Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE</th>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Our Learning Centre, Parajasila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Our Learning Centre, Ratapada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>About Our Learning Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>About Our Learning Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Our Learning Centre Katali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Lockdown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>About Lockdown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>About Our Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>About Our Village, Kutrujhiri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>About the Festivals Observed in Our Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>The Worship of Patrabudha in Our Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Chaity Parava in Our Village Katali</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aragamee Education
Annual Report 2020-21

A Report By Students
In India, specially in the states where the tribal population is relatively high, children from Indigenous communities in India are sent in large numbers to residential schools. There is a subtle form of coercion, as village schools in the tribal regions lack facilities and even adequate teachers. This coupled with Niti Aayog’s SATH E (Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital in Education) project to close schools with low enrolment in the states of Jharkhand, Odisha and Madhyapradesh, tribal parents are left with little choice for the education of their children. In Odisha reportedly 11,000 primary schools have been listed to be closed. A majority are in the tribal districts.

Education in the tribal districts has many challenges. Census literacy rates in these districts vary between 40% to 55%. Surveys on the ground, however indicate much lower rates with less than 25% having any ability to read or write in many villages, and many other villages having zero literacy. A large proportion of children are thus still first generation school goers. The parents of First generation school goers (FGSG) do not have school education. These children find it very difficult to take even the first step towards literacy and numeracy, as much of alphabet and number learning is taken care of by parents at home for second and third generation school children. As this home learning does not happen for FGSG, they have to struggle long and hard for acquiring the basic foundational skills in school. Tribal families are also by and large too poor to afford any private schooling or tuition for their children.

Another major obstacle is the language barrier. A very small percentage of Government teachers are from the tribal community. Thus in a large majority of tribal schools, the children cannot even understand what the teacher speaks. The Government of Odisha has an MLE (Multi-lingual Education) Cell. But the outreach of the cell is not even 10% of the total primary and upper primary schools in the tribal regions. Out of 11497 schools under the Department of School and Mass Education, and 1594 schools under the Department of Schedule Tribes and Schedule Castes catering to tribal children, the MLE programme is operational only in 1485 schools. In 2014 a Policy on Mother Tongue based MLE was developed by a team of experts headed by Prof. Ajit Mahanty. The main recommendations of the MLE Policy and Implementation and the Guidelines document were verbatim accepted by the Govt and notified in the Odisha Gazette. Now, however, the notified policy seems to be almost completely forgotten and the programme continues without much supervision, monitoring or development by the Government or OPEPA. Many teachers also express genuine difficulty in teaching effectively under the extremely challenging circumstance in a primary school classroom in the tribal districts. In many of the classrooms, there is extreme overcrowding. According to government reports, Koraput district has the highest number of single classroom schools at 241, and Rayagada has the second highest single classroom schools at 198 of all districts in Odisha. Both are tribal districts, coming under
Foreword

In India, specially in the states where the tribal population is relatively high, children from Indigenous communities in India are sent in large numbers to residential schools. There is a subtle form of coercion, as village schools in the tribal regions lack facilities and even adequate teachers. This coupled with Niti Aayog’s SATH E (Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital in Education) project to close schools with low enrolment in the states of Jharkhand, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh, tribal parents are left with little choice for the education of their children. In Odisha reportedly 11,000 primary schools have been listed to be closed. A majority are in the tribal districts.

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Many teachers also express genuine difficulty in teaching effectively under the extremely challenging circumstance in a primary school class room in the tribal districts. In many of the classrooms, there is extreme overcrowding. According to government reports, Koraput district has the highest number of single classroom schools at 241, and Rayagada has the second highest single classroom schools at 198 of all districts in Odisha. Both are tribal districts, coming under
Schedule V of the Indian constitution. School visits reveal extreme over crowding in primary schools in tribal districts, with teachers having to wait their turns for conducting class, because there are too few classrooms! Other schools have just one or two teachers to teach up to class V, with anything between 70 to 100 children in the school. How are teachers expected to manoeuvre under such circumstances with classes being multi-lingual and multi-grade, with scarce space for even normal movement?

