently refer collectively to themselves by the English word “tribes,” a term that is contested by scholars due to its roots in colonial anthropology (Atal 2009) that tends to generalise communities that are different from each other in respect to language, culture and customs (Bodhi and Ziipao 2019). The term ‘tribe’ is also contentious as the

separation of particular marginalised groups into this category during the colonial period conferred entitlements to certain exemptions, benefits and reservations that were intended to provide equality and protection to them (Schleiter and Maaker 2010; Sharma 2012; Srikant 2014).

The values of accumulation, investment, profit and surplus were largely unknown to the small scale subsistence economy of the tribal communities and indigenous knowledge was found to be incapable of meeting the productivity needs of the modern world. Indigenous topics and perspectives are systematically omitted from modern career centred education and in India indigenous languages, worldviews, teachings and experiences are excluded from contemporary educational institutions (Veerbhadranaika *et al* 2012; Brahmanandam and Bosu Babu 2016). The prevailing disputed status of these groups presents the urgency to raise awareness about their cultures and knowledge, and to assist them in combating discrimination and marginalisation.

In the *Tales of the Tribes* series, four of the represented stories are of tribal origin: additional to the Pardhan Gond creation story are tales from the Angami in Nagaland and the Lepcha in Sikkim, as well as a story with versions that are shared by the Tani clans of central Arunachal Pradesh. The series also includes an adaptation of *Tapta*, a popular folktale from the Meitei community of Manipur, who are not formally categorised as a Scheduled Tribe. The knowledge that is embedded in the cultural traditions of these groups includes the expertise about the traditional technologies of subsistence (for example, about the tools and techniques for hunting and agriculture), botanical knowledge, ecological awareness, theories about the climate, insight on celestial navigation and traditional medicine. This wisdom was learnt by long-term observation of the local environment; it was tried and tested, and it had the practical purpose of aiding survival under demanding physical conditions. This collective knowledge also established and sustained the sense of identity in the connections to community and inherited landscapes. The knowledge that was passed down from the ancestors provided direction and guidance for present, immediate and local circumstances: for example when to plant crops and when to harvest; how to manage the water supply and how to resolve social conflict. As the stories imparted important life skills in the oral text, this illustrates the importance of sustaining the myths, songs and stories that are the repositories of indigenous wisdom for the wellbeing of the community.

More recently, the tribal and kindred folk from the rural hinterland in India have experienced immense social upheaval brought about by their exposure to remote worldviews. In the transition from traditional to modern societies with access to imported products, mass media and new communication technology, traditional storytelling has lost momentum and it is usurped by popular television, the internet and mobile communication technology (Ningthouja 2013). For instance, the licensing of multiple cable television channels in India including Disney Channel, Pogo, Nickelodeon India, Cartoon Network and Hungama TV illustrates how animated content entertains young audiences nationwide. The young are now more interested in watching big budget animated films such as *Kung Fu Panda 3* (2016) and cartoon series such as *Chhota Bheem* (2008) and *Doraemon* (2016). Apart from the prime entertainment value of these programmes, they neither represent the indigenous knowledge nor the local cultural identities. When oral traditions cease to be passed down, the stories vanish and simultaneously tribal identities are progressively destabilised (Grenier 1998) so that the younger generation presupposes that their own cultures are outdated and consigned to the past.

However, additional to the value that local knowledge has to the community, interest is also emerging towards the potential value of this knowledge to manage natural resources and ensure their conservation into the future (Brundtland 1987; Gadgil *et al* 1993; Battiste 2005; UNESCO 2016). The evidence that traditional societies have been more focused on preserving their own social, cultural and environmental stability than on maximising production (Berkes 1993; Mazzocchi 2006) is reflected by the indigenous cultural dynamic of coexistence with nature and its distinction from the viewpoint that is directed at controlling nature and exploiting resources (Overgaard 2010). More recently, the critical threat to human security that has been linked to climate change suggests that the sustainability values and traditional systems of wealth distribution held by communities that have typically lived in close alliance with the natural ecology may have newfound resonance for determining practical alternative approaches to the unsustainable excesses of overconsumption (Frandy 2018). Animation can be used to develop new forms of aesthetic and cultural communication to introduce these indigenous worldviews and philosophies to younger people in all streams of society.

The first series of animated adaptations of tribal narratives from India was *The Tallest Story Competition* (2006) that had been produced by West Highland Animation in Scotland. The independent production company had already turned most of the Gaelic folklore into short animated films through community projects and the Director, Leslie Mackenzie, had become interested in establishing how local communities could connect with each other to circulate their narratives further afield and strengthen their traditions through the use of digital media. The fact that the film production was carried out independent and removed from the field research site raised some questions about cultural ownership, which led to the idea that the follow up *Tales of the Tribes* project would be developed as a study of ethical collaboration by media professionals with indigenous artists to assist them to retell their stories in animated form in the future.

