

Reimagining Education Through Indigenous Knowledge: An Analysis of Kandha Folk Song Translated from Kuwi into English

Mr. Jagulu Dakapraska¹, Dr. Jayasankar Praska²

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar in Education, Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

²Assistant Professor in English, Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Abstract

This paper examines how indigenous knowledge can enhance modern-day education, using translated Kandha folk songs from Kuwi into English as an illustrative example. Generations of indigenous peoples have kept collective memories alive through an oral tradition; folk songs, stories and rituals act as living archives that contain histories of people and land, ecological wisdom, moral values and collective experiences. These traditions are academically neglected, with formal education placing greater emphasis on standardized, text-based knowledge than on local and experiential forms of knowledge. Odisha has an oral tradition where folk songs are integral to the lifestyles of its Kandha community. These songs are not simply art, but knowledge from the real world (climate, ecological practices), social values, agricultural practices, and spiritual belief systems that underpinned the way hundreds of years of people lived in this land. It analyses selected Kandha folk songs, translated into English, which express teaching values of collaboration, concern for others and nature, community and intergenerational responsibilities, and environmentally sustainable living. These types of views can provide some new ways to break away from the patchwork test-driven approach that has dominated the school system of today, and make out-of-school learning more enjoyable. As a medium of transmission, translation also raises numerous issues about holding the meanings, symbols, and contexts of Kandha oral traditions outside the context of the language; as a language, it raises issues about how to hold the meanings, symbols, and contexts in context. The paper uses an approach to interpretation that seeks to retain the generative and educational purpose of the original music in dealing with these problems. It focuses on the educational aspects suggested for place-based education with a thematic analysis of the content to draw out the larger themes of experiential learning, sharing of knowledge with the community, inter-generational reflection on ethics, caring for place, and future pathways with local indigenous peoples. Aboriginal knowledge has the potential to create a more inclusive, culturally connected and socially strong education sector, the study says. It speaks of the potential of Kandha folk songs in becoming a pedagogic instrument as it connects with the learner's emotional, intellectual and cognitive dimensions, supports critical thinking, consciousness regarding ecological sustainability and tolerance for difference. This supports the integration of the knowledge of the oral traditions in the school environment, enabling the consolidation of indigenous knowledge systems and making a contribution to a comprehensive, sustainable and culturally appropriate education model.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge, Kandha Folk Songs, Kuwi Language Translation, Oral Tradition, Indigenous Education

1. Introduction

Multilingual Pedagogy is needed for Decolonizing English. Pupils' thinking needs to be valued rather than punished, especially in the context of thinking with mother tongue needs for some pupils. This is called bilingualism/translanguaging and is a window to richer learning. (Bhad & Sambhajinagar, 2021). The core of education is to build the understanding of oneself and society, values, critical thinking skills, and relationships with nature as a life-long process (Dewey 1930). However, contemporary educational frameworks that were developed predominantly in the context of colonialism and globalization continue to focus on formal education with curricula that are predominantly based on text and traditional classroom instruction. Instead, educational practices that are locally rooted, experiential, and culturally embedded tend to be neglected. This imbalance has resulted in the discredit and marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems based on their own oral traditions, ecological wisdom and collective memory (Battiste, 2002). More and more, university scholars and educators are seeing that education no longer needs to be understood only the way it has been traditionally conceived by European, colonial models but instead needs rethinking that is based on knowledge practices in which cultural diversity is actively included. In this context, indigenous knowledge can be tremendously insightful for offering holistic and culturally relevant ways of educational practices. Indigenous knowledge is embedded in the local experiences of communities and often transmitted across multiple generations through culturally specific oral traditions such as folk songs, stories, myths/rhythms performances, etc. (Semali & Kincheloe, 2002). These traditions have a practical background, not an ideological one and they change with every new social, cultural, and environmental reality of the community, keeping them alive. Folk songs are unique because they entertain, teach and preserve folk traditions at the same time. They convey historical histories, cultural values, environmental wisdom and spiritual worldviews while providing identity and a feeling of community. Odisha is the habitat of one of India's richest traditions of indigenous people like the Kandha community, who have preserved their oral culture as their means to pass exciting stories to children, which retains group knowledge (Elwin, 1955). Simultaneously, folk songs are associated with agriculture and agricultural work, seasonal festivals, life-cycle ceremonies and social gatherings in a community; thus, they are not only a library of value but also the wisdom of practice. The songs point to a worldview that is based on living in harmony with nature, veneration of ancestors, collective responsibility and sustainability. They have an extremely useful time dimension as they impart knowledge relevant to agriculture, environmental conservation, social cooperation and morality. However, oral traditions such as these have continued to be largely absent from formal educational curricula and academic debates despite their political significance. In this paper, selected Kuwi hats translated to English from some of the Kandha folk songs are analysed. Translation is one of the key ways in which these orally conveyed traditions find an audience outside the community itself, among readers who do not speak Kandha. Yet, even if we succeed at linguistic translation, this is not just a simple matter of translating the words. It calls for meticulous attention to cultural meanings, symbolism, rhythm and emotional expression, as the task is to reproduce the context and indigenous worldview of a text as faithfully as possible (Bassnett, 2013). Thus, this study conceptualises translation not simply as a linguistic or text-based exercise, but regards it as a cultural process that aims at mediating between access and authenticity. The main aim of this study is to find and describe the educational values in some selected Kandha folk songs and discuss their significance