The government sees residential schools as the alternative to all this and has given a lot of emphasis for a whole range of residential schools from the neglected Sevashram to the Kalinga model school, Ekalvya Model School to the Anwesha scheme at the cost of village schools. Neglect and closure of village schools is a gross violation of the Right to Education Act, the first line of which underscores ‘Every child of the age of six to fourteen years shall have a right to free and compulsory education in a neighbourhood school till the completion of elementary education’. (Emphasis by the authors)

On the other hand, children in residential schools face a range of problems, with extremely poor and inadequate food to exploitation by older students and teachers to violence to even sexual abuse. These are reported from private residential schools, as well as government residential schools. The stories from residential schools emerge year after year, indicating that measures taken by Governments to address the violence are proving inadequate.

This approach also fundamentally contradicts recommendations of the Kothari Commission, who advocated for a common school system with the concept of the neighbourhood school being central, to ensure equitable education to all children. These recommendations were incorporated in the National Policy on Education in 1968, and again in 1986 and its modified version in 1992 and have been approved by the parliament at least thrice. The basis of equitable development in some of the most advanced nations including the USA, Canada, several European countries and Japan has been the publicly funded efficient and universal school system.

Why are we not seeking ways and means to replicate what these nations have done, rather than repeating a history that has only brought despair to indigenous people in different parts of the world? While surveys and reports across the country show that we are still struggling with teaching children to read Agragamee School has successfully demonstrated a concept and approach to education for first generation school children that brings about a leap in learning outcomes in early grades, and also nurtures their creativity and cognitive development without children going to residential schools, or requiring additional tuition. The model has also been piloted in Government primary schools in 18 villages with proven success. Thus the model is replicable as well.

A Report by Students
NARRATIVE REPORT

THE CONTEXT

Seeking to address the poor levels of education amongst tribal girls, Agragamee began 3 schools for tribal girls in Padepadar and Adri Gram Panchayats of Kalahandi district and Kashipur Panchayat of Rayagada district. These schools helped below 20 years female literacy jump up from 0% to 85% in a matter of 5 years in 25 villages. In addition, it also established a model of education for first generation school children, that resulted in tangible learning outcomes, without stress and fear, and without tuition. This is indeed an achievement.

For most families education drains money in fees for private schools, as also for tuitions on top of it throughout the country. Lakhs, in fact millions of working class parents who put their child through school face this double whammy of school fees and additional tuition fees as children seem to learn neither in private schools nor in government schools. This is evidenced in the ASER – Annual status of education Reports, where half the children in Class V and one fourth of the children in Class VIII are not even able to read! This is also described in much depth in the Pratichi Report by Prof. Amartya Sen. The smarter parents admit their children to free Government schools, and then send them for tuition, saving at least some of their money. But in most cases, tuition fees are higher than school fees!

Through Agragamee’s model approach, first generation school children begin to read and write by the time they pass class II by just attending school. In Classes IV and V children are able to write stories, reports and essays, which are reflected in their newsletters, wall magazines, and the Students’ Annual Report. Most importantly, these children are full of self-confidence, curiosity and eager to learn. A pilot of this model taken up in 18 Government primary schools in three tribal districts helped reading levels go up from 4.7% to 83% in a period of 2 years.

When the lockdown was announced, Agragamee School came to an abrupt close. In response, Agragamee began learning centres in the villages through young Teacher Volunteers who had a basic minimum qualification of matriculation. They were provided basic training and TLM support, in terms of BB Boards, wall charts, and other basic needs. 19 teachers took up teaching in 18 villages. One was a large village, necessitating 2 teachers. The community provided teaching spaces like empty houses, some half constructed, or community centres, and in some cases school rooms as well. Yet the task has been challenging, and the volunteers have done wonderful work showing tangible learning outcomes within a period of a few months. Agragamee also took up a base-line student assessment to have a clear picture of where we were at the beginning. We are happy to say our volunteers were able to reach out to many more children than just those admitted to Agragamee School.

Teachers of Agragamee School on their part have done a great job of school visits, handholding, guiding, and taking care of practical needs through discussions with the community. Sharing their skills, developed and honed through long experience they have provided several insights and understanding to the teacher volunteers.

