CHAPTER II

FOLKLORE AND PEDAGOGY

Folklore in general does involve a degree of nostalgia, but it can also provide us with a basis for understanding our society as a whole. Just as a marine biologist can investigate a whole ocean from a single drop of water ... Studying the traditions of children enables us to recognize the shared experiences of the human condition (Grider 1980: 161).

Folklore is considered as traditional as school is modern and contemporary. It is regarded as a largely informal way of knowledge transmission. However, A. K. Ramanujan viewed it otherwise and mentioned folklore as “formal”, which makes its forms more visible and discernible (Ramanujan 1989: 259). It was also been seen that folklore and pedagogy were correlated as educationists and folklorists shared many common ideas in nineteenth century Europe (Coe 2000: 20).

William Westerman in “Folk Schools, Popular Education, and Pedagogy of Community Action” opined that pedagogy becomes revolutionary not through mere content but also through methods and an engaged communication process and understanding of the folk is central to an effective pedagogical process. Engaged communication involves the equality in teacher student relationship, where both can participate freely and openly. Folk schools originated in Denmark, starting with the pedagogic intent of education for rural people but later on took the shape of a revolutionary pedagogy in Highlanders School of the United States (Westerman 2009: 541-561). The Danish Folk School was the idea of Lutheran Minister N.F.S. Grundtvig, who as a student of Norse mythology, developed pedagogic strategies based on the students'
actions, questions and their daily life activities to inculcate amongst the peasants the idea of a cultural and linguistic identity. He thought of one remedy, which “was a form of popular education not just for elites but for the peasants as well” as Grundtvig believed that “academic life tends peculiarly to lead bookish men into false paths unless it is continuously corrected by an education that comes out of the life and the work of the people” (ibid: 542). By the mid 1920s, these schools became examples of success and about thirty percent of the rural population of Denmark attended folk schools. The curriculum included instruction through and of the Danish language and involved an understanding of daily lived realities and social conditions. These were accomplished through the observation of real life situations and collection of data through field work. Thus pedagogy was combined with the actual lives of the people and a lot of time was spent in the fields to develop better manual, agricultural, and domestic skills. No books were used and the stress was on oral learning. K. F. Bugge mentions that Grundtvig’s theory involved three factors “arises from life”, “is living” and “aims at life” (ibid: 543).

Thus, in such pedagogic strategies, knowledge is transmitted from one generation to another and is related to everyday life activities. Grundtvig’s views were also reflected by Leo Tolstoy, who also felt that, “home conditions...the village games...are the chief foundations of all education” (ibid). This folk school movement became successful and many political and economic changes like the development of agricultural cooperatives, land reforms and democratic participation were seen during the late nineteenth century in Denmark.

American educators got influenced and were impressed with this folk schools model and visited Denmark. Such efforts were initiated by educators like Olive Dame Campbell who wrote a book in 1928 and also
started a school after her husband's name as 'John C. Campbell Folk School' in the Appalachians:

[The] folk movement in the mountains...seeks the recognition and preservation of all that is native and fine....We would like to have the people recognize the worth and beauty displace the inferior music that of their songs; we would like to have the singing of these songs encouraged in all the mountain schools and centers; we would like have them displace the inferior music that is now being sung there...The people have already begun to be somewhat ashamed of their songs; they need to have them appreciated by outsiders... (Whisnant 1995: 103).

However this concept was spread more widely in United States by Myles Horton. By spending a year in Denmark in 1931, Horton found that Danish folk schools were very close to the community. Horton wrote about the Danish Folk schools and Grundtvig’s thoughts and energy as something “which enabled him to strike out, almost single handed, against the economic and spiritual poverty that enslaved the people” Horton initially named his school as “The Southern Mountains School” in North Carolina but later changed it to “The Highlander School”.

There was a change in the development of folk schools from Denmark to United States, where Horton “introduced into his concept of folk school the express purpose of effecting political change in the region. This signaled a switch in the development of folk schools”. Highlander thus strove to be more revolutionary as this school trained students and trainees on labour organising and building unions (Westerman 2009: 545). Highlander’s curricular pedagogy had three main developmental factors - the first was idea of experiential education and the emphasis was given on agricultural fieldwork, cooperative economics and participation in the organising of labour. Second was cultivation of leadership as one of the strong and innovative elements. The third was
the incorporation of cultural activities, use of crafts and handicrafts. His first wife Zilphia Johnson Horton had a major role in incorporating cultural activities in the school. “It was at Highlander that “We Shall Overcome” was adapted by her in 1946 to become the anthem of an embryonic political movement; she adapted the words, slowed down the tempo, and provided accordion accompaniment” (ibid: 547). Thus it is seen that both schools started the education for rural adults to educate them basic skills and participatory democracy. Similarly Paulo Freire too developed pedagogy of educational relationships, where the “student’s life becomes part of the curriculum” (ibid: 548). It is interesting to note here that Horton and Freire agree on the “dialogic and dialectic nature of true education, where the teacher learns from the students, and that “believing in the people, but not in a naive way,” which according to Freire is “necessary” (ibid: 554). Westerman while comparing the folk schools and Freire remarks that in both, the educational philosophy was based where:

The participants were largely from peasants and rural classes. Educational praxis was experiential. Understanding of social reality. Synonymous words were used to describe the overall education: folk/Volk in the Germanic – speaking countries, and popular in the Romance – speaking ones…importance of language as an essential tool in the process of emancipation …the concept of orality was central to the work of Grundtvig and his followers, Horton and Freire…being able to formulate and give voice to one’s own thoughts and sentiments (ibid: 555).

