Chapter 6

INTERACTION BETWEEN HOME, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITIES

This chapter aims to investigate interactions of children at home, school and the neighbourhood to highlight ways that these interactions shape and mediate children's learning. The discourse of identity, which Jenkins (1996) describes as 'touchstone of times' is viewed as inherently embodied, determined in part by the situation and context and multi-dimensional by nature (Bourdieu, 1993; Foucault, 1991; Giddens, 1999; Holroyd, 2002; Shilling, 1997).

This chapter mainly focuses on explaining the experience of the student in relation to what they learn at school, experience at home and community. As Pollard and Filler (2007) state, the learner's identity is constructed at the intersection of home, school and peer group, socio-cultural influences and relationships. Families, teachers and friends in relationship with an individual pupil and with each other, act to mediate and interpret wider cultural and political discourse that shapes the individual pupils' experience and perception. The school participation which is discussed here is in relation to various social contexts such as family backgrounds, rituals at home and school, the teaching learning strategies, family and community networks, parental involvement and child rearing strategies and parent-teacher relationships, gendered socialisation and linguistic practices.

6.1. Rituals, Going to Relatives and School Practices

The rules and rituals of the school include holidays and vacations, are congruent with the culture and expectation of dominant groups. Such practices mostly cater to the needs and requirements of the mainstream population while there is little or no space for the cultural and social practices of tribes and local context (Sujatha, 2001). Underlying these discourse, I tried to focus on how the compatibility between culture and rituals of the communities and the rules and norms of the school affect schooling of children of different communities. The school calendar, which lists both Gazetted holiday and optional holiday can be defined as rule of the school. The festivals celebrated in some communities are not listed in the holiday calendar, which is centralised and not relevant to the local communities. Thus, children belonging to these communities not only remain absent during these periods but are also deprived of teaching-learning opportunities, which cannot be compensated.
During an interview with Bhola Munda, a parent, he revealed that ‘Makar’ is the major festival in Munda community that goes on continuously for three days. During this celebration, children from Munda community miss school for a whole week, where there is the official allocation of one day as a holiday for this ritual in the school calendar. Besides these three days, the ‘carnival impact’ has a continuity on Munda children for another three to four days, in which they go to enjoy a week-long fair, where they watch locally played dramas, operas and other cultural festivals in the nearby localities.

Similarly, in the Santal community, they celebrate another festival named as 'Dalabhanga Punei' for three days. But these festivals are not listed as holidays in the school calendar. As a result, the absenteeism continues for an extended period. The interaction with the teachers also reveals the similar response:

Mr. Sethy: (Headmaster of upper primary school) "During Kali Puja, most of the children across different social groups are absent for 3-4 days while during Makar, most of the Munda children remain absent for 4-5 days."

Mr. Dalei (Teacher of Primary School): "During Kali Puja, there is an allocation of two optional holidays apart from the holiday allocated in the calendar. But during 'Makar' only one holiday is assigned, but children skip coming to school for enjoying the post-cultural festivals like watching local operas and dramas. So, the numbers of absentee children are more".

The rituals associated with someone's birth or death in the family or the neighbourhood often compel the children to remain absent on some important day. On the day of death, no one attends school. There is a mourning event for 12 to 13 days after someone's death, particularly on the 10th, 11th and 12th day; children are restricted to attend school for participating in rituals. Thus, it leads to their absenteeism from school:

"In high school, once I was a part of the prayer sessions. Looking at the very less presence of the children in the assembly, I asked about the reason behind it. Then some of the children replied that 5-7 Mahanta children are absent as someone has died in their community and they have gone to be a part of the rituals happened afterwards. While 7 Sounti children are missing because they have gone to attend the marriage function in their community." (Field notes, 24/02/2014)
The interview with one of the senior members named Sankar Mahanta in the village also revealed the same. He stated,

"During the time of rituals, which are performed just after the death of any family members or any person in our community, children do not go to school particularly on the 9th, 10th and 11th day. In those periods, cooking was not done in the morning or noon time. It was done in the afternoon and then, food is served after the rituals are over. Therefore, the children remain absent in the school as they cannot go to school in the empty stomach".

Bhola Munda, one of the parents, shared, “None of the children attend school when any of the family member or any members of our community dies. We also cannot force them to go to school."

Unlike boys, girls have additional responsibilities in helping their mother in washing the clothes of the family, which are perceived as impure because of the after death as a cultural Class of the community. There is the clear-cut gender difference in the work within home influenced by the cultural norms (Manjrekar, 1999). However, there are marked differences among individuals within the social group. For example, Manyiseni Mahanta attended school on the 10th day and participated in the ritual in the evening.

Further, during festivals like Laxmi Puja, which is celebrated in the month named as ‘Margshir’ (which falls during the month of November-December) as per Odia calendar, most of the girl children remain absent in particular for the task related to it. In this festival, the girls perform many of the tasks including cleaning the floors of the verandas and house for purification of the puja and many other such works in the day time. Rashmita Das, one of the Sounti girls, narrated,

"I am asked to clean the floor of the house and verandas with water and cow-dung on Wednesdays as the puja is held in the early morning of Thursdays. I have to wash the clothes of the entire family members with my mother as they are thought to be impure. All these tasks cannot be done in the evening because we have to decorate the floor with ‘chitta’ (rice paste). Therefore, I have to stay at home on Wednesdays."

Visiting relatives due to the marriage of any close relatives or for some other functions also limit the scope of going to school. Munda children visit their relatives with their parents though the school is open. Neither the parents nor the children are serious about absenteeism in the school at these times. Family structure among Mundas
and Santals group is nuclear in nature and there is no one in the household to take care of the child when parents visit relatives. Bhramar Munda explained,

"We do not have anyone to take care of our kids. Who will prepare food for them and get them ready for school? So, we take our children with us whenever we visit relatives".

Kabita Munda said: "When I was young, I used to go with my mother to visit relatives whenever my parents visit them. So, during those periods I remain absent from the school".

Mahanta and Sounti children visit the homes of relatives only at the time of vacation. Some of the children like Milan Mahanta and Harihar Das rarely visit any relatives in the fear that they may lose track of School and tuition studies. Bhagirathi Mahanta, the father of Milan Mahanta, shared, “Both of my children do not want to visit any relatives. Even if they go for any function, they come on the next day. I compel them to return to home”.