As representations of shared memory, folktales contain the essence of a culture (Scroggie 2009) which makes it vital to examine the oral narrative in detail and to interact with local informants during the process of adaptation for the medium of film. Many of the educated younger people of the contemporary tribal communities are now bilingual and they are best equipped to access and translate the stories from the village elders, who are acknowledged as the keepers of traditional knowledge (Hart 2010). Accordingly, their important role as interpreters in the research promoted intergenerational dialogue by a process of transmission that enacted the traditional pedagogical structures of learning from elders and paying respect. The dynamism and versatility of the audio-visual medium presents multiple possibilities for specific cultural details in visual art forms, rituals and cultural values to be woven into the plot, character and background designs. For example, the character dialogues and narrations can be recorded in local languages and the film soundtrack can incorporate vernacular expressions and songs. Nina Sabnani (2005:102) highlights the skill that is required to translate stories for animation so that it does not become static, which supports the practical role for media professionals in the adaptation of indigenous storytelling as animated content. On the other hand, traditional storytelling was a community activity and the oral retelling fulfilled an interactive function between the teller and the listener so that it was a co-creative project. How could this social function be transferred to the case study of the animation project?

Commercial animation production in India that caters primarily to the outsourced market demands generous financial investment to provide for the high-end production studios and requisite technical expertise. The ensuing focus on generating profit leads to marginalisation of local animation practice, as limited scope exists for small scale productions in the competitive market. Likewise, these commercially driven productions frequently resort to imitative formulas and the same stereotyping that Säid (1978: 206) identified with the study of a people as a category, because stereotypes are easier to read and are therefore arguably more entertaining (Salerno and Lengel 2014). For our project, an alternative format was required that would be accessible to local artists to enable them to collaborate with the media professional to produce their animated films.

The guidelines for indigenous research that were outlined by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), embracing values such as balance and reciprocity, are transferable for developing animation practice to enhance the traditions of group solidarity and participation. The first provision for this format of research is that the work must contribute towards social change that brings benefits to the community. Therefore the corresponding participation by members of the community in the media practice gives access to multiple voices and perspectives for authentic representation of the diverse hybrid identities that define the postcolonial frame of reference. To facilitate the local engagement in the animation project, a series of Animation Workshops were organised at regional locations: in Nagaland (2009); Sikkim (2010); Manipur (2012); Ahmedabad and Bhopal (for the Gond film) (2012, 2015) and in Arunachal Pradesh (2013). The participants would decide collectively which stories to work on and how to go about the adaptation for the film format. The workshops were also designed to connect local participants with student animators and media professionals as resource people to establish learning as a two way process: the technical expertise required by the animation process was introduced by the digital media artists and equally significant was what 'we' could learn from the local collaborators about the indigenous knowledge that informs their artwork.

Most of the participants, who were from the 18-35 age groups, were identified by the local partner organisations at each research site. Each workshop was three weeks duration – this was the time that was expected to engage intensive commitment to the project by the participants. The workshops were initiated by storytelling sessions and once the story had been selected – usually by consensus decision – the participants set about writing the script and creating the storyboard to determine the scenes, shots, actions, composition and continuity. They were also introduced to the character and background design requirements for animation, and to the experimentation of creating audio recordings and test animation sequences. The workshops implemented group discussions about the process of adaptation; the commitment towards contextualising the narratives and the identification of the target audience for the films. In this framework, the participants observed that animation could be an effective tool to engage younger people in the narrative traditions; the widespread popularity of animation also made it an appealing format to communicate vernacular cultural ethics to wider audiences that would contribute to reducing the discrimination that is frequently reported by indigenous young people who migrate from their own locality (Wouters and Subba 2013; Das 2014; McDuie-Ra 2015).

Participatory media practice raises questions about the power relations between the participants and the role of the visiting experts in the technical direction of the work. To elaborate, the film-maker holds a prominent role in the production and direction of

the film (Gregory *et al* 2005) and the central positioning of community members in the decision-making process of participatory practice introduced the inevitable tensions in the selection and presentation of the content. For instance, indigenous narratives that are in the form of epics would be recited over extended periods and they often contain meandering sub-plots and culture specific details: how could the adaptation for the short film format be carried out to still maintain the subtext of the story?

For some of the local young participants in the workshops, their expectations of the medium were broadly determined by their existing exposure to the format of commercial animation, and they regularly communicated the perception that the success of a film is evaluated according to its recognition: this aspiration for popular reception was further reflected by the frequently imitative designs of their own work, which illuminates the space for cognitive decolonization (Mignolo 2013) to strengthen confidence towards more original vernacular design aesthetics that favour handmade renderings. The incorporation of local art forms in the animation design would contribute freshness and vitality to the output and artists who have grown up with exposure to the culture would be suited to lead this process (Bordieu 1979). This project introduced research of the artistic traditions from each region: it was easy for the Pardhan Gonds artists, bolstered by their success in adapting and developing their folk art for the contemporary market, to ascertain how their artwork could contribute a distinct visual identity for the *Manjoor Jhali* animation film. However, other communities have been unable to sustain their visual art practices in the competitive market, and at the same time the younger people are now faced with the pressing need to find employment over developing their artistic traditions; for others, their traditional visual art was closely linked to cultural practices that are rendered obsolete. These conditions suggested the review of archival material to ascertain how the contact with ancient objects would influence the design choices.

Since the colonial era, as the native was widely considered to be immature and incapable of contributing to knowledge, this justified the drive to modernise these groups and to manage their resources. The descriptions of vanishing cultures and endangered languages, such as those delivered by the popular romanticised images that feed a particular strand of cultural tourism (Christ 2013), continue to undermine contemporary tribal societies. On the contrary, indigenous research aims to balance this image of indigenous peoples, their lifestyles and belief systems (Smith 1999), including particular attitudes that confine the concept of authenticity in tribal art to pre-colonial themes – essentially before the influence of Westernized global culture (Errington 1998). From this perspective, artwork that shows how local communities have successfully retained their cultural and spiritual values in the postcolonial context links more closely to the authenticity of the work than the materials used.