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, the Swiss educationist who outlined his model of education in his book Wie Gertrud Ihre Kinder lehrt (How Gertrude Teaches Her Children), observed that the mother-child bond was important for the understanding of folk pedagogy. The relationship
between them as teacher and taught in an environment of simultaneous active engagement with daily chores was interesting as to the way such transmission of knowledge occurred (Coc 2000: 23-24). Friedrich Froebel, another educationist, the founder of kindergarten movement also felt that the mother-child relationship as the basis of all moral and social values in the child. He published songs and games which were based on the traditional culture of peasant mothers:

Froebel and Pestalozzi did not collect folklore and are not considered to be part of the history of our discipline. Yet they clearly based their educational philosophies and practices on their idealistic and sentimentalized view of how knowledge was transmitted within a peasant environment. They interacted and influenced people in our intellectual lines of descent and were simultaneously influenced by them (ibid: 25).

Froebel had two fundamental aims in his mind while planning the activities and materials of the Kindergarten which seemed “to be the seed thoughts” and they are – his conception of “mind as activity” and the child as a creative being and the pedagogy as a process of development in harmony “with nature, man, and God” (Hill 1908: 132). He believed that the children can best learn through play and he called these play materials as “gifts” and the activities as “occupations” and the occupations ranged from “clay work, wood carving, paper folding, parquetry, painting, interlacing, buttons, and perforating” and thus the play methods through the use of gifts and occupations help in “natural, unified development of the child” (Tan 1989: 116-117). The credo behind all such strategies “should be matched to children’s readiness to learn” (ibid: 115) for an effective transmission of learning and a pleasing environment that makes it possible.

John Dewey too believed that education begins at birth and an individual is a social individual and social factor cannot be eliminated (Dewey
1897:77-80). David R. Olson and Jerome S. Bruner in "Folk Psychology and Folk Pedagogy" mentions "Teaching and learning are no longer to be seen as two activities, causally linked - one knows X because one was taught X - but rather as one special form of sharing or coming to share beliefs, goals, and intentions - in a word, as a culture" (Olson and Bruner 1998: 10). They exemplify 'folk pedagogy' as a visible facet of everyday life:

Watch any mother, any teacher, even any baby - sitter with a child and you will be struck at how much of what they do is guided by notions of what children's minds are like and how one may help them learn, even though they may not be able to verbalize their pedagogical principles. Further- more, as we shall see, the differences between mothers, like those between teachers, arise from their different assumptions about the minds of these children. Their folk pedagogy, we shall argue, reflects their folk psychology (ibid).

**Humanising Pedagogy through Folklore**

Bruner in his book *The Culture of Education* in the chapter "Folk Pedagogy" stressed on the role of teacher where he believes that as a 'pedagogical theorist' one would take folk theories into consideration and would like to "compete with, replace, or otherwise modify the folk theories that already guide both teachers and pupils'. He meant by this that teaching is more or less determined by the previous notions, theories and implicit assumptions about the assumptions how children learn (Bruner1996: 46). He further mentions "once we recognize that a teacher's conception of a learner shapes the instruction he or she employs, then equipping teachers (or parents) with the best available theory of the child's mind becomes crucial" (ibid: 48-49). Jerome Bruner talks about the approach to the nature of mind as "culturalism", which "takes its inspiration from the evolutionary fact that mind could
not exist save for culture” (ibid: 03). For him culture is very important and it “shapes the minds of individuals” where:

... individual expression inheres in meaning making, assigning meanings to things in different settings on particular occasions. Meaning making involves situation encounters with the world in their appropriate cultural contexts in order to know “what they are about.” Although meanings are “in the mind,” they have their origins and their significance in the culture in which they are created. It is culture that provides the tools for organizing and understanding our worlds in communicable ways (ibid).

Culturalism, thus she says that the culture forms the working of mind and so in this way learning and thinking are always “situated” in a cultural setting (ibid: 04). This is an interesting theory of mind which is useful to education as it is “much more outside-in” as Bruner mentioned:

Without specification of resources and settings required, a theory of mind is all “inside-out” and of limited applicability to education. It becomes interesting only when it becomes more “outside-in,” indicating the kind of world needed to make it possible to use mind (or heart) effectively... Culturalism is much more outside-in (ibid: 09).

It is not possible to understand mental activities without taking into account the cultural settings and resources. Bruner feels that each culture has its own theories of folk pedagogy on “why people behave the way they do” (Nsamenang et al. 2008: 51). Resources as Bruner feels not only include ‘instrumental resources’ like ‘mental tools’ (Bruner 1996: 08), required for a young mind to operate effectively but folk implements or toys that bridges school with the learners’ cultural hinterland and freedom from prescriptive and time bound learning that gives cognizance to cultural and personal diversities and differences. In this way Bruner believes that such approaches treat education not to be:
...an island, but part of the continent of culture...Culturalism's task is a double one. On the "macro" side, it looks at the culture as a system of values, rights, exchanges, obligations, opportunities, power. On the "micro" side, it examines how the demands of a cultural system affect those who must operate within it...it is much concerned with intersubjectivity-how humans come to know "each other's minds" (ibid: 11-12).