Harihar Das: "We only go to the home of relatives during vacation. We never attend when they call us on school working days. Even if there are marriage ceremonies in our neighbourhood, I go to school and attend the ceremony in the evening".

The culture and identity of the tribes including both Santals and Mundas are mostly linked with their rituals and festivals. However, the school doesn't have holidays catering to the cultural needs of these communities. On the other hand, the Mahantas get their due as the school remains closed during their festivals. Unlike Mundas and Santals, Mahantas have the alternative source of learning such as tuition to compensate, even they miss any classes. Sountis mostly celebrate the festivals like any Hindu Odia caste and thus, there is no loss for them. These findings echo Bernstein’s (1990) assertions that unlike middle-class students, who have the privilege to acquire the dominant cultural capital from different sites such as the family, communities and so on, children from marginalised groups find themselves doubly disadvantaged as their cultural capital is devalued by the school. The girls across different groups are mostly deprived of schooling opportunities during any of the festivals and rituals including marriage and death ceremonies.

6.2. Gendered Socialisation, Work and Learning

Division of work, based on gender, was prevalent in the socialising practices of the parents in the village. Many of the families socialised their children into roles,
norms and values associated with such gendered divisions. During interviews with children at the field site, it was revealed that girls were asked to assist their mothers in the household tasks of cooking, sweeping and cleaning the utensils. As a result, they get less or even rare opportunity to focus on their studies compared to the boys. As they grow older, the involvement increases in the domestic sphere of work and also in agricultural related work. Many of the girl children shared their experience that there is no option left for them to study at home since the family members expect them to do the household work. Sebati Munda, a drop-out who lost her mother at age of four and is supported by her father shares,

"I used to go to school and sometimes stay at home to look after the house. The frequency of absenteeism in school became more as I grew up and my engagement with household work increased. My father started banking upon me for all kinds of domestic work. I was told to be absent and be in the house to assist in sweeping the floor and carry drinking water (from long distance). Sometimes, I helped my father in grazing cattle. While I was studying in Class V, my father used to tell me to cook the food. He has never cooked the food and helped in cow grazing. Although I was willing to attend school, I did not have any other options except obeying his orders. I attended very few days when I was in Class V".

Kabita Munda, who passed Class X in 2014 and now married, said,

"We had to do all the household work in the early morning since both father and mother used to go to work to the agricultural farm or to do wage labour. So, studying at home became tough. No one ever persuaded to sit for study and we used to roam here and there".

Pan Majhi, a Santal girl, narrated:

"I wake up at 5.30 a.m. I start my morning in engaging myself in the house sweeping and cleaning the utensils. I was performing better in the lower classes when I was regular to school and there was no pressure from parents to do domestic work. As I grew older after Class III or IV, I was asked to do household work. I was asked many a time to be present in the home during school time instead of attending school particularly when my mother is ill."

Pan Majhi told me that there was no option for attending school during the period of cultivation. She remained absent for 20-30 days in the year because of her engagement in agriculture related work. She also goes to the local market to help her father because her father does not know calculations. She admits that because of her
frequent absence in higher classes, she was not able to understand hard and challenging concepts. As a result, she was bored in the class.

Bimala Naik, one of the Sounti girls, who failed to complete Class X said, "I cook and clean the utensils in morning and evening. So, I get less opportunity to study at home”.

Further, there is no option left for the girl children to remain present in the school when their parents especially their mother is absent or has gone to relatives’ home. But there is the exception in the case of some Mahanta families where the father is more conscious about the education of his children. For example, Bhagirathi Mohanta and his family members never ask the girl child in her family to do any kind of household work. Except some Mahanta households, most of the girls in the village help their mother and look after them when they are unwell and do a range of household tasks. Sibling care is an added responsibility in case of for girl children belong to Munda and Santal families. But boys were never found to be absent from the school when their mothers were ill. Mamata Munda, a Class V child shares,

"I am asked to stay at home to look after the household work whenever my mother falls ill. I do as much as I can do. I help my mother in cleaning the house, collecting and carrying drinking water from the tube-well and also help her in cooking".

Papani Mahanta, a Class VII student, reveals,

"I remain absent whenever my mother remains ill if my father has gone out of home or busy in some agricultural work or has gone to some relatives. My duty focuses on cooking, cleaning the utensils and taking care of my mother”.

Mili Majhi, supported by her widow mother shares that,

"I have no option to attend school when my mother remains ill. I do not only have the only responsibility to look after my mother but have to do all the household work from morning till evening. After cleaning the utensils, my job is to prepare breakfast and help my young brother for going to school."

These narratives reveal that the engagement of the girl children in these domestic chores limits their accessibility to education, which boy children are never asked to perform. The extra labour spent by these girls in particular on domestic chores affects school work not only in terms of time, which they could have devoted to their studies but also affects their concentration levels in the classroom and available time for homework.
The girl children are often asked to take the roles of adult and responsibilities at the cost of their need of education and to respond to the mother's need for assistance within the household. Their involvement with domestic spheres of work is mostly aimed to groom for adult roles within the cultural boundary defined by the community (Manjrekar, 2013). Chanana (1990) has also shown that so far, the education of girls concerned, "Access is culturally defined and relevance for formal education is determined by societal normative structures and expectations of what is feminine".

From the early age, the girl children, particularly among Mudas, are socialised into household works since both the parents go for wage labour or crop production in order to earn money for the family. Family as the primary agent of socialisation introduces the girl child into various household chores either as a compulsion of the family or preparing them for future roles as homemakers.

Many of the school going boys, especially the elder ones also remain absent due to the engagement in wage work. The socialisation of boys into dominant stereotyped masculinity influences the children for monetary need. Many of the Munda families engage their boy children to earn income or to support their family in agricultural related work in the beginning. However, once they get to know the value of having money in their hand to spend for their enjoyment and status, the boys start skipping classes and afterwards they quit school entirely for monetary income:

The headmaster of the Primary School shared,

"Mahanta boys see their father as the role model. They mostly see how they can earn income for their family. Parents also ask their children to engage in agriculture related work. On the other hand, Munda parents have the compulsion to engage their boy children to earn additional income to support their family".

In response to a question about why he does not persuade his children to continue school, one of the Munda parent reveals:

"I am much worried about completing the construction of the house, which is possible if the children earn and support. After the construction, they may attend school".