We are also immensely grateful for the support from different quarters, including, WIPRO Foundation, Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation, Dr. Chandrasekaran of Belgium, Dr. Purna Chandra Patnaik and Mrs. Gopa Patnaik of US, Dr. Hare Krishna Patnaik of US, Giving Circle of US, Dr. Ajoy Mohapatra of Germany, Prof. Sri Gopal Mohanty of Canada and a number of our friends and supporters like Dr. Aurobindo Behera, Prof. Durga Prasad Mohapatra, Mrs. Sindhubala Choudhury, Mr. Bidhu Bhushan Mohanty, Dr. Prasanna Kumar Sahoo, Prof. Satya Prasanna Dash, Mr. Prabhat K Bhattacharya, Prof. Chandrasah Choudhury and many others who have helped us stand by the tribal community in the time of their need. Agragamee staff also donated generously to run the Learning Centres.

The effort and the experience of Learning Centres were really challenging, as we had to very quickly adapt our approach from one school, organised classes, and schedules to a situation which had multi-levels of challenges, beginning with building teaching skills to our edu-volunteers, to dealing with extremely
CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic led to an abrupt closure of schools with children and parents in different tribal regions left wondering what will happen to studies. The situation became quite acute as there was no access to networks, and most people could not afford mobile phones for their children. We began a dialogue with the parents of Agragamee School students on what could be the alternative, in different village. Many parents suggested that it would be good if we revived the old model of village night schools. Many re-called the night schools run by Agragamee almost 20 years back. Those days of reading, dialoguing and learning with lantern lights dispelling the darkness of the night and of ignorance was still vivid in people's minds, as many were themselves the alumni of our night schools!

These centres had reached out to the community, and had adults, youth as well as children participating in the process of creating knowledge. Much of the learning was through discourse and dialogue, as the village situation was analysed, and concepts such as equality, freedom, and human rights were introduced, into a community which had little memory other than that of oppression. Alongside children, adults also learnt the 3's and picked up bookish knowledge as well. Many students from those night schools were now parents and remembered how those evenings had helped them with school education, pursue further studies, counter indebtedness, and know about minimum wages, etc.

Educated youth in the village came forward and expressed their eagerness to share their learning and help children of their community. Considering everything, Agragamee decided to begin evening Learning Centres, with the help of educated youth who could be trained as teacher volunteers in the villages. Our initial idea was to cater to children of Agragamee School. But how could one leave out other children who were eager to learn. So the Learning centres grew, encompassing 35 to 40 children in each village. Children were taught to maintain physical distancing, and hygiene, and taught about the pandemic. Washing hands, wearing masks when they stepped out of their villages, quarantine of migrants, importance of testing, and the symptoms were all described, and in 10 villages, Agragamee learning centres were started. The visibility in 10 villages, attracted people in neighbouring villages, and eventually Agragamee opened a total of 18 Learning Centres in 17 villages.