Thus Bruner believed that by an active engagement with cultural forms, learning and imagining are facilitated. He identified four dominant models of learners' minds as models of mind and models of folk pedagogy, which are embedded in the cultural settings and these are:

1. Seeing children as imitative learners
2. Seeing children as learning from didactic exposure
3. Seeing children as thinkers
4. Seeing children as knowledgeable (ibid: 53-63):

The first model is following the adult by imitating and is the "basis of apprenticeship, leading the novice into the skilled ways of the expert" and the expert here in this pass on the skill through practice and as Bruner says:

An underlying assumption is that the less skilled can be taught by showing, and that they have the ability to learn through imitation. Another assumption in this process is that modeling and imitating make possible the accumulation of culturally relevant knowledge, even the transmission of culture from one generation to the next (ibid: 54).

The second model, seeing children as learning from didactic exposure. The acquisition of propositional knowledge, this model is seen as the traditional way of teaching, where teacher is regarded as knowledgeable and the student is supposed to be totally unaware. This kind of pedagogy is one way and is not "mutual dialogue", as Bruner mentions:
What is to be learned by the pupil is conceived as "in" the minds of teachers as well as in the books, maps, art, computer database, or wherever. Knowledge is simply to be "looked up" or "listened to." It is an explicit canon or corpus—a representation of the what-is-known. Procedural knowledge, knowing how to, is assumed to follow automatically from knowing certain propositions about facts, theories, and the like: "the square of the hypotenuse of a right triangle is equal to the squares of the other two sides" (ibid: 55).

This is similar to Paulo Freire's 'banking concept' where he feels that the expert believes in actively depositing knowledge into the minds of the docile students who are presumed to know nothing:

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits (Freire 1996: 53).

The idea of banking education symbolises the oppressive relations that characterise schooling which can also be compared to other structures of power and inequality in culture. Thus the oppressors are the ones who have power and considered to be superior and active and the oppressed are the passive. As Freire rightly feels that the education should be the practice of freedom rather than the practice of domination (ibid: 62).

Paulo Freire analyses the teacher-student relationship in and outside school fundamentally as "narrative" in character, where the teacher—"a narrative subject" and the students as "listening objects" (Freire 2009: 52). Narration leads the children to memorise the narrated contents. Here it is shown that students are like depositors or containers who fill
themselves with the facts and reproduce when required. In this the teacher controls knowledge and the students are just the recipients and the teacher is presumed to know everything and the learner is totally unaware.

The third model sees children as thinkers. The development of intersubjective interchange is the model which believed that the children can understand and it is not one sided pedagogical model as Bruner feels:

Such a pedagogy of mutuality presumes that all human minds are capable of holding beliefs and ideas which, through discussion and interaction, can be moved toward some shared frame of reference. Both child and adult have points of view and each is encouraged to recognize the other's though may not agree. They must come to recognize that differing views may be based on recognizable reasons and these reasons provide the basis for adjudicating rival beliefs (Bruner 1996: 56-57).

Bruner in this model projects that pedagogy is not through imitation or didactic instruction but it is through the “discourse, collaboration, and negotiation.” He further says that “knowledge is what is shared within discourse, within a “textual” community” (ibid: 57). Children in this model of pedagogy are regarded as thinkers who are capable of reasoning like adults. Here interaction between the teacher and the taught is highlighted and the model suggests in helping the students to interpret and understand and not just believe in factual knowledge. rather this is actually a model of mutual understanding (ibid). Freire too believed in the dialogical method. For him dialogue is the first step in education as he mentions:

Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot
between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming – between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them (Freire 1996: 69).

Thus through this approach both the teacher and the taught learn from each other and they become jointly responsible for the process of learning. Freire too like Bruner believed in interaction and communication as “without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education” (ibid: 73-74).

He emphasised on the dialogical relationship between the teachers and taught where both learn from each other. This approach does not believe in depositing of ideas and knowledge on the learners. Intersubjectivity in Bruner's model refers to “common understanding” which implies the child’s ability to “read other minds” and this starts with the infancy period in the family and is seen beginning with the mother child relationship, where both the mother and the child share joint attention on the common things. In these model children organise their learning, remembering, guessing and thinking. The “child’s own folk psychology becomes the object of study” and this explores the child’s own framework to understand better (Bruner 1996: 57-58).

The fourth and last perspective on folk pedagogy is seeing children as knowledgeable: The management of objective knowledge, states that “cultures preserve past reliable knowledge”, and that:

...teaching should help children grasp the distinction between personal knowledge, on the one side, and “what is taken to be known” by the culture, on the other. But they must not only grasp this distinction, but also understand its basis, as it were, in the history of knowledge (ibid: 61).

Learning is clearly related to the larger social world and pedagogical strategies is intrinsic in the transmission of folklore genres as
repositories of knowledge because "knowledge cannot be simply an abstract thought" but a "living document" (Dei 2010: 80). George J. Sefa Dei viewed that theory and practice cannot be separated and the "key to human survival is the ability of society to pass knowledge down through generations by cultural transmission" (ibid). Mahendra Kumar Mishra remarks that "Folklore is a stock of knowledge created by the community". This knowledge is very useful in a pedagogical way and "Folklore as a body of community knowledge and a mode of communication contributes much towards creating a culturally responsive curriculum" (Mishra 2009: 03). Pierre R. Dasen too believed that knowledge is gained through "informal education". the title he gave as he believed that "traditional education" sounds past education and the education which is not being practiced, but by informal education he did not mean unstructured and haphazard education (Dasen 2008: 25-26).