Interestingly, there is no guarantee that whether construction will be completed as the family does not possess enough funds. Although the construction work is not in progress, he expects that children should earn towards it.
Biranchi Munda, one of his sons, who has discontinued his education from Class IX onwards and was contributing to the income of the family, has stopped giving money to his parents. He has bought a mobile and listens to music on it. He participates in various wage labour or construction work inside and outside the village and discontinued going to school (Field notes, 20th September 2014). On my last visit in August 2016, I found Biranchi Munda got married.

Like Biranchi Munda, many of the school going children, once they remain absent for a long time due to their engagement in household division of labour, end up not going to School.

Rabi Munda (Discontinued in Class VIII): "I have not attended school for one and half months. I was asked for helping my father in agricultural work. Now, I am working at a brick kiln and involved in brick kiln activities. My brother is not able to work being affected by polio. So, I help my father in different kind of jobs when he asks."

Gajendra Mahanta: (Discontinued in Class VIII): "When I was in Class VIII, I was asked many a time to skip classes and to contribute to agriculture related work. I would also go to work when ordered by my father. Since my brother went left our village to engage in some work and earn money, my parents used to ask me to do one or other work. I became irregular and afterwards, I lost interest towards attending school”.

Bipin Mahanta (Discontinued education in Class X): "Since my father worked outside the village and out of home for many months, and my mother was suffering from cancer, I had to shoulder many household responsibilities I was also working as a loader. So, I was unable to attend school”.

The boys mainly drop out due to familial pressure to contribute to various paid labour outside the domestic sphere, which are associated with a set of gender norms. The social context of masculinity is equated with the ability to earn and be engaged in the labour force. Whenever any financial crisis prevails in the family or in the absence of the father or any other elder who work outside the village, there is pressure on boys to take up this leading position in the family and contribute to the household economy by direct or indirect engagement in various productive work outside the domestic space. The involvement of boys in various economic activities coincides with school hours and it also pushes them to drop out.

6.3. Social Capital, Family Networks and Tutoring

Social capital refers to the collective asset generated from the social relations between individuals, who share membership in a typical social structure (Coleman,
Like other forms of capital; it facilitates certain actions and outcomes for those who occupy a given social structure. Trust, obligations and expectations, norms, relations of authority, and shared information are the different kinds of social capital. Social capital is viewed as a social structural resource, which lies in family relationships i.e. relationship between adults and children within the family and further enables children to gain access to human capital (Coleman, 1994: 300). Those who belong to a particular social structure, can rely on the social capital to address some problems and control over their lives even when other forms of capital such as human capital is lacking. Coleman further asserts that families even possess strong economic and human capital but these accumulations are redundant if social capital is lacking.

The teaching learning process in the school, being insufficient to make the children come to the desired level of learning, parents with strong economic background send their children to private school. On the other hand, parents with manageable income make arrangements for private tuition through the parental networks so that the children can get scope to learn something meaningful.

Interviews with parents and children revealed that there are some Mahanta and some Sounti families, who do not have sufficient income but they share the norms and values core to their community ties, which help them to procure additional capital and compensate for the insufficiency of financial capital and human capital. Most of the Mahanta and Sounti parents are able to channelise their community obligation to seek the support of their kinsmen, those who are educated up to the certain level for tuition or get guidance as needed for their children. For these children, there is no restriction of time or money:

Sebati Mahanta, who is staying in her uncle's house since her childhood explained,

“There is no point of attending school after the courses are over since there is less scope for learning new things. The courses are already covered. Now (during December, 2014), I concentrate on studies at home and clear doubt from the teacher appointed for private tuition. Although the morning time is fixed for tuition, I can approach at any point of time to clear my doubt. The tuition teacher is my distant uncle in relation”.

Sankar Mahanta supports the education of her grand daughter Jagyaseni Mahanta, who lost her father at an early age. He said,

“\textit{I did not have enough money to pay for the private tuition nor do I have the competence to teach since she is in higher classes. Looking at the situation, I}
requested a person in the neighbourhood (belonging to our community), who has completed Bachelor’s degree in science stream, to provide tuition to her. I never complained about the timings, even though he cannot commit to a fixed time. Similarly, he has also never complained that I was not able to pay fees to him on time. Apart from the tuition timings, he often helps to clear Jagyaseni’s doubts in any subjects.”

Basumati Mahanta, one of the students of Class VI told,

“Me and my younger brother attend tuition in the morning and evening. My father is not able to pay the tuition fees every month. We used to pay once in two or three months. But our tuition teacher has never complained about payment of fees”.

Hemanta Das, one of the Sounti children shares,

“I don’t go for tuition. Since my sister has passed Class X, she guides me in my studies and also helps me in doing my homework. Even other children like Bhuban Naik who is in Class VIII, Bipin Naik of Class IX and Sabita Das of Class VIII often come to our home to get some guidance in studies from my sister”.

Another Sounti boy Bipin Naik, who is preparing for his final examination of high school said,

“My family members are planning to arrange a tutor for me to help me in understanding subjects like Mathematics, Science and English, which are bit difficult to comprehend. My parents have consulted the tutor. The tutor has said that once he becomes free in his engagement with the brick kiln work, he will help me in tutoring. I face difficulties because no one from our locality gets tuition and since there are fewer chances of earning a fair remuneration, no one is ready to spend time as tutor”.

On the other hand, some of the more tight-knit families, who have stronger sense of the importance for education, try to provide extra time and resources to their children than first generation families. Further, having common space and place of residence and being closely located to each other, children have higher chances of getting appropriate access to educational support from social networks. The parents play more interventionist role and work together to manage their activities in such a manner that their children achieve educational success and have less chance of distraction groups of children engaged in non-educational related activities. One of the parents, Bhagirathi Mahanta, aged 40, whose qualification is Class XII discussed that there is ‘the danger’ to children being mixed or engaged with other children of the
village in games or in other activities. He perceived these children as indiscipline and said it may affect the behaviour of their children. Fortunately, he got support from another parent, who is equally concerned about his children.