How would the dynamic relationship between the local participants and the visiting resource people be negotiated in this project? Looking back to the earlier anthropological research, Clifford Geertz (1983) had contrasted the ‘experience near’ (what the informant and his fellows see, feel, think and imagine), and ‘experience far’, employed by specialists to forward scientific philosophical and practical aims. He also warned against an illusory sense of trans-cultural identification arising from the researcher towards the subject. In India, Verrier Elwin’s lifelong work in the Central and North East regions had produced 26 books and numerous articles that mark his prominent contribution to the knowledge about tribal cultures of these regions. His unconventional method for ethnographic research of the tribal

cultures in India from the 1930s to the early 1960s had been to settle down and live with the people that he studied and to participate in their culture and way of life as far as was possible for an outsider (Elwin 1964): this undertaking is reflected by the singular intensity of the text. Drawing on his immersive experience, the workshop environment would at least become the intimate space for the researcher and the subjects of the study to work together to develop their cultural media representations - albeit for a comparatively reduced period of time. The local participants would receive new information in a supportive environment; for the film-maker, who is by profession drawn to the conventions of film language to communicate with viewers, a co-creative media project with indigenous artists is the juncture for identifying one's own biography. Rather than attempting to place the experience of others within this framework, the participatory media practice is the intellectual challenge to connect more deeply with indigenous ideologies.

The restraints of regular geographical accessibility in the region and the limited technical infrastructure, as well as the widespread primary ambition of the local participants to secure long-term employment (in North East India, this overall implies the desire for Government jobs), meant that on the conclusion of the workshops, the production of the animation for the films was carried out by young professionals in India at independent studios distant from the sites of the research. This was the way to achieve the completion of the *Tales of the Tribes* series, and the work was perceived by them as opportunities to develop their film-making techniques by the commission to represent cultural content that they otherwise would not have been exposed to. The synergy of the emic and the etic perspectives towards the adaptation from one format to another, and by the activity of simultaneously noticing the local detail and reviewing the global conventions of the narrative structure of film, this would more accurately represent the contemporary cultural transitions of these societies.

Geertz (1983:70) proposed that the relationship of the researcher to the subject could achieve communion - which he compared to grasping a proverb, catching an allusion, seeing a joke or reading a poem. To the extent that this possibility arises in cultural research and media projects, the affirmation of indigenous knowledges that are holistic and integrative is a strategy to transcend from the fragmentary metropolitan experience towards learning to recognise our interconnected, integrated relationships. Bourdieu's theory about the reproduction of the social structure that results from the habitus of individuals illuminates the space for becoming aware of normative tendencies, and then to deconstruct the socially and culturally acquired ways of thinking that reproduce the dominant social structure. For this trajectory, the firsthand collaboration with members of the community for research begins to challenge the personal perceptions of separateness that have been associated with the Orientalist practice of defining and evaluating other cultures in comparison and contrast to our own social structure. Elwin had also recognised the trauma that the tribal communities had experienced by the overwhelming thrust of modernity that challenges their traditional practices and epistemology and he described a tribal bias to ease the encounter when he wrote (1964: 245):

"A tribal bias means that we recognise and honour their way of doing things, not because it is old or picturesque but because it is theirs. It means that we must talk their language, and not only the language that is expressed in words but the deeper language of the heart."

During his lifetime Elwin documented several volumes of folklore of the tribal communities that he studied. His published collections include *Myths of Middle India* (1949), *Tribal Myths of Orissa* (1954), *Myths of the North-east Frontier of India, Volume 1* (1958), *A New Book of Tribal Fiction* (1970) and *Folktales of Mahakoshal* (1980), as well as *The Art of the North-East Frontier of India* (1959). This body of work has provided resource material for the animated programme. Three of the stories of the *Tales of the Tribes* collection directly recount interconnection and interdependence in relationships: the three brothers are unable to live together after the death of their elderly mother in the story of *Man Tiger Spirit*, but the connection between them (and the three realms that they represent – human, natural and supernatural) is always remembered; in *Nye Mayel Kyong*, the hunter must return from his visit to the land of the immortals to fulfil his duty as a healer.

As with many of the indigenous groups, the performance of rituals by the related Tani tribes of Arunachal Pradesh (Nyishi, Apatani, Adi Galo, Tagin and Mishing) is essential to appease the local spirits for human wellbeing (Berkes 2012): in the *Abotani* animated film in the *Tales of the Tribes* series, the sacrifice that precedes the division of land conveys the belief in the merit of personal sacrifice for the welfare of the community. The topic of land rights is also represented in the ancient folklore, and many of the stories of origination that connect these communities to the landscape relate how their ancestors emerged from the earth: for example, in *Man Tiger Spirit* the three brothers emerged from a cave. The *Abotani* story further portrays the theme of the conflict over land, and it offers an account of humankind's preferred habitation in the fertile valleys.