for modern educational thought. Using close textual reading and thematic analysis, we examine the ways these songs align with experiential learning, environmental education, ethical responsibility, collective action and intergenerational transfer of knowledge (Berkes, 2018). It examines how these indigenous knowledges challenge modernity within the limitations of formal education, including an over-reliance on standardized assessment and decontextualized learning. The study shifts away from framing indigenous knowledge as an archaeological remnant of the past and instead positions it as a rich dynamic source for contemporary pedagogical practice. According to the study, ensuring that indigenous knowledge is well-integrated into mainstream education would be a major step towards providing inclusive and culturally responsive programming. When used as a pedagogical instrument, folk songs will become for young learners living spaces that will involve critical thinking and emotional feelings, that will involve social engagement towards identification with culture and that will be ecologically sensitive. They are also formative in that they tend to encourage contrasting ways of knowing, learning, and relating to society and the more-than-human world. The new vision of education based on indigenous knowledge must be taken beyond a mere addition of a few local stories to the already available curriculum. This requires a shift in paradigm that acknowledges epistemic traditions and other ways to know. This research can add to the discussion of educational reform by introducing indigenous folk songs into the academic realm and showing how indigenous oral traditions can better serve education for diverse, sustainable Agentive Well-Being (AWB) in more locally-based cultural contexts. It connects the past with the present, honoring the significance of indigenous voices in shaping future generations.

2. Livelihood of the Kandha People

Kandhas (Kondhs) are an indigenous people of Odisha. Their way of life has been closely connected to the forest, hills, and environment where they have lived for centuries. The Kandhas' use of nature is not just for their livelihood and nutrition; it is also the basis for their cultural activities, religious beliefs, and sense of community. They provide for everyday living and have cultural or religious significance. Agriculture is at the core of the Kandha economy. Now, even though Podu is still practiced largely in a household way by most families, some of the larger ones shifted towards settled agriculture depending on topography or other local peculiarities. We also keep crops such as millets, maize, pulses & seasonal vegetables that grow in the climate or region. They continue to depend largely on forest resources for their livelihood apart from farming. They gather fruits, edible roots, and honey to use at home or to provide medicinal herbs or firewood that generate an income when sold in local markets. Such a strong community spirit, rooted in social and cultural life, has resulted in support for one another and co-operation with each other. As agricultural people, they are directly influenced by everything related to the season and therefore, as far as festivals, rituals, dances, and folk songs are concerned, they have an important role to play in people's lives. These methods are ways that give thanks to nature, honour their ancestors' traditions and improve their spirituality with the deities they possess in their locality. The Kandhas also hold vast traditional knowledge on medicinal plants and biodiversity, as well as sustainable practices evolved for generations; much is retained through oral tradition and practical experience. Despite the unmistakable impact of some elements of modernization on many aspects of their lives, most Kandha communities still adhere nearly fully to their traditional ways and maintain cultural continuity. At the same time, they struggle under varying socio-economic burdens, including poor education, services, infrastructure and jobs. However, though facing issues like this, Kandhas represent an indigenous custom and ecology habitat with immemorial traditions of ensuring community welfare.