Bhagirathi Mahanta said,

“I have never thought of sending my children for tuition. However, a man called Dicamba Mahanta, who is a graduate and teaches in a private secondary school, proposed a plan to me to send my son and daughter to join tuition where Dicamba himself is teaching his child who is in Class VI. My son stands in the first position in Class V terminal examination and my daughter stands in the second position in her Class IV terminal examination. Since both of our sons are studying in the same class. So, studying together will make them good friends and their performance will also be better throughout. They go for tuition in both the time of morning at 6.30 a.m to 9.30 a.m. and evening at 6:30 p.m to 9:00 p.m. He does not mind if we could not pay the tuition fee even for two months continuously. My father and father of Dicamba Mahanta were close friends. Even I used to consult him during my studies. He was senior to me in school. Even children of ours also play together and spend their time in our place so that they never get the chance to be friendly with pupils of other groups.”

However, Munda children do not have any other option except self-study. They neither have the financial resources to pay for private tuition nor is any educated person available in their localities, to guide and help them in studies.

Chandan Munda, one of the students, said, “I am not able to understand Mathematics, Science and English. But no one is there to help me out. My father earns too little. So, I cannot go for tuition”.

Kabita Munda: "I study on my own. Even if there are some subjects in whom I found difficulty, I try to discuss with teachers if possible. Else I remain silent and leave that portion.”

The discussion on tutoring mechanisms points out that the mutual trust and reciprocity, the form of social capital, generated from the kinship and social ties helps Mahanta families largely to rise over the temporary poverty and economic disadvantage. Parents use their community networks to connect to other parents with in their neighbourhood to get a good teacher. White and Wehlage (1995) argues collaboration in neighbourhood groups increase community social capital, which helps them to get access to human capital i.e. knowledge of a good teacher at less economic capital. They persuade Sunil Mahanta to teach at his own convenience but he did not
agree to conform because he is tied to the profession of tutoring as there is less chance of getting adequate and regular earning.

Further, Mahanta parents took benefit from each other’s academic resources; i.e. knowledge and educational qualifications. It seems both Bhagirathi Mahanta and Digambar Mahanta, being educated parents of highly performing students and associated with each other since long, want to carry forward this long association gradually to their children, for a betterment of their educational performances and also for future education prospects of their children.

Photo: Children of Two Mahanta community of village studying together

Children belong to the Sounti community also get benefit from the connection of their parents and child to child interaction. Bipin Naik, being a good friend of Hemanta Das, takes the advantage of consulting his sister in clearing his doubts, without any financial implication. On the other hand, the suffering of the children belong to Munda community continues, due to the unavailability of tuition facilities for them as they have very limited income source and also there are no educated leaders present in their community.

6.4. Parenting Practices, Child Rearing Strategies and Education

The kind of child rearing strategies adopted by the parents has relative influence over access to education for different groups of children. While Mahantas and Sountis have a very routine way of dealing with their children, Santals and Mundas don't have any particular schedules to routine the activities of their children. The finding echoed
Lareau’s work (2003, 2000) which stress that middle class children benefit more from the school because their parents share the same cultural attributes about how children should be raised in a manner that school expects from them. Mahanta and Sounti children were also found to be advantaged as the parenting practices i.e. the care and caution taken by parents for educating their children, mostly facilitate them to benefit from schooling practices. Lareau (2003) discusses that middle-class parents practise a form of parenting called "concerted cultivation" whereas working and lower class parents practice "accomplishment of natural growth." She discusses that since concerted cultivation is culturally aligned with the educational system, children of these parents are in an advantageous position. They are endowed with the necessary cultural capital to negotiate effectively inside the educational institution. Concerted cultivation, she argues, places emphasis on children's structured activities, active intervention in schooling and focus on language development of children (Lareau, 2003).

Organisation of the daily life of the children by their (Mahanta and Sounti) parents found to benefit children in the education system. Lareau (2003) argues that organisation of daily life, one of the components of the concerted cultivation, consists of extracurricular structure in the form of day-to-day activities in middle-class homes. Under the structured and organised activities of daily life, a Mahanta child is socialised into waking up early morning around 4am-5am and start studying. Children is fed dry food at breakfast so that they remain active in the early morning and do not feel sleepy. Apart from their school hours, they also study during evening hours. Mahanta children those who are at higher classes are found to be very particular about their timings.

Nrusingh Mahanta, a Class IX child, shared that he leaves his bed at 4 a.m. and starts studying because his parents have told him that studying in the early morning brings better results. Initially, his mother forced him but now it has become a regular habit for him to wake up at 4 am. After 6 am, he goes for a walk and for some athletic activities for which he spends only 30 minutes to 1 hour. He practises sports activities because his parents tell him they stave off illness. He is also determined to be an athletic champion in the school. After athletics, he sits down to study till 9 am.

Similarly, Biswanath Mahanta, father of a class one child shares, "I encourage the child, who has just started his schooling at the age of four, to wake up at 4 am in the early morning every day. Nowadays, he is accustomed to it. Then, he offers prayer and I teach him till 6 am. I understand that this is the only time I can
train him well because I am busy throughout the day in my business and it also adds extra time to his studies apart from the regular study hours”.

Bhagirathi Mahanta shares about the lifestyle of her daughter, Monali Mahanta studying in Class V:

“She and her brother wake up early morning to go for tuition, which starts at 6.30 am till 9.00 am. After school hours, she prepares herself for tuition and she plays with her friend for some time at the place of tuition. She does not play with indisciplined children. She always looks at the watch and does her tasks timely. Even on Sundays and other holidays, she and her brother go to tuition thrice in a day but she has never complained about it.”

The morning time activities for most of the Mundas go differently, providing fewer opportunities for education. There are no routine activities followed by the Munda children. It is up to the child when she/he feels comfortable to leave the bed. Typically, they wake up at 7.30-8.00 am, besides during the season when the children wake at 5.00-6.00 am and visit forest to collect edible items such as pulses and fruits, which are sold in the market. After that, they sit here and there and spend time without studying. If she/he is more than 8-9 years of age, she/he is engaged in the household works in the morning time. In most of the Munda and Santal families, both parents leave for work in the early morning expecting that the children will do their work on their own.

During school times, the children belonging to all the social groups normally attend the school from 10 am to 4 pm. Some of the children belonging to Munda communities remain absent due to their engagement in the agriculture related works, which support their parents and in other works like brick-kiln work or wage labour when the cultivation season is over.

During cultivation, most of the children, irrespective of the communities remain absent in the school, especially the Munda children.