Verrier Elwin has been depicted in the *Tales of the Tribes* as an animated character: the presenter whose role it is to introduce the five films. His presence in the series is a tribute to his outstanding contribution to the knowledge about the tribes; it aims to introduce his work to younger audiences, and it further adds to the cross cultural elements of the programme. The relationships with the communities represented in the series were sustained for the duration of the production and elder members were later engaged for the translation of the dialogues into five vernacular languages that were recorded in subsequent workshops with local students for the planned programme of screening events to local audiences in each area.

The overarching response from the local viewers was the interest that was shown towards the animation film project at schools, cultural institutions, film clubs, colleges and universities during a summer screening tour in 2017: they enjoyed seeing their own familiar stories in animated form, particularly as the films had been dubbed into their mother-tongues. Further, the screenings became an active forum for lively discussion about the representations. The animation programme has since led to production of a commissioned documentary film, *The Journey of the Tales of the Tribes* (2018), which contains some contextualisation of the narratives and the production processes of the animation series.

Conclusion

The creative collaboration between local and visiting participants sets up situations for discussion, skill-sharing and teamwork that acknowledges and incorporates the different local perspectives to develop greater understanding of the values that are presented by the cultural properties themselves (ICOMOS 1994).

The topics that arose from our workshop discussions centred on the politics of representation. The accuracy of the depiction of tribe specific details was a priority for the participants and at the same time they also communicated their concern towards extending the representation in the films to include the neighbouring groups. This was most prominent where the stories that were selected for adaptation had versions that were shared by several tribes: for instance, *Man Tiger Spirit* was based on a story from Nagaland that is shared by the Chakhesang, Mao and Sumi tribes, as well as the Angami. The visiting resource people were more focused towards making informed technical choices in the manifestation of the output. The use of textile designs from neighbouring tribes and references to other folktales, such as the Mao story of a primordial mother, *Dziilli mosiio* at the beginning of the film (Mao 2009), was a personal decision made from a purely aesthetic approach. However, this has since been questioned by some local viewers on the basis that it could be misinterpreted as cultural appropriation by the Angami tribe. The reading accurately reflects the ongoing tensions between the ethnic communities of the region that could be overlooked by the external media professional, and further highlights the significance of local perspectives to develop representations that are acceptable to the communities themselves. Subsequently, the strategy was not pursued in the next story of *Abotani*, where it was unanimously decided that the main characters would not exhibit any tribe specific attire to be more acceptable to the wider Tani clans of central Arunachal Pradesh.

The successful completion of the project shows that when workshops are organised for both local participants and animators, this becomes a viable method for engaging people with diverse skill sets to producing animated interpretations of local cultural narratives in an ethical way. In addition, the animators who joined the workshops as resource people learnt about indigenous storytelling from the context of a medium that they were familiar with. Demystifying knowledge and speaking in plain terms to the community are essential communication skills for the researcher to be able to share information and the results of the work with collaborators. The challenge of long distance communication was a primary limitation of our work, and this experience shows the value that is placed on face to face communication to establish trust from the local groups in India.

I have briefly outlined some of the issues that have emerged during the workshops to illustrate how the film productions are influenced by the contemporary experiences of the people who have participated. As the only person in the team from a European cultural background, I resist the preconceptions that this generates and it also stimulates awareness of the assumptions that are frequently made about indigenous people. By working together in collaboration and absorption in a shared creative project, these activities connected us in humanising ways with the communities that have participated.

The Future with Government Support

Government support worldwide has led to the development of animation from the cultural and education sectors. Animation practice by indigenous people and other experimental artists has received Government support in Canada, Australia, in the former Soviet Union and in Scotland. The National Film Board of Canada has produced films about First Nations peoples that have addressed social and political issues, cultural preservation and the creative arts as well as collaborative representations in the medium of animation; In Australia, *Dust Echoes* was a series of twelve animated dreamtime stories from Central

Arnhem Land in Northern Australia, produced by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation; Soyuzmultfilm was the most influential animation studio in the former Soviet Union until its breakup in 1991, and in Scotland West Highland Animation has produced 70 animated films of the native Gaelic folklore during a period of over two decades, from 1985-2005. The collaboration with Government Departments to develop and disseminate indigenous animated projects would be ideal for developing an Indian animation sector targeting specific rather than mass audiences. The cited examples worldwide further suggest that the animated produced can be broadcast on local networks, and they can also be provided to local schools as bilingual educational material.

The research has highlighted the great value in the process of developing the cultural media representations, which indicates that the educational setting is the appropriate environment for furthering the initiative. The process of creating cultural animation contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship: from the perspective of anthropology, animation can be as socially engaged as informative films in a presentation that is less solemn. It can also be effective for representing aspects of culture that would be difficult to depict in ethnographic film: for example, the visualisation of the supernatural characteristics of the mythologies; and because it is evocative, animation can highlight subjective feelings. Participatory film-making activities can also make the research about traditional cultures more accessible to local young people than for example, texts in English language, and the format of the Animation Workshop is also the site to study the contemporary issues that are faced by young people from various backgrounds.

Film that is developed by participatory practice is also informative for animation studies, mass communication and media studies as material for analysis about the nuances of representation as well for decoding audience diversity. Looking at the vast potential resource of original Indian indigenous narratives and folk art styles, it is perfectly feasible that experimentation by indigenous artists and animation practitioners can contribute to demonstrating that traditional does not have to mean unoriginal. However, as discussed previously in relation to the commercial industry, when the ambition to 'make films from our own culture' is replaced by economic considerations it can result in a 'globalised' way of making films in line with international 'Americanised' culture (Mackenzie, personal communication 2015). Workshops that invest animation from the context of culture and education require support from the Government so that the representations are not compromised by commercial interests and the artists can be free to experiment more. Indian Government support is also critical because of the credibility it offers in the regions of this study where there is a strong imperative for young people to secure government employment (Goswami 2010).