He too agrees with Bruner on the views that:

... schooling is only one small part of how a culture inducts the young into its canonical ways. education is not just about conventional school matters like curriculum or standards or testing. What we resolve to do in school only make sense when considered in the broader context of what the society intends to accomplish through its educational investment in the young (Bruner 1996: ix)

Dasen in his article has mentioned different studies on the impact of informal education:

Informal education is embedded in daily life, with teachers being relatives, but the responsibility for learning lies with the learners, their motivation stemming from the social contribution they are able to make and their participation in the adult community of practice. Observation and imitation are the main learning processes, and demonstration (without verbal exchange or questioning) the predominant teaching
procedure The maintenance of continuity and traditions is the primary goal of informal education (Dasen 2008: 27)

In one of the study in his article by Greenfield and Lave, three types of learning processes - trial and error, shaping and scaffolding were explained, where according to Piaget, trial and error process should lead to the "conceptual knowledge". In shaping, the teacher plays the major role as the learner's response is controlled and problem is organised in small steps as to avoid the errors and also correct responses are awarded. In scaffolding, the adult provides the support to the inexperienced or "novice" by intervention and at times even by taking over when some steps appear difficult to the learner. In this, the learner is helped in the beginning and then eventually the learner takes over independently.

Thus it is "an instructional process which always involves social interaction. It illustrates Vygotsky’s concept of a 'zone of proximal development'" (ibid: 27-28). Jean Piaget, Swiss psychologist developed an explanation of the development of thinking from infancy to adulthood. He proposed a theory of cognitive development through an orderly sequence of four stages of sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational and these stages are generally associated with specific age (Woolfolk 2004: 31). Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, Russian psychologist was a major proponent of "socio-cultural theory". He believed that "human activities take place in cultural settings and cannot be understood apart from these settings" (ibid: 45).

He was of the view that cognitive developments takes place through the interaction and conversation with the more able member of the culture, who act as guide and teacher so that the child is not alone in discovering. Similar concept of adult assistance was called 'scaffolding' by Jerome Bruner (ibid: 50). Zone of proximal development is the difference between what a learner can do without help and what the child can do with help and thus is the area where the child cannot solve problem
independently but can be successful with adult guidance (ibid: 52). These can be seen in comparison to the formal education. Indigenous education in Africa is very much prevalent even today. It has been hypothesised that "the most profound and most utilizable cultural learnings for most Africans, including the erudite, occur outside school, within African family traditions and peer cultures" (Nsamenang et al. 2008: 51). This has been discussed in ethno theories of developmental learning in the Western Grassfields of Cameroon of Africa, where "children's social worlds constitute a prerequisite condition for understanding their development" (ibid: 52). Learning is embedded in the culture as knowledge and skills can be acquired through participating learning at home or at society and in Grassfields of Cameroon education is embedded on family traditions, everyday routine and in all social activities as every culture have its "own folk curriculum of how children can become competent members" (ibid: 53-56):

Learning and role-taking are organized to conform to the
stages of life...the extended family, along with neighbours and
peers, is the primary sociological garden in which cultural
knowledge and responsibility training, sprout and flourish or is
stifled... as the first educators...parents are the source of
primary knowledge and cognitive skills (ibid: 58).

The philosophical systems of indigenous knowledge system are also
about social and moral conduct and these are conveyed in societal
modes of thought through folklore "to regulate and guide individual and
collective human action, thought, and behaviour" (Dei 2010: 80).
Ramesh C. Mishra conducted studies on tribal children of India and
came to similar inference, in the fact "that the abilities, which are
functionally salient in the cultural life of a group, are highly developed
and competently displayed in test situations by individuals who
negotiate their life in particular culture” (Mishra 2008: 154). Thus it is more important how to teach rather what is being taught:

Formal education, particularly schooling, should be seen as one specific form of cultural transmission, often lacking in cultural appropriateness; this problem could no doubt be lessened by searching for ways to bring schooling more in line with informal education (Dasen 2008: 43).

For this kind of pedagogic approach, folklore plays a crucial role as it expresses itself through culture. Folklore “... is born in culture’s womb. And, because of this, the study of culture cannot be fruitful and perfect without the study of its folklore” (Islam 1985: 14).

BEYOND ETHNOCENTRISM TO A FOLK PEDAGOGY

According to John Monaghan and Peter Just, Culture was the lens that helped to place in proper perspectives one’s experience of the world. Culture, thus becomes a part, rather an integral part, of us naturally. For Malinowski:

Culture is the integral whole consisting of implements and consumers’ goods, of constitutional charters for the various social groupings, of human ideas and crafts, beliefs and customs. Whether we consider a very simple or primitive culture or an extremely complex and developed one, we are confronted by a vast apparatus, partly material, partly human, and partly spiritual, by which man is able to cope with the concrete, specific problems that face him (Monaghan and Just 2000: 39).