"When I visited the family of Jeevan Munda, I found his two sons had not attended school. Rabi Munda, aged 15, went to help his parents at the brick kiln. Although he is a child with physical disabilities, he is helping his parents since they do not have other sources to supplement manpower due to lack of finances, further his elder brother is affected by polio and cannot work properly. (Field notes, 20/02/2014)"

Evening hours are mostly dedicated towards study by the Mahanta and Sounti children. On an average, study hours range between 2-21/2 hours in the evening. But
the study timings of Munda children depend on the availability of kerosene since they do not have stable electricity connections in their houses.

Alok Majhi, who completed his Class X amid many difficulties, shared,

"I was able to devote less time to studies in the evening time due to lack of supply of kerosene or irregularity in electricity. Duration of study was very short during the rainy season when power supply was at absolute minimum. The family had to struggle to get kerosene due to the shortage of money."

Most of the Mahanta and the Sounti children are regular with daily routines such as waking up early, studying as per daily schedule and so on. These habits make them more regular at studies and promote them to perform better than the Munda children. Instilled with these practices from the very early age has a determining influence on habitus formation not only in the way of thinking, which is more closely approximate that of schools but in terms of a ‘whole cultural disposition’ (Grenfell and James, 1998). On the other hand, Munda parents are neither able to guide their children regarding study nor they have enough time to teach discipline to their children as they are pre-occupied with subsistence and survival.

6.5. Parental Involvement, Resources and School Performance

Consistent with Coleman's theory of social capital (1998), many studies reveal that when parents direct their social capital towards education of their children, there is decrease in drop-out among the children (Astone and McLanahan 1991; Carbonaro 1998; Mc Neal 1999). Further, strengthening social capital to set communities is associated with an increase in students' achievement. (Coleman, 1988, 1991; Epstein 1991, 1992; Topping 1992)

As discussed earlier, Mahanta parents are more involved in their education at school and thus, the teachers took interest in teaching their children. These parents are very active, involved and assertive to evaluate the success of their children in the school. They deploy interactional strategies with the teachers to make them realise about their children ‘s success:

Bhagirathi Mahanta: “Either I or my wife visits the school to discuss the progress of my children and also suggest the teachers that they should thoroughly check the writings of the children and provide them much scope for writing. We go to school every month at least once or twice to interact with the teachers. Sometimes, my wife also takes classes in upper primary school”.
Rashik Chand Mahanta: “My uncle, Bansidhar Mahanta, sometimes, visits my school and asks about the progress of mine. My father often looks at my notebooks to check whether I have completed the homework or not”.

Bhagirathi Mahanta considers going to school and interacting with teacher’s yields positive results. When I asked him, “Don’t you feel that you waste your time and money by visiting school and interacting with teachers”, he shares, “I never feel that going to school wastes my time and work. Rather it helps in motivating my children. They feel happy if I pay a visit to school. Further, it gives them a feeling that we are concerned about them ”.

The two-way communication and continuity of connection (when there is an exchange of resources i.e. information, advice and experience of dealing with children in the home and school setting) between teacher and parents provide the optimum development context for the children. The result is that there is the high probability of success for the children as a consequence of the accumulation of capital (Bourdieu, 1987). The social capital, generated over a period through the continuity of connection between Bhagirathi Mahanta and the school teachers multiplies the cultural capital created by his child i.e. Milan's prior schooling in the private school setting and expectations of being a high performer(Brooker,2000).

Parent's continuous interaction with school teachers fosters the better relationship between teachers and children both inside and outside of the school. Bhagirathi Mahanta, whose wife is Vice-Chairperson in School Management committee of the School said,

“Once my son Milan, who studies in Class VII, and regular to school, was sick and could not attend the school. At that time the headmaster of the school visited our home with biscuit and mixture to know the reason behind his absenteeism”.

Jagyaseni Mahanta’s grandfather, often visits school to inspect the teaching-learning process. He realised that continuous visits and inspections to school helps his grand-daughter in accessing additional capital from the teachers.

Munda parents rarely visit schools due to their never-ending involvement in labour. Less interaction with teachers results in their voices being unheard in the school. They rarely go to school and thus, there is less scope for them to know what is
happening in school. However, teachers report that these parents are less responsive towards the education of their children:

The lady teacher in school: "Munda parents rarely visit school. They are uneducated and mischievous. Parents from Munda community visit when they are drunk because they think that their voice can be loud and teacher will have to hear to them. Also, teachers will be afraid of them if they come drunk."

The Headmaster of the Upper Primary School: "Munda parents are least concerned about their children. Even interaction between them is very minimal. We have asked them to open bank account so that the stipend provided by the government can be transferred to their account but some of them have not opened account till now even after frequent reminders".

Jeevan Munda, the father of a child with physical disability, being trapped by acute poverty, hardly gets to know about the schooling of his child. His wife shares, “He (Jeevan Munda) often drinks and persuades his younger child to go for wage labour and earn for the family”.

“They also forgot to deposit the bank draft in the bank, the stipend which is offered to the child belonging to disability category. Even the school officials did not inform his parents about the scholarship amount given to the child. One day, I pay a visit to the home of Jeevan Munda to know the result of Class X examination of his son. When I asked his son about the status of his examination, he was not able to convey properly about his performance. When his father asked him to show his certificates, he came out from the mud house with a small rusted metal trunk. It seems that all the important documents of the family are stored in this trunk. While searching for the certificates, a demand draft, which is his stipend money, was found lying in the corner of the trunk. While checking the demand draft, it was found that it had expired. They felt bad that they were not able to encash the cheque and started blaming each other. His father blamed the son for not informing them in time.” (Field notes, 18th September 2014).

The Munda parents feel very helpless and inferior due to their illiteracy. They perceive their voices are unheard in the school. The apathetic attitude of the teachers further impedes their involvement in school. Bhramar Munda, father of Hera Munda shared, "The lady teacher doesn't even look at us. She always shows attitude without any reason as if we are her enemy".
6.6. Parental Expectations, Informal Socialisation and Role Models

Interviews with parents and children confirm the fact that differences in parental expectations influence the participation of their children in the educational process. Parental expectations are further shaped by habitus, a term Bourdieu uses to describe disposition towards "What is comfortable or what is natural that child inherits the family's place in social structure" (Lareau, 2003). Having realised that they do not have adequate resources to support the education of children, Munda parents were not able to set any benchmark or target for the education of their children and also for their future occupations. Bhramar Munda, father of two children, who was struggling to feed his family shared that

"I am not able to visualise till which level I can educate my children nor what kind of occupation my children will pursue in future. I have insufficient income to educate my children and I don't feel like investing capital on education of children too as they themselves are not interested in studying and like to roam here and there."