The scheme is thus summarised:

- (i) Collaboration with animators is a practical way to manage the technical processes and to coordinate the film productions;
- (ii) Local artists gain new exposure and skills and they advise on the cultural content. Software training is provided to the local participants by the animation resource persons in regular Animation Workshops organised at regional locations;
- (iii) Responsive project management, a digital media studio, power back-up and the costs for the animators and participants need to be budgeted for;

- (iv) The films can be completed to broadcast standard with assistance from animators during the production and post-production phases.

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Book Reviews

MASSY, William F (2016): *Re-engineering the University: How to be Mission Centred, Market Smart and Margin Conscious*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, pp. 288, Hard bound, ISBN: 978-1-4214-1899-5

The book under review, by William F Massy, points out that universities are in a state of flux today and need to change through adopting an activity-based analysis of teaching programmes mediated by information technology, which helps eliminate tasks and activities that do not add any value to the programmes. The information thus generated eventually feeds into an institutional financial planning and budgeting, thus enabling institutions to make tradeoffs for improving cost effectiveness. The re-engineering of universities is deemed crucial if they wish to maintain their competitive edge and remain meaningful, more so because the higher education institutions (HEIs) are influenced and affected by the market and also appear as players and influencers in the market. The book has six chapters -- with three core chapters on the 'new scholarship of teaching,' 'cost of teaching' and 'financial planning and budgeting.'

Rising enrolments, and diversity of modes of course and programme transactions with the emerging technologies and market competition to fund programmes, are the pressures which demand the universities to change. The universities have to respond to the pressures, adapt and adopt changes so as to remain relevant. Although Massy makes these arguments with reference to the traditional American universities, the aspect of forces of changes and demand on the higher education institutions (HEIs) holds relevance for the HEIs in other country contexts as well. At the same time, data driven, technology mediated decision making related to activity costing which Massy discusses in the book is something which has been argued for the American universities since the 1980s and 1990s. Data driven models of decision making about institutional financing have evolved and become more sophisticated since then. Massy argues for the importance of data driven models so that the HEIs might make informed decisions about programmes --- starting from the costing of the activities, which feed into the programmes.

In Chapters 1 and 2, Massy begins by underlining the importance of the university and its functions, and then he goes on to explain why a re-engineering of the university is a challenge. Although the awareness about the challenges may be there in the HE community, the strength of Massy's book is that he picks up each challenge one by one and patiently suggests solutions to each of the challenges with possible actions, examples and models throughout the book. Acknowledging that the universities are complex places, the thesis which the author puts forth in the book is that "the academic business model" of traditional universities has basic flaws and is unsustainable (pp 38-41). The flaws outlined here include five flaws, i.e., over-decentralisation of teaching activity, unmonitored joint production,

dissociation of quality from cost, lack of good learning matrices, and over-reliance on market forces.

While the professoriate should primarily function as team members of a larger enterprise, they view themselves as “autonomous agents” who pursue “self-defined” goals of teaching and research. This issue is rooted in the traditional structure of the universities as well as the specialist nature of knowledge in the respective disciplinary domains. Although decentralisation reflects faculty autonomy which translates into academic freedom, and is the source of innovation and intellectual diversity, the gains for the systemic improvement remain unrealised in the absence of collaborative efforts and team support. Further, due to unchecked implementation, usually research crowds out teaching time. Massy, however, does not say much about measuring and improving research and remains focused on improving the quality of teaching and teaching activities through “broadened scholarship” and systematised efforts through Kaizen (continuous improvement), systems thinking, service science and learning science (Chapter 3).

Taking cue from the principal investigators of research projects who manage research teams and have to constantly make decision in consultation with financiers to make necessary tradeoffs, addressing both quality and cost, the author suggests applying similar model to the teaching programmes. The universities and colleges specifically focused on teaching may find Chapter 3 on the “New Scholarship for Teaching” and Chapter 4 on the “Cost of Teaching” very useful. The point one could draw here is that in the joint production of teaching and research any one activity should not take over the institutional time and resources so much that it affects the quality of the other.

Institutional assessments by regulators and external assessors have always expressed concern about assessing the quality of the institutions, but suitable indicators for measuring student learning are largely absent. Student engagement and satisfaction surveys point towards the conditions which would facilitate learning but fail to find out whether students are learning better. In addition, there is information asymmetry between the institutions and markets because institutions do not disclose the data on students earning even if they have. Instead “surrogates for quality” such as “time to degree, graduation rates, and employment uptakes and salaries’ are used to resolve lack of information” (p 50).

Another flaw which the author points out is the assumption that markets could be relied upon as “the ultimate arbiters of quality and price.” This is because of the difference between institutions and users over their value propositions. Users are interested in “self-serving” value added indicators. Even that information is mostly “anecdotal,” as the author notes. However, the major concern is with the lack of data, which could qualify claims on student learning improvements, and institutional efforts in particular, to make that happen. In the market place, institutions exploit this information asymmetry by overpricing programmes so that to a common user the price of the tuition fee becomes synonymous with quality. We feel that visible infrastructure (buildings as well as technology) is another surrogate for quality, which is used by the market as pretext to overprice the programmes. Technology, which is not useful or is utilised to improve student learning, either in the form of providing better learning opportunities or provide qualified data on student learning to enable institutions and the professoriate to improve the pedagogical inputs and processes, is actually not value added.