Everyone, everywhere, tends to believe that there is only one best way to do things and to view the world- his or her own. According to Che-Mahzan Ahmed:

In a modern Enlightenment discourse, the term prejudice has a distinctively pejorative connotation. In Truth and Method, Gadamer suggested that prejudices were just 'pre-
understanding’, not as an unfounded judgment... Gadamer refers prejudices as *vorurteil*. The *vorurteil* provides anticipation for a new meaning. Here, what is new is seen in the light of the known past of familiarity. Gadamer mentioned that to be aware of one’s own *vorurteil* is a part of newness creation whereby one is able to assert the truth against one’s own fore-meanings. In this perspective, understanding requires the engagement of one’s own biases (Ahmad 2009: 37).

The field of education is no exception in the prevalence of ethnocentrism. Everyone, everywhere, tends to believe that there is only one best way to do things and to view the world—his or her own:

> It is well acknowledged that classroom discourse, the ‘micro-culture’, embodies and reflects the macro-culture just as much as education in general embodies and reflects social and cultural meanings. The seemingly ‘innocent’ classroom instructions transmit cultural meanings of what it is to be a child/student, how children/students develop, and what it means to learn (Zhao 2007: 02-03).

According to Cliff Goddard and Anna Wierzbicka, this ethnocentric bias can lead to the danger of our understanding of the “discourse practices of other cultures...if we view them through the prism of our own culture-specific practices and concepts” (Goddard and Wierzbicka 1997: 231). Melanie Davenport describes the situation in United States, where in the curriculum, dominant values are reflected and all students adapt to the dominant culture:

> Multicultural education today is often perceived as controversial because it is in fact a needed challenge to the hegemony of white European American culture in the U.S. school system. To create a more pluralistic society and correct the structural inequalities which perpetuate racism and other forms of discrimination, it is crucial to change the educational
system which reproduces these problems. To transform a society, the educational system must be transformed, which is necessarily a domestic issue (Davenport 2000, 367).

It is essential to overcome the problem of ethnocentric bias, which can be a great obstacle in our understanding of the discourse practices of other cultures. To avoid this, it is very important to introduce the approach of folklore in pedagogy. This would definitely help the students to know themselves properly and also help in analysing the similarities and differences as students cannot be considered in isolation. There should be a bridge between home and school life. This kind of education as Gloria Ladson Billings termed as "culturally relevant pedagogy". Culturally relevant pedagogy draws on students' home culture as a mechanism for helping them achieve success in school. It is basically using student's culture as a basis of learning. In her study of teachers of culturally diverse students, she described how some teachers did not stick to traditional approaches of pedagogy, their own pedagogical approaches motivated and encouraged learning. They capitalise on the students' home and prior culture and knowledge as a bridge to learn and adapt new content and skills:

Culturally relevant pedagogy rests mainly on three criteria, (a) Students must experience academic success, (b) they must develop and/or maintain cultural competence and (c) they must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order (Ladson-Billings 1995, 160).

Pedagogy will become culturally relevant when the adequate mutual respect is given to different cultures. James A. Banks describes multicultural education for this and the five dimensions of multicultural education for effective implementation in the schools. The five dimensions are "content integration, the knowledge construction
process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure” (Banks and Banks 1995: 152). Rachel A. Grant and Lewis Asimeng-Boahene in the article “Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Citizenship Education: Using African Proverbs as Tools for Teaching in Urban Schools” dwelled on the culturally responsive pedagogy with the “African proverb as frames for teaching African American students to become engaged local and global citizens” (Grant and Asimeng-Boahene 2006: 17). Proverbs in Africa have powerful impact on their life and thus could be described “as socially constructed systems of meanings and understanding, and philosophy that frame African living, values, world-view, and belief systems” (ibid: 20). African proverbs as they have given examples serve many important pedagogical aspects for children in the school education. Proverbs like: 

*Stolen things bring misfortune (Kenya).*

*Whenever a person breaks a stick in the forest, let him consider what it would feel like, if it were himself that was broken (Nigeria)* (ibid: 21).

Through such proverbs students can be educated and also be given understanding about the African way of living that shows them “to be good family members and good citizens” (ibid: 22). Proverbs related to health and good eating habits promote hygiene and manners amongst the learners:

*Health is the body of prosperity.*

*The doctor cannot drink the medicine for the patient*

*There is no medicine as active as good food* (ibid).

**The Role of Language in Folk Pedagogy**

Language is also an important aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy and the role of folk speech is important in such an approach. Dell Hymes emphasised that a “competent speaker calls for much more than grammatical knowledge” rather it is to be believed that it is important to
know “how to speak in culturally appropriate ways to different people about different things in different settings” (Goddard and Wierzbicka 1997: 232). Idiomatic compatibility is of utmost importance for effective communication in a learning environment, taking recourse to a register that is informal and draws upon local variations of words and phrases. Can act as a bridge between the language used within the family and larger community, which is a largely informal environment and the language used in textbooks, a predominantly formal register. There are different speech styles, which are culture specific as Goddard and Wierzbicka have mentioned about “variation in discourse styles” in five unrelated cultures of Japanese, Malay, Polish, Yankunytjatjara, Ewe (Goddard and Wierzbicka 1997: 231-257). For this, language is often the medium through which different discourses are conveyed. In Hawaii, at the end of the nineteenth century, the Hawaiian people were almost forced to an English language environment as the medium of instruction in schools was only English. The use of Hawaiian was legally prohibited in schools and administrative offices and also imposed the view that English would bring that kind of prosperity that Hawaiian language and culture could not. (Okazaki and Jennifer 2009: 11). If the indigenous children are taught through the medium of a language that is not their own language, then as Tove Skutnabb-Kangas mentions, it will not only “…prevents access to education” but “also be seen as language genocide” (Skutnabb-Kangas 1997: 04). Hawaiians was submerged in an English language environment where the use of their own language was detrimental to their survival and their psyche:

The disappearance of the indigenous language was not only a matter of the “free market economy,” but was beaten out of the people, both literally and figuratively. Indigenous language holders were prohibited from passing down their language to the next generation...this completely overlooks the sociocultural dimensions of language use.
historical causality of assimilation that prevented the transmission of the Hawaiian language (Okazaki and Jennifer 2009: 11).

When Hawai‘i became the 50th state of the United States in 1959, the colonisation was furthered. Then in 1978, Hawai‘i State Constitutional Convention put forth the proposal for teaching of the Hawaiian language, history and culture in all public schools and also proposed for the recognition of Hawaiian as an official language along with the English. The proposal was later implemented and this was seen as Hawaiian revitalisation movement (ibid: 11-12). Such situations are not alien to India, particularly the North East, where struggle for recognition of ethnic languages as medium of instructions goes on, and revival of cultural behaviour and artifacts is often seen as a deliverance from the oppressive restriction of legitimate cultural expressions.

Latin American governments in 1960s started developing educational programmes for indigenous people and over the period the models were modified but in all the models, prominent place was given to the indigenous languages. First model was executed during 1960s and 1970s. In this, indigenous language was used in the first few years of schooling to facilitate learning to the colonial languages that means Spanish or Portuguese. Many projects were developed based on this model. This phase was termed as “Transitional Bilingual Education”. Second model was developed during 1970s and 1980s, when indigenous groups demanded an up gradation and more access of the indigenous languages in the school. In this model, reading and writing were taught in the indigenous languages and Spanish was taught as a second language. This period was termed as “Maintenance Bilingual Education”. The third phase was of “Bilingual and Bicultural Education”, the third model was developed during 1980s to recognise both the culture and the language of the indigenous people, and this was
the first attempt to integrate indigenous culture in the curriculum. It was felt that the most of the efforts in this model was of the superficial aspect. Fourth model was developed during 1990s and is still continuing, which is "Intercultural and Bilingual Education (IBE)" (Gajardo et al. 2008: 200-202). In this they described that the culture is dynamic:

... this model promotes an education rooted in the culture of reference of the learners, but open to elements and knowledge from other cultural horizons... on a pedagogical level, this model emphasizes the need to go beyond a purely linguistic level! and to adapt the curricula, taking into account the indigenous skills and knowledge... the idea is to reinforce the indigenous languages and cultures as well as to create a new paradigm that would include both indigenous and Western knowledge (ibid: 202-203).

Susane J. Parez states about Peru's indigenous education as Peru being a multilingual and multiethnic country has forty two living indigenous languages, Spanish, and several immigrant languages but formal education plays a central role in the promotion of a Spanish-only policy (Perez 2009: 14). Though, in 1970, indigenous organisations contributed actively by claiming their right to an education based on their own language and culture and the first National policy on bilingual education stated that "bilingual education should be offered to children with an indigenous mother tongue or were incipient bilinguals in an indigenous language and Spanish" (ibid:15). This educational model is widely known as IBE (Intercultural Bilingual Education) and by 2000, this model was in use in seventeen Latin American countries (ibid: 14).

In Nepal too, as Iina Numela mentions in her article on "The Story of Elders in Mother Tongue Education in Nepal Built upon notes from my field journal" (Numela 2009: 21-23) that under Multilingual Education Program (MLE), which is a part of the Education for All (EFA), a
program jointly funded by the governments of Nepal and Finland, started in January 2007, where it is very interesting to see the role of community elders (Indigenous Knowledge (IK) holders) who were invited for story telling sessions:

Inviting the IK holders...was not only to show how local content/knowledges and language can be quickly and easily introduced in formal schooling in any community and connect the non- Nepali speaking children and the Nepali speaking teacher. It is also a celebration of the oral traditions that form the basis of the culture and traditions of most non- Nepali speaking peoples in Nepal. There is no reason why formal education could not embrace teaching methodologies that are derived from and respect the oral traditions of the community. Non Nepali speaking children will feel comfortable being taught in culturally appropriate ways and giving a place to oral traditions in the sphere of formal schooling will reinforce their value (Nurmela 2009: 22).

The Program had definitely shown the way to all non- Nepali speaking children and teachers that everyone can learn in their own language and can feel comfortable coming to school with their own culture and background (ibid). In this way it can rightly be said:

Folklore is an ideal tool for bridging the gap between language and culture in the classroom. By using folk and popular materials to illustrate or expand...students' attention can be drawn to broader cultural issues, including values, worldview, history, and even literature (Magliocco 1992: 451).