Kandha People's Beliefs Ecological

Kandha folk songs are a valuable resource to the compendium of the beliefs, values, and worldview of the Kandha (Kondh) people. Instead of serving only an entertainment value, the songs convey hundreds of generations' worth of cultural knowledge and display how the community understands their relationship with nature and people in a sense of spirituality or social practice. They transmit experiences and concepts that are vital to the identity of the Kandha people through oral tradition (Elwin, 1955). These songs are unique because of their close connection to nature. Nature is more than just a life-giving physical environment to the Kandhas; it is a sacred and Anthropocentric being who supplies sustenance for human existence. In typical high-up fashion, hills, forests, rivers, trees, and animals figure most often as important beings who are loved, not passive background components of the landscape. Such depictions exemplify this community's belief that the human benefit from nature-with which, according to this view, it is inextricably tied and dependent upon for survival-is conditional on respect and incorporation within nature (Gadgil et al., 1993). It is also a symbolic spirituality of Kandha folk beliefs. The songs weave in references to Jerry lookalike ancestral spirits, local gods, and the almighty ceremonies, belief in the supernatural working in the everyday. Then there are these spiritual beliefs closely linked to agricultural seasons and seasonal festivals, as well as community functions. Singing is a means of worship (Elwin 1955), and it is a way of expressing gratitude, supplicating, and reaffirming cultural identity. This focus on a life in communion is also an important one. Kandha folk songs are a testimony to the culture of social and cultural harmony, one which echoes emphatically the spirit of coming together as one. They sing in many situations, from farm work to the celebration of festivals, about their trials and tribulations, and about how community engagement is an integral part of the human experience. The level of personal achievement is seldom separated from the level of the larger community, and emphasizes the desire for unity as a community. At the same time, the songs also unofficially play a role in teaching values and imparting moral lessons across generations. These stories and poems are packed with values such as honesty, respect, kindness, accountability, and harmony towards adults, the older ones, and harmony among children. These values are acquired slowly over time, through repeated performances, and cultural values do not need to be formally taught (Battiste, 2002). Kandha folk songs also contain a wealth of ecological knowledge. In the lyrics, you have an awareness of the seasonal cycles, farming practices, and sensible use of natural resources. They are not proponents of exploitation, but rather they call for moderation, balance and respect for the environment. There is also a knowledge system in the original culture that views nature as a life-giving, ongoing process and that it is important to preserve the assets of both the present and future generations (Gadgil et al., 1993). While an analysis of folk music is relevant due to the significant impact Indian regional music culture has on its collective output. Under the disguise of cultural exchange, a folk artist gets an opportunity to connect with a new demographic (Tripathy & Roy, 2022). Kandha folk songs are a reservoir of cultural memory that abounds in the life philosophy of the community. They show a worldview rooted in sustainability, spirituality, community, and stewardship. The songs are vital vehicles of cultural memory and indigenous knowledge through oral tradition, preserving and transmitting these beliefs across generations.

Songs are Important for Human Life

The song is an important part of being a human because it helps people directly connect to their souls, culture, and real life. They are the basis through which human beings express feelings of happiness, grief,

joy, pain, and sorrow in a simple yet meaningful way, often comforting and healing our minds. Culture and tradition are also preserved through songs. Many folk songs pass along the stories, values, and beliefs in communities and indigenous communities especially, being nurtured by generations of people as informal records of who we are. On the other hand, songs help achieve learning with such ease that it becomes fun to learn something as well, helping to imbibe lessons and values in life, particularly for children. Singing also ties our social bonds closer: we sing in unity when we gather for festivals, rituals, and celebrations. They encourage creativity and imagination, making life more colourful with deeper meanings.

Social Values through this folk song

These couplets from the folk song enigmatically encase some of the most important social values out of everyday living; education extends beyond schools and classrooms. The song imparts lessons about responsibility, compassion, cooperation with neighbours and living together in community through the mundane acts of caring for animals. These values are not lessons that are first taught; instead, they are woven through the day-to-day experience and children learn organically simply by being involved in community.