Benchmarking of learning levels and institutional efforts towards continuous improvement is increasingly used by assessors as an accountability measure of the institutions. Cost measurement is another important measure of accountability. Massy gives a detailed model for designing teaching systems based on course based activity costing. However, since much of the focus of the book is on teaching, it comes to only the professoriate to measure the costs and contain costs. It seems to imply that teaching is the only cost intensive activity in modern higher education institutions. Moreover, Massy seems to encourage institutions to come up with detailed information on measurement of students learning by arguing that if such new information is available then “rating entities, publishers and consultants” will “rush in to publicise and apply the new information” (p 53). At the face value, it seems that measurement of learning levels will add to the competitive advantage of the higher education institutions in the marketplace.

While reading the book, the business interest of the consultancies in encouraging institutions to come out with new information which is usable by the markets to compare the values added, was always on the back of our mind. Institutions do not produce the information on learning levels, nor share it, firstly because learning is a complex phenomenon and not all what is measurable as inputs can be argued to contribute to measurable learning levels on one to one basis. Massy’s Prototype Model, for example, takes into account the distinction between full time faculty and adjunct faculty (pp 134-36).

An integrated financial planning and budgeting model has been proposed in detail in Chapter 5. This is for envisioning university information for financial planning and budgeting, which may help institutions to decide how to make tradeoffs between mission and margins. Massy, who has had a long innings as a professor, as an administrator and as a consultant, constantly refers to his previous works and models which were developed while advising universities to design their budget processes.

If we consider the institution as a whole, it is not only the courses, programmes and related activities which are cost intensive. There are many other aspects of an institution, besides the teaching-learning in the classroom, which add on to the tuition bills of the students. For example, for a long time teachers’ salaries were seen as a financial burden on institutional budgets. Now even with teachers’ working conditions, tenures and salary structures becoming precarious, the tuition bills for the students are on a constant hike year after year in the private sector. Therefore, application of Massy’s costing models for not only reengineering the university around teaching but also on research activities should be comprehensively extended to all other activities including asset creation and technology adoption (for the purpose of teaching-learning as well as for institutional governance).

In Indian universities, usually the administrative responsibilities of the professoriate crowd out the teaching time and teaching workload crowds out the time available for research. This is especially true of the public funded universities which have a large number of affiliated colleges so that the responsibility of quality monitoring of the colleges is borne by the professors. In addition, serious research of any substantial value in India has remained confined to the domain of specialised institutions. With the revised quality assessments for institutions, research is becoming an important determinant of institutional quality.

The present book may be useful, particularly for the teaching intensive HEIs, to rethink the way their programmes, curriculum and activities should be planned in an environment

with budgetary constraints. Massy's aid to this reworking is through reconsidering the financial planning and budgeting through activity based costing, and by looking at the programmes offered in a holistic manner, with the faculty working as teams rather than in silos. However, in a severely resource starved environment, whether HEIs can remain mission centred, remains a broader ponderable question.

The book written in an iterative style has a lot of useful information, models and insights. The author constantly makes concerted and well-referenced arguments for the buy-in of his proposed model. Overall, the book is a very useful resource for the planners and administrators at the helm of affairs in the universities and colleges in organising their finances and budgets and using the activity based costing information, and data driven models for forecasting so as to balance the mission and margins.

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VARGHESE, N V.; PACHAURI, Anupam and MANDAL, Sayantan (Eds)(2018): *India Higher Education Report 2017: Teaching, Learning and Quality in Higher Education*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp 377, Price: ₹ 1250.00, ISBN: 9789352807161(HB)

This is a third issue in the series India Higher Education Report published by the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE), NIEPA, the earlier two having been published in 2015 and 2016 respectively. As the title suggests this issue deals with teaching learning and quality in higher education. The present volume discusses various concerns in the above fields of higher education. As per the subtitle of this volume, it has three sections. These are Part I: Rankings, Research and Quality, Part II: Teachers and Teaching-Learning, and Part III: Quality Management.

Following the introductory chapter contributed by the editors, the above three parts are distributed over 15 chapters which deal with various concerns in higher education. The authors of these chapters are academics and policy makers in higher education,

In the first chapter, the editors rightly observe that since quality is the foundation of higher education, there is an increasing interest in the issues of quality. Quality is an asset in the global market. However, the editors draw our attention to the state of degeneration and poor quality in higher education. While referring to the concerns of quality in higher education, they explain how different stakeholders focus on various aspects of quality, with their own definitions of quality. The editors rightly stress the role of teachers despite the increasing role of technology in teaching, learning and evaluation. In the field of quality, they explain that the quality assurance has shifted from External Quality Assurance (EQA) to Internal Quality Assurance (IQA). There is the need to make higher education more learners centric and to strengthen the IQA cells.