**Pedagogy as Performance**

It is interesting to note that most of the teaching in a classroom environment involves elements of performance on the part of both the students and the teachers. The improvisation in oral speech and the rhythm and style of the teacher in the classroom has great impact on the
children. If a teacher is reciting a poem in the classroom without any rhythm and modulation in the speech, the learning may not be interesting. Pedagogy thus is seen as performance in the classroom:

The classroom, with teachers and students engaged in the processes of education establishes culture. It becomes a practical place; a site in which diverse beings come together in order to engage and negotiate knowledge, systems of understanding, and ways of being, seeing, knowing, and doing. This negotiation occurs through social performance; engaged practices of relations and interrelations (Alexander, Anderson and Gaiegos 2005: 03).

They describe the act of teaching as a “performance event, as well as being a performative event - the difference and link is that teaching is “doing”, but it is also the repetitive act of doing that manifests its existential and practical presence” (ibid: 94). As Elyse Lanné Pineau mentions:

The claim that teaching is a performance is at once self-evident and oxymoronic. In casual conversation, the statement inevitably brings smiles of amused, if rueful, recognition from colleagues who have struggled to script the “well-wrought lecture”, hold the attention of a critical audience, improvise a participatory exercise, or dramatically land on a key point during the last seconds of a fifty-minute period. As a colloquial expression, the performance metaphor is readily acknowledged by seasoned educators who recognize that effective teaching often relies upon “theatrical” techniques of rehearsal, scripting, improvisation, characterization, timing, stage presence, and critical reviews (Pineau 2005: 15).

The classroom pedagogy is actually considered as performance, where the teacher plays various roles as actor, speaker, director and the children too interact in the classroom setting. While teaching and
narrating stories the teller uses different tricks, creates suspense, brings modulation in the speech to make the process of pedagogy interesting.

Folklore can add to overall enrichment and efficacy of pedagogic transmission:

Within the traditional study of language and literature, the word "culture" has often been used to designate the products and processes of the "Great Tradition" – the artistic and literary traditions of the European upper and middle classes. However, under the influence of the postmodernists, the definition of culture is changing, and the burgeoning field of Cultural Studies now includes aspects of popular culture such as popular literature and fashion. This approach to the definition of culture is in fact much closer to that long held by folklorists and ethnologists. To an ethnologist, culture comprises nearly every learned aspect of human behavior, from what is considered edible to gender roles to complex political systems. Within this intricate web, the folklorist is interested in those aspects of culture which are creative, expressive, and are transmitted informally, through oral tradition or by imitation, for example. The word "folklore" has been used to mean "the culture of the common people," and while this is partly true, much folklore is very broadly distributed across class lines (Magliocco 1992: 452).

Alice S. Horning in her article explains the teacher as performer in the class by narrating an incident about her teacher who while explaining the Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard, enacted the act by replacing the act of eating cucumber suddenly to pickle eating in the classroom, in a dramatic manner making the class to imagine the situation in the act (Horning 1979: 185). She remarks that:

The analogy between teaching and performance may provide criteria to meet the need for more precise and constrictive
teaching evaluation... it is important to note that the analogy is imperfect and does not precisely match teaching to any particular kind of performance, such as singing or acting... the analogy applies much more generally or indirectly to all types of performance (ibid: 186).

Teaching in the classroom involves lot of activities however it is also believed by Horning that “teaching as performance is not only a matter of form. It is a matter of contents, too” (ibid: 190). The stories told are not simply reporting or explaining rather are performances in a dramatic manner depicting events in a way involving the listeners and the teller and as Michael Owen Jones mentions that “a story, for example, is not a “text”, as in literature ...it is the entire performance” (Jones 1994: 02). Richard Bauman in his book titled Verbal Art as Performance developed this idea of verbal art as performance “based upon understanding of performance as a mode of speaking” (Bauman 1984: 03). The term performance has:

...has been used to convey a dual sense of artistic action - the doing of folklore- and artistic event – the performance situation, involving performer, art form, audience, and setting – both of which are basic to the developing performance approach (ibid: 04).

He further mentions that performance as treated as communication or “as a mode of spoken verbal communication consists in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence” (ibid: 11). This ability of communication depends on the “knowledge and ability to speak in socially appropriate ways” (ibid). Similarly, the teacher while communicating needs to keep this aspect in mind to make the performative act of teaching interesting and educative. It is basically the “display of competence” (ibid: 13).
NARRATING CULTURE INTO PEDAGOGY THROUGH FOLKLORE

Nadine McFadden feels that folktales are a "finger print of history" because through folktales customs, settings and origins of tradition can be found out. Folktales can contribute to "mutual cultural understanding" (McFadden 1991: 1097) In 1948, Conference of Churches at Oxford defined education to be:

the process by which the community seeks to open its life to all the individuals within it and enable them to take their part in it. It attempts to pass on to them its culture, including the standards by which it would have them live. Where that culture is regarded as final, the attempt is made to impose it on the younger minds. Where it is viewed as a stage in development, younger minds are trained both to receive it and to criticize and improve upon it (Majasan 1969: 41)