The lines *“To streams and pools we bring them all, / And give them water by their side”* reflect the necessity of taking care of the creatures. Animal care is routine, yes, but it takes kindness and patience to take them to water and a commitment to preserve life. Children with experience doing these activities come to realize that it is an indivisible element of living as a part of the community. Hence, responsibility is learnt through experience instead of through theoretical details given verbally.

Likewise, the verses say: *“Oxen, sheep, the goats we keep, / All are ours, so close, so near”* the beasts are treated not only as commodities but as objects that belong to daily life, their welfare weighed to a large degree by the dimensions of human lives. It teaches children that they are in a bond-based community rather than one of alienated independence. It promotes sharing over self-interest and strengthens communal benefits for the community at large.

A phrase so lyrical you sing along inarguable and the following lines, *“If they live well and happy stay, / Our hearts will fill with cheer,”* confirm this notion that one is only truly happy if he/she/they share in the happiness of others. So, it is enjoyable to the people, too, because the animals make their peace and their happiness very well, and that perhaps suggests personal peace is always linked with collective peace. From this viewpoint comes insight into empathy, and into what's happening outside of their own interests. It's a statement of the more sweeping concept that we have a reciprocal caring relationship with humans, nonhuman animals, and nature.

In the next song, *“We are the herders of oxen, / We are the herders of sheep. / We are the herders of goats and all, / Their care is ours to keep,”* which can make us repeat “we” throughout it, only reminds us that ownership sits ubiquitously on our shoulders instead of just a few. And in this way, the song recreates values like cooperation, solidarity, mutual help and community life, stating that together we make it. Outside of those social lessons, the song also describes a respectful relationship with nature. It is known that animals cannot survive without adequate care, and the community responsible for these animals understands this very well. Hence, the song advocates for a lifestyle where both man and animals help each other. When these concepts are transmitted from generation to generation, the folk song serves as one

of the main sources of indigenous education, as it helps build knowledge on being compassionate, sustainable, and responsible in community life with nature.

KADING GODU MARO

(KUWI TRANSCRIBE VERSION)

Kading Godu Maro Tai, Mendang Godu Maro,
Goring Godu maro Soi, Kadrung Godu Maro.
Wamude Tai Wamude Soi, Tawami Hatate Mange,
Gorin Mendang Dihimanude Soi Mecheli Ano Thamge.
Burubutata Bariharuta maro, Mecheli Taki Ahatuno,
Utapauta Lelipauta Maro Eyu Utana Tachiwana.
Kading, Kadrung, Mendang, Goring Mawa E De Nijar,
Ewa Nihiki Teba Aanucheian Mange De Raha Hotane.
Mambi E Kading Godu, Mambi E Mendang Godu,
Mambi E Goring Godu, Mambi E Kadrung Godu.

We Are the Herders

(English Translated Version)

We are the herders of oxen,
We are the herders, brothers dear.
We herd the sheep together,
And goats we guide without fear.
Come, my brother, come my friend,
Time is calling us today.
The sheep and goats are crying loudly,
Let's take them out to graze and play.
To hills and fields of green we go,
We'll lead them far and wide.
To streams and pools we bring them all,
And give them water by their side.
Oxen, sheep, the goats we keep,

All are ours, so close, so near.

If they live well and stay happy,

Our hearts will fill with cheer.

We are the herders of oxen,

We are the herders of sheep.

We are the herders of goats and all,

Their care is ours to keep.

(End)

Analysis

These lines of the folk song may look deceptively simple, but impart true educational values rooted in practical human life. Rather than being preached through a textbook or some sort of formal lesson plan, this song will bring you in wild style with rhythm, repetition and group participation. This speaks to the imaginative and often musical method of retaining and relaying wisdom that some rural and indigenous communities tend to rely on, in which songs/stories/experiences have an overwhelmingly large part to play in education. Education is closely tied to experience children learn practical skills and cultural norms, as well as social responsibilities, in a gradual process of growing into the adult community life.