TRAINING TEACHER VOLUNTEERS

A dialogue was initiated in the villages for selection of youth who could be teachers. It was felt that it would be best to have youth from the village itself for the learning centres. This would take care of logistics, and also enable children to learn from somebody whom they knew and felt secure and comfortable with. Youth selected as teachers in the learning centres were put through orientation and training programmes so that they can pick up the basic techniques for quality education. The training was provided by experienced teachers of Agragamee, to help them understand and adapt the methods and approach developed in Agragamee Schools by Agragamee. The training has been participatory and interactive helping teachers understand and analyse the school situation, and the needs of children. Many of the youth felt that only fear would make the students learn. The interactive training approach taken up by Agragamee helped teachers understand the negative impact of teaching through fear and abusive methods, while also providing them several alternative methods and techniques of teaching and communicating.
Table I: Teacher Training Provided by Agragamee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF TRAINING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7\textsuperscript{th} to 9\textsuperscript{th} May, 2020</td>
<td>All Teachers gave the Introduction and brief details about the educational situation of their respective villages. Introduction of the topic “Kau Dake Kaa” was taught to the teacher. The action song was practiced to make learning easy for the students. The proper use of the Blackboard Teaching was showed to them. They were trained how to deal with the students with love and affections.</td>
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<td>30\textsuperscript{th} to 31\textsuperscript{st} May</td>
<td>Introduction and aims and objectives of the programme, Importance of reading and literacy. The advantages of education were discussed with examples and case studies. Qualities like confidence, self understanding, leadership qualities and speaking skills in front of the people were discussed with examples. Teachers trained in basics of whole language approach, and use of workbook primer Kau Dake Ka. Practical problems in the different learning centres including lighting, space for the children etc. were discussed.</td>
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<td>13\textsuperscript{th} to 15\textsuperscript{th} June</td>
<td>The teachers were asked about the students like how they are studying, Is there any improvement? Are all children coming to learn there or not? They gave their feedbacks about their respective villages with student strength. They listed the needy items like TLMs and electricity. The problems that they were facing while teaching was solved and all doubts were cleared. The approach throw which students should be taught was explained. They gave the feedbacks of the villagers about the learning centers. The dignity of a Teacher’s Duty towards the students was summarized.</td>
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<td>21\textsuperscript{st} – 22\textsuperscript{nd} June</td>
<td>A Brief Introduction of the Teachers was done. The training programme was initiated with all the precautions taken under the crucial moments of the pandemic COVID-19. They were firstly taught about the basics like Paragraph Sense Grouping, New Word, Jumble Words and Formation of Sentences from Words. These were taught to make every student understand. All the problems of the teacher like Deficiency of Study Materials, No Place for Study, Lack of Parent Support and Deficiency of the Electricity were discussed and told them how to handle these situations.</td>
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<td>27\textsuperscript{th} – 29\textsuperscript{th} June</td>
<td>Analysis of the previous training class was thoroughly followed. They were taught how to teach the students through play way methods with games like Dice, Rangametry, Name Card and use of zero. Making of words from Alphabets with activities and pictures was showed to the teachers. Bingo Games was played. Teachers were trained how to teach help student to write through drawings and were taught how to perform Division as well as how to teach Mathematics by singing.</td>
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| 8\textsuperscript{th} – 9\textsuperscript{th} July | The teachers were asked firstly three questions  
1) How can I be an Ideal Teacher?  
2) What are the qualities of an Ideal Teacher?  
3) What should be done to educate my villagers?  
The teachers were asked to give a demo of how to teach the topic “Kau Dake Kaa” on blackboard. The methods trained by Agragamee were followed. Multilanguage Teaching was done by known to unknown methods.  
The teachers were taught how to prepare Monthly Report and Lesson plan.  
Finally some feedback questions were asked. Those were:  
• What is the difference between Government School and Night Class?  
• How can the children be educated? Discuss it.  
They gave good explanations to these questions. |
All the Monthly Report and Lesson Plan were collected from the teachers. They said about the situation of the village. They said whether students were showing interest or not and the student strength is decreasing or increasing. They told about the problems while teaching as well as the problems of the students while learning. They were asked how they can know that students were learning everything. They were taught how to check the understanding level of the students and how to group the students in four levels. Those levels were:

- **Level-1**: Students with good reading and understanding skill
- **Level-2**: Students with reading skill only
- **Level-3**: Students with low reading skills
- **Level-4**: Students who are not able to recognize alphabets

Dealing with the four leveled students was taught. The qualities of a Good Teacher were listed. The teacher revised Play Way Methods that can be used in class, Proper Use of TLM in Mathematics and Language, Multilanguage teaching and Preparation of lesson plan.

### LEARNING CENTRES

Youth volunteers, with a minimum qualification of matriculation are trained in Agragamee by experienced teachers to run the Learning Centres for children in the primary age-group as also drop outs. It is a challenging task, as with almost no experience of teaching, they take up multi-grade, multi-level and multi-lingual teaching, in village spaces provided by the community. The training helps the teachers attract students and engaged them through activities, action songs, word games and written and oral exercises. Teachers are taught to manage the class by forming groups, and encouraging children to learn from and teach each other. Yet, it is a difficult challenge, as the teaching is in the evening, and only in some cases have the use of school rooms been made possible by a pro-active School Management Committee. In other cases, village members offer portions of their house. This means, that there is no blackboard, and often times un-plastered walls make it difficult to hang and use BB boards, and also lead to reduced lighting. Agragamee has provided solar lanterns in those schools where lighting is a problem. In other villages, where there is electric connection, the learning centres have lighting. Given these limitations, the youth volunteers do a commendable job with great enthusiasm and commitment. Agragamee teaching staff monitor and hand hold the volunteers, providing ideas, support, and village mobilisation efforts to ensure effective running of the centres.
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A Report by Students

Mathematics and Language, Multilingual teaching and Preparation of lesson plan.