Part I deals with "Ranking Research and Quality." There are four chapters dealing with it. In "World University Ranking Systems," G D Sharma discusses the methodology of

ranking and traces 5 waves in the history of universities. One would agree with the author that there are serious limitations in the world university ranking and that it is USA and UK biased. The author pleads for a rational ranking system for Indian universities and institutions located in divergent and complex conditions. He also observes that the present ranking system ignores the vast needs of knowledge and research requirements of developing countries that have diversified socio-economic and educational needs of the people.

In Chapter 3, Furqan Qamar presents a comprehensive analysis of the parameters and methodologies used by the global and regional rankings of universities. He identifies the parameters and methodologies that have the potential to pull down the ranking of Indian universities. One would agree with the author when he says that the objectives of these ranking and scores should be to identify the quality gaps and take policy and investment decisions to improve the overall quality of higher education institutions (HEI's) and higher education.

Chapter 4 by N Jayaram is on "Research on Higher Education in India." It is based on certain documents and literature. It attempt to review the state-of-the-art research on higher education in India. He explains the role of National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), Indian Institute of Education (IIE) and some regional research institutions. He also discusses the issue of funding for higher education. The author laments that until recently India did not have a research centre devoted exclusively to higher education. He rightly observes that the formulation and reformulation of policy for higher education in India is seldom based on scholarly research and the politicians and civil servants remain complacent in the matter of education. A higher education research work on these problems has direct policy implication only very rarely.

Chapter 5 of Part II is "Availability and Shortages of Teachers in Higher Education," by Chiranjib Sen. According to the author, the expansion of higher education has not been commensurate with the skills of the faculty members. This has created a tension between the quality and quantity of higher education. Now the salaries are attractive, but do they encourage any quality research? Is there any agency which would take the cognisance of quality research at the central or state level? In fact, this observation is to be probed deeper if we want to face the global competition.

In Chapter 7, Syantan Mandal attempts to comprehend how the teaching-learning processes vary among disciplines, levels and institutions, and why there is the need to consider the evidence based formulation of policy to improve the quality of teaching in higher education.

In Chapter 8, Vimal Rarh argues that standards in higher education have been jeopardised while attempting to make the higher education socially inclusive. There is no proportionate increase in the material and intellectual resources. Introducing the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education in a country like India is a challenging task. The author also explains the limitations of development of multi-media enriched e-content with regard to content and teacher training applicability. The strides of higher technology day by day are posing a challenge during the use of ICT in higher education.

Since teaching, learning and assessment are integrated, K Pushpanandan (Chapter 9: "Student Assessments in Higher Education") pleads for the creation of a globally relevant and competitive higher education system focusing on student learning goals and outcomes. Assessment reforms focused on competence based learning outcomes need to be undertaken. There should be efforts to develop the competencies of teachers.

M Rajivlochan & Meeta Rajivlochan (Chapter 10: "Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS) and Semester System in Indian Higher Education") discusses two reforms that were introduced in the Indian higher education, namely the CBSE and the semester system in colleges and universities. They were introduced to make the higher education in India globally competitive. The authors remind that the core purpose of universities is to create knowledge and use it in society. It is, therefore, imperative that there should be requisite upgradation of the administration as well as academic infrastructure.

In Part III, Chapter 11, Mariamma Varghese explains the concept of quality in higher education and its two indicators – quality assurance and accountability for quality assurance. The author observes that these two are the two sides of the same coin. Till this day, the criteria of assessing the quality of different institutions have been well laid down but the accountability measures have to be well defined. Improving accountability is vital for all the envisaged institutional reforms.

Explaining the "Managing Quality at Institutional Level" (Chapter 12), B S Madhukar argues that defining and assuring quality in a diverse higher education system is very complex. Then he explains the processes adopted by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and the National Board of Accreditation (NBA); these have been practised for more than two decades now. He advocates the creation/identification of model colleges and model universities. These institutions would act as the prime movers.

Anupam Pachauri explains "Effects of External and Internal Quality Assurance on Higher Education" (Chapter 13). This chapter explains the development of higher education and the concerns for quality in India, reviews the literature on the effects of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) cells, also reviews the literature on effects of national quality assurance system on institutions, analyses the shifts in the quality assurance of higher education, focuses on the quality assurance in India, and deals with the structure and practice of IQA and the effects of IQA and EQA. Then there is discussion on the metrics for accreditation. The final section concludes by arguing that the effects of Quality Assurance (QA) in the institutions can be sustained by funding of support by the regulatory bodies and by the participation of all stakeholders.

The relationship between "Finance and Quality" (Chapter 14) has been discussed by Aarti Srivastava. This chapter discusses the issues related to funding and the phenomenon of inadequate requirement in higher education. Why have many technical institutions been closed down? The author explains how mindless quantitative expansion without any quality control is a lesson for all the market driven policies. There is a problem of funding also, with only 0.82 to 0.89 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) being spent on higher education out of the total spending on education and out of it, a major part goes in the payment of salaries. While focusing on teacher quality, the author rightly observes that education system can excel and sustain only with the help of quality teachers. The remarkable success and high level of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) proves the positive relationship between quality and financing.

The last chapter by N V Varghese deals with “Qualification Frameworks for Improving Quality and Relevance of Education.” He makes observations on many important concerns in the field of higher education which are rarely attempted by the scholars. These are related to, for example, (1) ability of education to provide skilled manpower for various jobs, (2) paucity of skilled workforce on the one hand and lack of relevant skills among the educated on the other, (3) defining the skill levels and standardising the training arrangements. It was good to see the author taking cognisance of new initiatives such as “Make in India” and Skill India missions.