Next, the opening line during its opening: *“Come, my brother, come my friend, / Time is calling us today,”* gently urges him to prepare for his duty. The song conceptualizes daily chores not as a chore to be managed individually, but creates an image of such chores as collective efforts that bring individuals from the community closer together. These two words, which allude to brother and friend, draw awareness to collaboration and partnership over independence of learning and work; that children must be taught the importance that these are group efforts. On the one hand, there is an eventual association to indigeneness, a lived understanding of life through sunset, animal needs and seasonal adjustment, creating some ungodly clockless reality.

The next lines: *“The sheep and goats are crying loud, / Let’s take them out to graze and play,”* empathize with animals as well. Well, for example, this song gives so many values to the kids who can understand it - respect animals they see as a source of food sometimes but should take care of other species. Rather, it establishes an ethical relationship between humanity and nature that says caring for animals not only requires money, but is the exercise of a moral obligation driven by respect and compassion.

Lines like *“To hills and fields of green we go, / We’ll lead them far and wide”* provide environmental education from the school of hard knocks. Complementing adults, children herd animals of every variety while rapidly acquiring an intuitive acquaintance with the landforms and ecology of the local region. They learn how to approach hills, fields and open country whilst also learning about the relationship with their surroundings and how it can affect livestock. This knowledge appears through practice, not via an educational process in the classroom.

Similarly, we read that by their side *“To streams and pools we bring them all, / And give them water by their side,”* emphasizing the ecoregional natural resource value of water too. This song teaches kids about how to locate water in their area, which animals are thirsty and why it matters, so we have to take good care of every animal's health so that they can survive. They are practical, giving children real skills to provide for themselves and survive in their communities.

Lines such as these, *“Oxen, sheep, the goats we keep, / All are ours, so close, so near,”* evoke a sublime sense of ownership. In the movies, they are not just a source of economic resources but also in the household and Community. This mentality inspires kids to fortify their connections between people, animals, and land through respect and gratitude and a greater connection to sustainable living.

These final lines, *“If they live well and happy stay, / Our hearts will fill with cheer,”* actually bring a moral lesson about happiness in the peace of living together. You basically only look after yourself; if her members are happy and healthy, the animals will be. What this suggests is that one can create wealth of any kind, which ultimately destroys nature. It expresses an easy way to relate to reality as interdependence of humans, animals and nature as the true path for happiness through care, harmony and communal responsibility towards life.

3. Conclusion

The various Kandha folk songs are basic, important modes of communication and knowledge creation among the communities of the Kandha tribal people in Odisha. These sacred songs come with an oral tradition and involve virtues of nature, community, and ancestor worship, but also mean a lifestyle based on being friends with the earth pulse. They teach us important lessons that we can learn about: responsibility, friendship, and, more importantly, to live within our means, which many people might not learn in this institutionalized educational system. This research is unique not only for documenting those songs out of Kuwi, but as the song translations are in English, they open up a space to be transparent and argued over. But this makes things more complicated because translation could often be painful due to loss of cultural context and lost emotion; this study takes an interpretative stance in preserving the songs but also having them accessible for outsiders. Results: My analysis finds that while Kandha folk songs are awfully educative, this is not done through a classroom but by observing and experiencing facts. Living in a community is an active engagement with its communal knowledge, so that children are imbued with ethical, utilitarian, and social responsibilities tied to particular places. Such a form of education resonates with the reality and aims to provide cognitive and emotional awareness. The evidence necessitates giving greater due regard to indigenous knowledge systems in contemporary schools, and shows the potential for education becoming more widely accessible and culturally meaningful with increasing frequency. Kandha folk songs for specific classes from Karnataka are among the standard practices that will help enhance ecological awareness and cultural diversity of particular places. A case of a folk song demonstrates the role of quotidian experiences as pedagogies with special interest to familial and community obligations. Through learning to care for others and the environment, it also offers children an opportunity to develop cooperation, empathy, and sensitivity toward feelings of others as well as their own emotions. The song conveys a world in which we are all connected: what is good for one is your own smiling, wellbeing, one teaching of Kandha traditions; it provides immanently possible imperatives upon culturally sustaining and humane education.

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