Level-4: students who are not able to recognize alphabets
Level-3: Students with the ability to read and write only
Level-2: Students with reading skill only
Level-1: Students with good reading and understanding skill

BASE-LINE STUDENT ASSESSMENT

A base-line student assessment was carried out in all Learning Centres. The tests in language and mathematics assessed basic skills the students came with, so that, we could have a measure of the impact over time, as also have clear picture of the learning needs of students of different age-group.
The questions tested the abilities of the students progressively from simple to more complex, assessing the ability of the students to decipher letters, words, pictures and read and write in language. Thus a student who got more than 80% in language is able to read. In mathematics the test assessed the ability of the students to recognise numbers, and order them from big to small and vice versa, and do simple additions, subtraction and multiplications. It was found that only about 42% of 13 year olds could read. In mathematics, the scenario was much worse, with only about 16% of 13 year olds able to do multiplications. Number recognition was also a problem faced by a very large number of children. In all 653 students in the age group of 6 to 15 years were assessed. The number of children in 14 and 15 years age group was too small to give a significant result.

Fig. 1: Base-line students Assessment
TEACHING LEARNING MATERIAL

Teacher Volunteers are provided with sufficient Teaching learning material to help them have active participation of children, and also support their teaching. The Kau Dake Ka wall hanging was designed so that teachers could carry out exercises using the wall hanging. The wall hanging in keeping with the approach and method of Agragamee helps learning through lively pictures, and songs. It encourages the learner to immerse in the subject matter, whether a song, or picture or word exercises, and enables the child develop an idea of phonetics through language, and word usage, rather than memorising alphabets. How to use the TLM is an integral part of the training for teacher volunteers.

CONCLUSION

**Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains;**

Jean Jacques Rousseau

Can we think of breaking these chains? There are perhaps no stronger and more agonising chains of bondage and slavery than hunger!! A tribal child in South Odisha is born into a situation of hunger, with parents who have suffered chronic and generational food deprivation. And so one needs to ask, is a tribal child even born free? Mankind, despite all the advances in science and technology, despite all the glorious discoveries of the earth and the universe, has not been able to ensure freedom from hunger for every one of his fellow beings.

So what are we doing, talking about education? In Agragamee, we feel one of the root causes of hunger is lack of quality school education, which leads to the lack of the ability to gain necessary and functional knowledge and, information for oneself. For example, the information about what is written in a cheque submitted to a bank for withdrawing cash, or information about the MRP (Maximum retail price) or the expiry date of a product, specially medicine, and so many other things, including knowing weights and measures when one sells their products, knowing your constitutional rights, etc. In this the information age, even as a lot of people acquire mobiles and smart phones, which they can hardly use beyond seeing movies, listening to songs, and dialling numbers of relatives, not even having the ability to know is a huge cause of bondage, and exploitation.

In Agragamee, we seek to provide an education that liberates from this bondage through the learning centres that are open to all. The method is learner centred, and teacher training focuses on helping the teacher understand the approach and method, rather than memorise techniques. It encourages learners to explore the written and print word through what they know, fun games for words building, words ending etc. In maths, the Agragamee approach takes learners through the mathematical context of their world, helping them realise how much they would be earning, if they didn't get exploited, helping them understand the value of their labour, and introducing them to real life puzzles. All this forms the learning, as also part of the community mobilisation, as more and more people get attracted by the fun in learning, and join.