J.A. Majasan viewed that the above definition gives education a broader outlook in which it is believed that education is not only confined to the institutional learning rather values the training and learning of the youth in school less societies because folklore is the most appropriate instrument to educate and train youth to respect culture and still operate comfortably with keen dynamism as citizens of a technological age. It explains the common rules and teaches the etiquette of the society and thus it helps and directs the young to be able to acquire effectively with varying conditions of life (ibid). Folklore can be seen to be integral for non institutional learning environment, where modes of traditional culturally compatible transmission of life skills can be adapted to transmit contemporary learning by liberating it from the confines of the strictly institutional model. Folktales are popular in all the cultures. In Yorubaland, they are so popular that story narrating is tabooed during the day so as to make children do their other normal duties. It is said that anyone telling or listening to tales during the day will have a stunted
growth. The similarity is found in Indian society also where in different cultures it is tabooed to tell stories as in Punjabi folklore, it is said that if the story is narrated during day time then uncles and friends forget the route to their homes and would not find the way to get back. Most folktales are for entertainment but sometimes also have historical significance. They are mostly told to improve morals among children. Mostly folktales related to children are connected with discipline in order to make them form good habits. Such stories are short and depict how disobedient children suffer severely because of disobedience. There are tales explaining why the sky is so far away, why tortoise has a rough shell and such why stories which not only answer children’s queries but also make them attentive to many things and phenomena which they probably had not noticed. In a way, folktales have the effect of creating interest and knowledge about established customs and practices which also give insight to their own world of culture and folklore (ibid: 48-49). These folktales also emphasise on social norms. They are found quite interesting and mostly are used in primary and elementary classes. However, teachers and professors can also make use of these folktales in explaining literary concepts and aspects of language. Sabina Magliocco firmly believed that “teaching language is to teach about the culture in which language is spoken” and ascertained “folklore is an ideal tool for bridging the gap between language and culture in the classroom” (Magliocco 1992: 451). Folk and popular materials can be used to illustrate or expand on grammatical points and with the help of these children’s attention can be drawn to various cultural issues like values, history and literature. When using folklore in classroom as Jill P. May finds that folklore helps in understanding that “how literature evolved from oral traditions” and students may find similarities in the plots and themes of several stories but the language style and characterisation may
vary greatly. This will be able to identify that to study oral language and
diction; there is no one best method to orally deliver a message rather
speaking depends upon regional tones and phrases to convey a mood
(May 1980: 148-149). According to Cliff Goddard and Anna
Wierzbicka, explaining and interpreting such “culture-specific speaking”
is the task of “discourse and culture” studies:

It is a task which can be approached from many different
directions, using many different methods, but most scholars
agree that it goes beyond merely describing speech patterns in
behavioural terms. The greater challenge is to show the links
between particular way of speaking and the culture of the
people involved...can come from many sources,
including...observations of child- raising practices, the
proverbs and common sayings of the culture, semantic analysis
of cultural key words, and wider cultural analysis(Goddard
and Wierzbicka 1997 231).

Many stories are told in a very simple manner and use simple repetitive
verse and in addition there is a great sense of rhythm in them. Poetic
prose evokes a mood and imagination and sets a scene (May 1980: 151).
Folktales may contribute many words and phrases to speech and
literature. Oral tales are very good means which can be utilised with
young students to make them compare the fascination of many events
with the contemporary stories. The comparisons between the early
stories like Snow White and Three little Pigs where the endings deal with
the punishment of the evil persons to the contemporary stories of wife
beatings and violent murders. They can analytically compare that people
in contemporary times are also fascinated with brutal nature. However,
in most of the violent tales, innocents are saved and the messages
conveyed through these tales are generally positive (ibid: 150). Myths in
India have always been very popular and are used very frequently in day
to day life. In different folk-songs, myths there are descriptions about the origin of universe, agriculture, wildlife, trees and other living objects on earth (Ramachandran 2003: 35). Myths about valid knowledge like the origin of universe have no place in contemporary education. The linkage of folklore and institutionalised education is missing in the present times. As in the words of K. Kumar:

The distribution of opportunities for learning in a society is an important factor influencing both how ‘worth’ of a certain kind of knowledge is perceived or weighed and how knowledge that is regarded as worthy of being taught will be represented in educational materials. We can take for granted that the knowledge produced and possessed by groups whose access to education is poor will not be regarded as worthy of being taught in schools (Kumar 1997: 17).

The accessibility of folklore in daily life and wide diffusion of folklore is one of the reasons to introduce this in the classroom. The student encounters folklore in daily life much more than the products of literary and academic culture, since folklore is widely distributed and has analogues in many cultures like proverbs, folktales are found nearly everywhere. The usage of folklore is very common and most of the students can identify with it easily (Magliocco 1992: 454). Children who have an appreciation for traditional and folk literature is generally able to enjoy modern narrative more completely and the traditional binaries of folklore being opposed to or a substitute for dominant cultures can be countered. As Gramsci points out, folklore:

should not be thought of as an oddity or an eccentricity or as a picturesque element, but as something that is to be taken seriously and earnestly,” because it illustrates a “conception of the world and of life” (ibid 1992: 453).
Thus, Folklore has always been a nascent player in pedagogic transmission and played its part in developing and inculcating values and customs. The folklore which through proverbs, fables, folktales, myths is the source of local cultural resource knowledge “offers specific pedagogic, instructional, and communicative enhancements to learning outcomes for youth in contemporary school setting” (Dei 2010: 81). The imperative now is to enlarge its scope and bring contemporary areas of knowledge pursuit under its ambit, where folklore emerges from being contents in traditional narratives to a methodological paradigm that can accommodate diverse and newer areas of knowledge pursuit and transmission.