Further he adds,

"Where to find so many daily wage jobs so that I can spend on their education? If children would have a little willingness to gain something from learning, then I could have thought of spending on them. In the Munda community, children do not sit to study anything. They only enjoy roaming here and there in a group. It is worthless to invest money on them. When I will find that there is insufficient income from daily wage jobs to sustain my family, that will be an end to their education."

In Bourdieu's view (1973), poor students (lower economic status) always decide whether to continue/proceed their education or not, based on the evaluation of the cultural capital which they possess. On the other hand, exceptional students from the lower class may see the accumulation of cultural capital as a way to overcome the problems they face in their class position. Munda and Santal children are getting education but they do not have any ambition or target in life. The reasons can be attributed to poverty and lack of cultural capital. But they feel that at least being educated, their children can be clever, educate their next generation. This is similar to Jeffrey et al. (2005)'s discussion about Brijpal, who believed that educated cultural distinction combined with school knowledge and skills can provide a basis for collective Dalit’s fearlessness (nirbhik), cleverness (châlāk), self-awareness (jâgarûk) and inner confidence (himmat, hosla, atmavishvas). There are some families who despite
their low status, want to invest maximum resource on the education of their children. Their trust and belief in the power of education to transform their education help their children to succeed in school system.

Alok Majhi, a Class X (in 2014) child shares,

"My sister used to motivate me for studies. She says no one is educated in our family. I should try to study well and earn something "for my family”. He wants to study till graduation”.

Sounti parents, although, belongs to the Scheduled Tribes like Mundas and Santals, they are more positive about the education of their children. In contrast to Munda and Santal parents, Sounti parents see education as a medium to counter their historical exclusion and leverage their social and economic position in the society. The reason is that they see the emergence of new generations of young males in Sounti community in their village and in the locality, which have benefited through the system of reservation and accumulation of educational credentials. Therefore, Sounti parents hold on to the hope of reservation in white-collar government jobs and access to higher education and employ their material and cultural resources for better education of their children. Harihar Das, a Sounti boy narrated;

"My parents often say that they were not able to study due to lack of school and because of their poverty. I should study hard and get a job. I don't know what to become but they often discuss the case of my cousin from the neighbourhood, who is pursuing higher studies in Tamilnadu”.

Bipin Naik, one of the children studying in Class X shares that his father often says,

“Patha napadhile murkha habu, loka eiita seita kahibe, hasibe”(Odia version)
"If you will not study, people in the community will laugh at you. They will gossip about you."

Mahanta parents often put the tribal-non-tribal distinction in the minds of their children while motivating them for better study. Further, the Mahanta families, having the experience and trapped through the fate of un/under-employment, never dare to visualise that their children would get jobs in future if he or she is not studying well in their class comparable to other children in the village. It seems as Mahanta parents are investing money on the education of their children by giving them extra supports like private tuitions and reference books in order to increase the performance in their education. There is also motivation among their parents to maintain the image of the
upper social and educated status in the village as well as the most possible ways in getting government jobs to their children:

**Bhagirathi Mahanta**: "I will give my son education as long as he wants to study. If luck favours him, he may get government job. There is less hope that he will get a government job since we belong to the general caste (meaning that they are not Scheduled Tribe). If he will not get job, he will help me in agriculture."

**Rashik Chand Mahanta**: “My parents inspire me to score good marks in the examination saying that we don't belong to the tribal groups and do not have reservation. Hence, securing good marks in school can only help in higher education and further in getting jobs. My uncle Bansidhar Mahanta, who is in the government service, persuades me to study well so that I can become an engineer. I know that if I will pursue my education in science stream, I will become an engineer. Therefore, I focus more on studies so that I can become an engineer whom my family dreams for”.

However, most of the parents are less enthusiastic in educating their daughters. The main purpose with which many of the parents across the social groups are motivated to send their daughters to school are linked with the idea of enhancing marriage prospects and further preparing them for future roles as good wives, mothers and also helping in the education of their children (Agarwal, 2000, Dreze and Sen, 2002, Jeffrey et. al. 2005, Saraswati, 1999, Subramanian, 2002.). Similarly, Bhattys (1998) argues that marriage is seen as the ultimate objective of girls' upbringing and hence no special consideration is given to the education of girls. The patriarchal and exogamous kinship system bring lower economic value of female education for parents.

**Jagyaseni Mahanta’s grandfather shares**, "I can give her all kind of facilities to make her study till she passes her Class X examination or more until a good proposal comes to their family. Her education will help them in getting good marriage proposals for her since we cannot expect that she will get a job as getting a job for us is an impossible task. We will provide more scope for her education not only because it will help in getting an attractive match with someone who has a government job and also because more education will mean less dowry. Good job holder groom will prefer marriage without dowry if the girl is educated and beautiful”.

Related to the education of his daughter, Bhagirathi Mahanta responded, "I would make my daughter learn till Class XII and afterwards, I will get her married after she attains the age of 18. In Mahanta caste, we have the system of early marriage. We are waiting until she becomes 18 years old since many rules and regulations regarding child marriage have come into the picture."
Girls, belonging to dalits, tribes and those who are living in remote areas, go to school but their educational aspirations are set by limits. As Velaskar mentions, “Girls may aspire to school and may also perform well in studies. However, parental motivations for daughters’ education are mostly defined by the cultural ideals of domestic work and marriage” (Velaskar, 2006).

Nrusingh Mahanta said, "My sister often encourages me to become a doctor. I have decided to study hard and become a doctor and I will make it". Further, the persuasion by his mother also inspired him. He also shared what his mother says to him, "We are poor. Education can only help us to get job. She often motivates me to go further and fulfil others’ dream".

Parental expectations are found to differ with socio-economic backgrounds of the families. Mahanta and Sounti children feel motivated and encouraged to study, which is influenced by the expectation of their parents and other family members. Even if they do not have adequate economic resources within their family, they are influenced by the professional and social position of their relatives or people in the neighbourhood. On the other hand, the Munda children do not have any role expectations since their parents are led by aimlessness, due to lack of adequate economic resources, social and cultural capital. Further, the education of girls is affected by the cultural and social norms of the community and perception of low future economic returns attached to it.