Would this education, liberate the poverty stricken tribal community from the bondage and trappings of hunger. Would this education help tribal people to come into their own, and become full fledged citizens of a free India. We firmly believe so, as the constitution of the country guarantees liberty, equality and fraternity, and we are committed to helping every human being achieve that.
Because of the lockdown, all the shops and schools closed. So our teachers went to different villages to know how children can learn. They asked Santoshi Didi to run a night school in our village. Santoshi Didi started a night school. All of us went to study in the night school. The younger children see the pictures and write from Kau Dake Ka. When we read our books, if we do not understand any words, we ask Santoshi Didi. In the Learning centre, we learn language, maths and environmental science. I go to the learning centre everyday. I have learnt much in the learning. Our learning centre Didi teaches us very nicely. She asks older children to stand up and read aloud. She writes out the names for the little children, and asks them to copy it. Once we have all finished reading, she explains the lesson to us. Then we write the question answers and show it to Didi. We go to the Learning Centre at 4.30 in the evening. Then Didi takes our attendance, and makes a phone call to Guruma.
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and reports how many children have come. We learn division, multiplication and LCM and HCF. When our studies are over, we have singing and dancing, and then we go to school. Why did we start a Learning Centre in our village? The reason is there was a lockdown due to the corona virus. So we started a learning centre in the village. In the learning centre, we also write out English words dictated by our Didi. On Saturday, we have drawing class. We see pictures, and write stories, and answer questions, on the story, and show it to our Didi. Boys in the village also come to study. There are three levels in the learning centre. The Kau Dake Ka book is taught to the first level. The Shiksha Kendra is located in the community centre of the village. Every Sunday, we clean it with cow dung and water. Every evening, we study in the Learning Centre, and go home at 7pm. We study seated on the floor in the Learning Centres. Didi teaches us very nicely. She helps the younger ones.
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A Report by Students

Our school is called Mukta Gyana Kutir Agragamee Vidyalaya Kashipur. It is located in Kashipur Panchayat of Rayagada District. Our village is Ratapada, my name is Rupuni Jhodia.

After the lockdown, the schools, shops and markets all closed. Because of that, our teachers went to every village and conducted meetings, and told Koita Didi to start a night school in our village. So Koita Didi started a night school. The night school runs in the veranda of the government school. That is why, all the children in the village go to study in the night school. We go to the night school at 5pm, and return at 7pm. Koita Didi teaches us songs, games, stories and also dance. Koita Didi comes to school everyday with attendance register, text book, pen, chalkpiece and blackboard. We see Koita Didi going to school, and take our notebooks, and books and follow her, and also call out to those who are late to hurry up. Then she takes the attendance. Koita Didi makes us sit according to our class groups class I, Class II and so on in the learning centre. For children of Classes I and II, Koita Didi writes out poems from Kau Dake Ka book. Children go one by one to the blackboard and read it. Then she writes out text from our language book on the blackboard, and we also go up to the blackboard and read it out. Then we do the question answers from the book, and show it to Koita Didi. After that, she writes out the arithmetic problems from the maths text book in our notebook, and we solve the problems and show it to her.

Rupuni Jhodia, Class-V, Ratapada
Our school is called Mukta Gyana Kutir Agragamee Vidyalaya Kashipur. It is located in Kashipur Panchayat of Rayagada District. Our villages is Ratapada, my name is Rupuni Jhodia. After the lockdown, the schools, shops and markets all closed. Because of that, our teachers went to every village and conducted meetings, and told Koita Didi to start a night school in our village. So Koita Didi Started a night school. The night school runs in the veranda of the government school. That is why, all the children in the village go to study in the night school. We go to the night school at 5pm, and return at 7pm. Koita Didi teaches us songs, games, stories and also dance. Koita Didi comes to school everyday with attendance register, text book, pen, chalkpiece and blackboard. We see Koita Didi going to school, and take our notebooks, and books and follow her, and also call out to those who are late to hurry up. Then she takes the attendance. Koita Didi makes us sit according to our class groups class I, Class II and so on in the learning centre. For children of Classes I and II, Koita Didi writes out poems from Kau Dake Ka book. Children go one by one to the Blackboard and read it. Then she writes out text from our language book on the blackboard, and we also go up to the blackboard and read it out. Then we do the question answers from the book, and show it to Koita Didi. After that, she writes out the arithmetic problems from the maths text book in our notebook, and we solve the problems and show it to her.
My name is Lipi Nayak. My village is Kumbhasila, block Kashipur, JilaRayagada. I study in MuktagyanaKuitr, in Class V. Due to the Corona Virus, there was a lockdown all over Bharat. Because of this, we were asked to study in the learning centres by our school. My teacher, called Bini Didi and asked her to teach in the Learning Centre.