All chapters are ably supported with references and footnotes. Charts and graphs too add to the quality of the chapters. These focus on quality assurance, rankings, research and teaching learning in India. Thus the book enlightens readers on various aspects of quality concerns in higher education in India.

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CREMONINI, Leon; PAIVANDI, Saeed and JOSHI, K. M. (eds)(2019): *Mergers in Higher Education: Practices and Policies*, New Delhi: Studera Press, pp. 315

Terms like mergers and acquisitions are applied to the higher education sector in order to connote a distinct idea. On examining the mergers in this sector, one finds myriad theoretical positions as well as complex and uncertain outcomes intended to be achieved. Most of the research on this phenomenon is interdisciplinary with multiple perspectives and therefore there is missing a common denominator that might be used to cull out any generalisations. Typically, a merger is between two or more institutions, and transforms them with a new culture which is the culture of the resultant organisation or, else, it synergises with the organisational culture of the dominant one. The policy makers as well as individual institutions in most countries view this phenomenon as a vehicle for reform in the higher education sector. Each case of merger brings out a unique set of circumstances, actors and characteristics with distinctive strategic change. The objectives of mergers vary across nations such as reduction in fragmentation, economies of scale, enhanced efficiency and quality etc. Most of the literature available on mergers can be categorised from four standpoints, i.e. participants, stakeholders, nature and landscape of higher education of the respective country. These can be further elaborated as single sector vs. cross sectoral, twin vs. multiple, horizontal vs. vertical (based on comparable or dissimilar academia) and complementary vs non-complementary (overlapping).

The volume in hand is one in the series on the “Perspectives on Higher Education” which seeks to address the issues related to higher education in a comparative perspective, with contributions from leading scholars, planners and administrators engaged in the field. The book is divided into fourteen chapters which discuss the very idea of mergers in higher education, its implementation at both macro and micro levels, and its outcomes.

The first chapter outlines the conceptual framework which is also foundational for the subsequent chapter-wise country analyses. Chapter 2 to 14 focus on different countries that bring out unique merging experiences with their processes and outcomes. Moreover, each country chapter presents a brief background of the current status of higher education of the specific country, along with the inconsistencies in its very idea. The merged spaces have paradoxical results, both negative and positive, that is, some of them have been facilitated and some impeded in their accomplishments. The success factors which undergird mergers in higher education are leadership, shared vision, locational proximity, ownership of assets, governance, academic alignments and cooperation from stakeholders.

The thirteen countries covered here include Greece, The Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, India, China, Sweden, Hungary, Brazil, France, Portugal, Argentina and Finland. The country cases are very sporadic and random, which limits their foregrounding to compare. However, some of the countries where mergers have found their feet are missing; these include Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Norway, Vietnam, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and Russia. It is argued that mergers are also necessary in India due to low efficiency, fragmentation, low global rankings, inappropriate funding and massification, although there are no supporting policies for the same. The mergers in China are relatively more successful as compared to the UK or Australia because of two reasons. First, most cases of mergers have received increased financial resources both from the government and from tuition fees. Second, the political culture controls any kind of opposition. The Chinese also show that that the mergers were mainly based on optimism, hypothetical expectations rather than rigorous research and investigation. In fact, given the importance of independence and autonomy in academic institutions, it may perhaps be surprising that universities have been willing to accept the pressure of collaboration, which hits institutional autonomy severely. However, merging the institutions leads to narrowing of fragmentation which curtails the attritions in the system and enhances the efficiency. So happened, for example, in France which introduced the Operation Campus programme as a way of funding the creation of Poles of Research and Higher Education (PRES).

The mergers also intend to facilitate better student flow, by linking institutions offering different levels of education and creating pathways. The universities of the Heads of the Valleys in Wales sought to provide access to courses offered by Welsh universities in remote areas, while the University of the Highlands and Islands was formed out of merger of fourteen further education campuses following a long term investment in locally oriented research areas. Mergers become central to creating a momentum for change within higher education institutions by supporting capacity building and promoting best practices through the penumbra effect. Further, they also lead to recalibration of differentiation in the system. The Tampere 3 merger process required national legislative clearance and amendments to two legal frameworks and created a new category of Finnish Higher Education Institutions, spanning over three different knowledge communities. On the other hand, mergers may also concentrate and circumvent the provisions and therefore undermine the very capacity of university as an independent organisation. They also reduce the institutional entrepreneurial capacity to undertake experiments and research to push the frontiers of knowledge for the benefit of human race. Finally, mergers lead to streamlining and oversimplification which limits its constituencies of creating social backlash and changing the world order, for the better.

The book comprehensively tries to enlist the merits and demerits of mergers in higher education and substantiates its arguments through country case studies. However, the subject is extremely wide and varies for each country; therefore some kind of bunching with similar national baselines would have heightened the understanding for both the kind of readers, i.e. the researchers and the general readers. On the contrary, getting the sense of mergers across continents with examples from specific institutions dilates one's thinking in general and generates ideas about the validity of mergers in one's own nation.

The current volume enormously contributes to the literature, especially on the issue of mergers in higher education. This is a relatively recent phenomenon --- not only in India but across the globe. Thus the book will be extremely beneficial to all stakeholders of higher education who are interested in understanding the issue, in both national and international contexts.

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