6.7. Language, Identity and Education

Odia as the mainstream language is used in schools as the medium of instruction by the teachers despite the presence of children, whose parents speak Munda and Santal language in their home and community settings. Despite the claim of the research that use of mother tongue is more effective in teaching and learning, Munda and Santal parents are in favour of using Odia language. They want that their children to learn Odia and English, which would offer them a sense of security and adjustment with the mainstream society. These parents consider that when their children will acquire these linguistic skills, one kind of cultural capital, it will lead them to future success and can get some sort of work, thereby converting the cultural capital to economic capital. Since there is little recognition for the mother tongue of these tribal communities in the educational and employment prospects, they are little judgmental about the use of their mother tongue in the education of their children:
Bhramar Munda: "My wife and I used to talk in Munda language whenever we discuss anything between ourselves but we rarely speak in Munda language when we talk to our children. What is the worth of knowing Munda language? If they will know Odia language, it can help them in getting works at outside world and can manage to adjust with people."

Bhola Munda (father of four school going children): "Knowing Odia or English will help them to get acquainted with many people. They can do something better in future. What will he do by knowing Munda language?"

Jeevan Munda: "There are no benefits of learning Munda language. We want our children should know Odia language so they can be able to know what is good and what is bad."

The discourse revealed by the Munda parents’ narratives show that symbolic capital and economic capital are their chief concern. Like formal education, family is the institution where certain kind of knowledge is taught as ‘legitimate’ language. Although both wife and husband use Munda language (their own mother tongue), they are very particular about the children's future. Hence, the need for inclusion and assimilation with the wider society influence their decision to make their children far from learning the Munda language.

Habitus is created over the course of collective history. It is the product of the internalisation of the structure of the social world (Bourdieu, 1989, p.18). Having internalised one's own, any attempt to change one’s habitus can be interpreted as an attempt to change one's identity (Chan, 2002). Munda parents have realised that learning Munda language will not provide them the scope of improved opportunities to move further in life. They consider if their child learns mainstream language, they can easily join in the labour market and also can cope with the outside world.

Teachers are of the opinion that one of the reasons of low performance of the Munda children is the issue of language, As Bernstein (1971) states lower class youth fail in school because they fail to master and use mainstream language, which he called elaborated code. On the other hand, the use of restricted speech code restricts their ability to communicate with others. Parent's language resource, which is one of the significant cultural resources, helps in the education of the Mahanta and the Sounti children as their parents speak the language, which is prominently used in the school. On the other hand, Munda language, being devalued in the mainstream culture or not being practised in the school, largely limit their access to content and resources used in
school. The findings echoed as many of the studies reveal that social class positions are reproduced in a manner wherein children’s language is valued and devalued in school (Ball, 1995, Cadzen, 1998, Riehl, 2001).

Munda children having seen their parents interacting in Mundari language are more habituated with Mundari language in their home setting. Munda parents shared that they prefer their children to learn Odia language and therefore, they do not interact with them in Mundari language. However, in many of the instances during home visit, it was found that parents consciously or unconsciously interact with their children in Mundari language.

The language of reading and writing being alien to them, the children find less attractive in the school settings. (Xaxa, 2011). Teachers use Odia language, which is the home language of Mahanta and Sounti children attending school. Most teachers find it challenging to help the Munda and the Santal children to perform better in class when parents mostly use Mundari and Santali:

One of the primary teachers told me, “I have not got any training in Munda or Santal language. We teach them in our language (Odia) but they rarely respond to us. Teachers who know these languages should be appointed so that children will take interest in study. They (Children) can be also happy to see that the teachers know their language."

Another teacher said, “In school, none of the students are able to speak clear Odia. Mahanta speak Kudumi language and Sountis speak their own version of the language. However, Mahanta and Sounti children were able to understand Odia language clearly as most of the parents and guardians are at least literate and communicate with them. But many of the Munda and the Santal students are not able to understand and also communicate very less in the classroom”.

With the schools not having a mechanism of educating the children in their own native language, children lose competency in their home language (Jhingaran, 2012) and often face challenges communicating at home. Some of the Munda parents also shared how their children ask them meanings of some of the Munda words. Munda parents mostly interact among themselves in Mundari language and do not possess basic literacy skills to teach their children in Odia. On the other hand, teachers do not have the basic knowledge of Mundari language to use as a link language to educate Munda children, or at least introduce them into basic levels of reading and writing at the early stages of schooling. As a result, many of the Munda children, as discussed
earlier, even at the end of primary level of schooling did not possess minimum reading and writing skills.

6.8. Parental Interaction, Control and School Discipline

School discipline is one of the debatable topics among the parents across the communities in the village. There has been the divergence of opinions regarding the mode of punishment. Many familial and community-related factors operate in the life of Munda and Santal children and when these factors are combined, it makes their adjustment and engagement in school tough. It becomes very challenging to leave these pervasive influences outside the operating style of the school. As discussed earlier, children are asked not to attend school by their parents as they have to contribute to the family income by involving themselves in the wage labour and activities to overcome the financial crises at home. Some of them also need to be absent from school as they have to look after their younger siblings who need care and vigilance as the parents go out for works for the whole day. Though school officials (teachers) have the knowledge that children remain absent in school due to these compulsions, these problems are unnoticed by the teachers and these children are punished. Children remain absent due to acute poverty and when the school authorities asked them to pay a fixed amount of money against absenteeism, it further complicated the problem of the children:

Gurei Munda (Mother of Raja Munda): "The teachers are asking for money at the cost of absenteeism in school. Sometimes, we engage those (children) in agricultural work because of our financial compulsion. In other time, it is up to them if they want to attend to school or not. We do not have control over our children. We are busy in our work from the early morning until late evening. Sometimes they go to school and sometimes they remain absent. When children make up their mind to attend school, they start asking for money, which they have to pay to their teachers. Since we have limited income, it is tough to manage money for such purposes. So, the children decide to attend school once they get the money which they need to pay their teachers for the cost of their absenteeism. It takes some days for us to give them money”.