About Our Learning Centre

Lipi Nayak, Class-VI, Kumbharsila

Bini Didi agreed. She came to our school and took training for five days. And then she came and told us that Kanaka Guruma had told her that all children should come to the Learning Centre by 4pm. From that day, we have been going to the learning centre to study.
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Bini Didi agreed. She came to our school and took training for five days. And then she came and told us that Kanaka Guruma had told her that all children should come to the Learning Centre by 4pm. From that day, we have been going to the learning centre to study.
We went to the centre, and Bini Didi came. She asked us all to stand. We all stood up. She asked classes 1 and 2 to sit together in a circle, classes 3, 4 and 5 to sit together in a separate circle, and likewise for classes 6 and 7. Then Bini Didi taught us in BODMAS Formula. She taught mathematics to children of Classes 3, 4 and 5, for classes 1 and 2, she taught songs and sometimes drawing. One day, all our Guruma came, and gave masks to every student and asked who all come to the learning centre everyday. We said we all come everyday.
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We study in Bini Didi's house. I like Bini Didi very much, as she makes every student understand nicely. All of us study very nicely, and have also learnt many songs and dances. I like the way Bini Didi teaches, and makes us understand. One day, it was raining heavily. On that day we just had song and dance competition, and went home after the rains.
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My name is Jamuna Mjahi, Village, Kuturujhiri, Maikanch Gram Panchayat. My School is Mukta GyanaKutirAgragamee, Kashipur. From March the Corona Virus caused all the schools and shops to close down due to the lockdown. Everybody returned to their homes. After some days, our teachers from Agragamee School came and told Bhagwati Nani to teach, so that children could study. Bhagwati agreed. One of the members of our village said the children could study in his house. So all of us cleaned a place for the learning centre, and began our lessons. We study from 4 in the evening till 8. Every few days, Our teachers from Agragamee come and see how the learning centre is running, and also to guide how lessons should be taught in the learning centre.

Language, Mathematics, English, and songs and dance are taught in the Learning centre. Bhagwati Didi asks us to read and calls out words from the books for us to make sentences. She also teaches us addition, substraction, multiplication and division. She teaches us very nicely. She teaches the little girls their names, and words from the Kau Dake Ka book. For the older children, she weites on the blackboard, and asks them to read. Everybody reads in turn. We also do action songs. She calls out words in English, and we write it down.
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The little ones also learn to make sentences from the words in Kau Dake Ka. She teaches us action songs from Kau Dake Ka and other books. In the Learning centre, the teaching is very nice. As the school is quite far from our village, Giridhar Majhi of our village have provided a room from his house. We have cleaned the room and study there.

We study from 4pm to 8pm. 31 children of different levels study in the Learning centre. Agragamee teachers came and grouped us, we come everyday to study. The learning centre Didi teaches us very nicely helping us learn new words, and make sentence from them.
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Our village is Katali, in Maikanch Gram Panchayat of Kashipur block. In March, the corona virus lead to the lockdown of the entire country. From that day, we didn’t have school. Our teachers had a meeting, and told us that we shall have a Learning Centre so that children can study. Then Kanaka Guruma told the people in the village that Susheela Didi would be our teacher. Everybody agreed. In the same way, they went to other villages and had meetings. They also selected teachers to teach in other villages. Susheela Didi began to teach us from Ist May. Susheela Didi began by asking us who could write their own name. She then taught those who didn’t know to write their names. She asked us to read the language book. We read the language book.

Our Learning Centre Katali Munni Majhi, Class-V, Katali
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A Report by Students

Susheela Didi then made us sit in a circle and we sang songs, and danced. Susheela Didi divided us into four groups. Many people come to see us as we study in the evenings. Everyday, we go to study at 4 in the evening. We study till 7 o'clock. On Saturdays we do drawing. We all go together to study. When the school is finished, we go home.
Susheela Didi then made us sit in a circle and we sang songs, and danced. Susheela Didi divided us into four groups. Many people come to see us as we study in the evenings. Everyday, we go to study at 4 in the evening. We study till 7 o’clock. On Saturdays we do drawing. We all go together to study. When the school is finished, we go home.
I am Mamata Naik, Class V.