Panchua Munda shared that his daughter who left school seven years back when she was in Class V, got married (She is a mother of two girls). He said,

"In her batch, students were asked to pay money for their absenteeism. When she was in Class V, she also had to pay money for the same. But it was not

31 Although there is no state rule of asking for money against their absenteeism, the school teacher has taken a preventive measure to stop absenteeism.
possible to arrange that much amount of money then. For this reason, she continued staying at home. She asked once and after that, she remained silent. Even I did not focus much on this aspect. Gradually, she discontinued.”

While the teachers in the school were asked about such kind of punishment, one of the lady teachers in the primary level responded,

“We do not have other option to persuade them to attend school. Since they are poor, if they will be asked to pay the amount at the cost of absenteeism, they will be regular in school. Parents will be sending their children to school with such fear that they have to pay the money”.

The rigid school timings, culture and expectation of attending school every day is contrary to the culture and ethos of the child rearing of the Mundas and the Santals. This is the reason for which Munda children rarely attend school. The similar observation was made by Sarangapani (2001), who reports in a study on Baigas, the tribes of central India, whose children remain absent from school and preferring to roam the jungle or hunt for crabs in the river rather than endure the monotony and the harsh comments of teachers that marks schooling. Like Baigas, Mundas do not have the system of beliefs of confining and limiting the freedom of the children and compelling them to do certain kind of work. There is the provision of maximum freedom for the child to decide his course of action in his day to day life Even they wish to enforce them to follow certain codes of conduct, parents being busy in their work from morning to evening, parents get less time to do the same:

Biranchi Munda’s mother shared that her two children came home late night after watching the television. She also said that both of her sons often visit one of the Mahanta families to watch television but they are allowed to watch after they do household work for them. Out of irritation, she asked me why I do not talk to these Mahanta families and persuade them to stop playing television as it distracts most of the children (Field notes, 17th June 2014).

When I told her, ”Why do not you stop your children from watching television? It was the duty of the parents to discipline their children”, She replied to me,

“How can you teach discipline to the children? Can you bind them in chains like cows or horses? Whatever they want to do, we let them to do the things” (17th June 2014)

Panchua Munda, who has a son and a daughter said, "Three of us were going here and there for work. Most of the time, we were on the field and were not able to
look after the children properly. So, both of my kids learnt whatever they wish to. Whenever they wanted to attend school, they attended”.

When I asked Panchua Munda, "What steps you have taken to ensure that the children attend school every day", he replied to me,

"Ghisaat Otaraa kari Tanku neiithantiki?" (Odia version)
"Would you expect that I will push and pull them every day to attend school?"

The school has its own set of disciplinary practices and expectations rather than something part of people's everyday life and culture. The school has no consideration for nature and belief system of the Munda families, who need education the most. Teachers are very much aware of the economic requirements of the families, for which they are not able to push their children to school. Still they punish them for being absent in school. On the other hand, the Munda families being accustomed to the belief of giving fullest freedom to children and allowing them to do whatever they like to do, which the mainstream schooling fails to consider. School, then, becomes a burden for them. The school's structured/routine practices do not have the scope to cater to the needs of the Munda children, who experience some freedom at home.

The exposure of working with adults at different workplaces also make the younger children accustomed to the conduct and behaviour of adults. Many children like Biranchi Munda, once they get an opportunity to work with older people, love to adopt adult lifestyles and start bunking classes. His mother said,

"Biranchi has bought a mobile out of his money. Whatever he earned, he spent on buying the mobile. After he bought the mobile, he is more connected to his mobile than his studies and communicating with parents. From last one month, he has not gone to school."

Parents across the communities do not prefer many of the systems of sanctions, rewards and disciplinary rules of the school. Parents also complained that there is no discipline in the school. Teachers, rather act to reinforce positive behaviour take recourse to some of the disciplinary actions and practices, which are detrimental to children's schooling. While many of the affluent parents choose to send their children to the right schools located nearby the village or schools at their relative's place, some Mahanta and Sounti parents, take extra care in the home. There are serious complaints that the teachers are not serious in their teaching and ask many of the children to be involved with some of the unacceptable behaviours.
Sankar Mahanta, one of the Guardian shares,


"Nowadays, the school restricts corporal punishment. So, children roam here and there even when the school activity continues. Teachers don't take interest whether students have come or not. Sometimes; they climb trees and also run in the playground during school hours. Teachers don't pay attention to these acts of children ".

The school's disciplinary practices largely focused on inspection of the cleanliness of the students. One of such practices is looking at their nails. The inability of the Munda children to cut their overgrown nails in time often resulted in punishment. Munda children are also often punished by Mahanta children, who are normally appointed as monitors in school. Even the teachers are silent over such scenes of punishment where none of the children except one or another Munda child is a victim. Teachers never question why only Munda children are the sufferer’s. The school has rituals and disciplinary control practices that largely perpetuate the marginalisation of Munda groups of the population. The findings echoed Morris's (2010) assertions that "poor and minority students obtain knowledge as well as certain ways of speaking, behaving and dressing from the community contexts for their survival and cultural participation while school require the different set of skills and knowledge, which poor and minority students lack. These characteristics hamper students' access to education."

6.9. Summary

This chapter explored how various factors at the intersection of home, school and communities affect school participation of different communities. I have discussed viewpoints of students, parents and teachers to reflect on how compatibility between rules and rituals of the home and school affects school participation. It was also discussed how gendered socialisation seems to influence girl’s life and they get less opportunities to focus on their studies compared to the boys. The chapter also highlights how the kind of child rearing strategies adopted by the parents influence access to education for different groups of children.

Among Mundas and Santals, parents’ low involvement due to their constant struggle for survival, affects the schooling pattern of their children. Having less financial resources, with no positive role models in their community, a large section of them are
de-motivated and in despair and are less positive that their children will emerge successful in their further academic career. The medium of instruction in home language versus the mainstream language also directly affects the school participation. Thus, we can conclude by saying that with the schooling pattern being alien to the culture, institutions, and traditions of weak and small size tribal groups such as Mundas and Santals, these children get fewer opportunities to learn and some of them drop out. On the other hand, the organisation, structure and culture of schooling, being the representative of mainstream culture, children belong to Mahanta and Sounti community, who are economically better-off and completely assimilated to mainstream culture benefit much in the school and thus, they have high chances to complete schooling. The gain from education and schooling is directly related to the social group's economic, political, social and cultural situations.

In the next chapter, I highlight on key issues that emerged from the three analytical chapters presented. Implications for policy and further research also discussed in the next chapter.