Because of the Lockdown myself and many of our friends both boys and girls are just unable to attend the school. The Agragamee School Guruma and Sir (Joint-Director, Vidhyaji and Director, Achyut Das) guided a Sister of our village to start a Night School Learning Centre in our village. They also distributed oil, soap and mask. Some other children from our village also attend the Learning Centre. The farmers are unable to grow and buy vegetables. During the lockdown period our villagers were unable to go to any other village. But, as the lockdown was lifted the people are able to visit their relatives and are able to return home after staying there for some days. The Corona Virus arrived on 19th March 2020 in our country. During the lockdown period I used to collect firewood being in the village. Being at home at this time I was managing different household activities like processing of paddy, ragi, cooking, fetching drinking water from the tube well.
I am Mamata Naik, Class V. Because of the Lockdown myself and many of our friends both boys and girls are just unable to attend the school. The Agragamee School Guruma and Sir (Joint-Director, Vidhyaji and Director, Achyut Das) guided a Sister of our village to start a Night School Learning Centre in our village. They also distributed oil, soap and mask. Some other children from our village also attend the Learning Centre. The farmers are unable to grow and buy vegetables. During the lockdown period our villagers were unable to go to any other village. But, as the lockdown was lifted the people are able to visit their relatives and are able to return home after staying there for some days. The Corona Virus arrived on 19th March 2020 in our country. During the lockdown period I used to collect firewood being in the village. Being at home at this time I was managing different household activities like processing of paddy, ragi, cooking, fetching drinking water from the tube well.
I just didn’t find anything interesting during the lockdown period. It destroyed the dreams of all the people. Everybody was very sad. The boys and girls also couldn’t go to schools, colleges for their study and to office for their other requirements. But, as the lockdown was lifted the senior friends are able to attend their colleges. I myself and four of my friends have come to the Agragamee School to attend the Training Programme. Children from other villages have also come to the Agragamee School. I feel very glad to participate in the training. We found in the news that people in all villages had been lighting candle in their home respectively on the lockdown day to ward off Corona virus. Some people just couldn’t grow any vegetables and other crops due to lockdown. All the mothers from our village
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A Report by Students

Our mother also gave one Rupee coin to each of her nieces. We couldn’t celebrate Annual Function in our Agragamee School because of the lockdown. We were also asked to take precaution by wearing masks. Old men and women were also given four months of Old-Age Pension with a total of Rs.2000/- each. Three months of the PDS rice and Cooking Gas was distributed free of cost in the villages. The Corona Virus has spread from China. I don’t find anything interesting because of these restrictions imposed on us for the lockdown.
A Report by Students

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The Corona Virus first came from Wuhan in China. From there, the Virus spread to other countries and States. All the offices, Schools, Colleges and Universities were closed. We conducted a meeting in the school. The school teacher told us that we should not come to school from that day onwards. All schools closed down. The School Children returned home. We were told that Corona Virus is an infectious virus, which means it can spread from one person to another. Our Guruma (Headmistress) guided us to wash our hands in soap and to wear masks while going out of our homes. They also distributed masks to women, children and old persons in our village.

When our dress, footwear, Sari etc. got old and torn we couldn’t get any of those items to purchase. Buses, trains and airplanes all were stopped. There was no vehicle travelling on the road. The people didn’t go to weekly market and if anyone went there then the police would beat them for violating lockdown rules. That’s why...
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the people were afraid to go to the market. If any clothes got old and torn off new clothes weren't available in the market. The School Children were distributed rice and money allowance due to Corona Virus during the Lockdown. Electric Bulb, PDS rice and Dal were distributed at the Gram Panchayat Office. The hospital, Police Station, headquarter offices weren't closed due to Corona Virus. The hospital is not closed for extending treatment to treat the people. There was day and night police patrolling to keep watch on any people travelling on the road. The Govt. distributed the Old-Age Pension to the old persons of the village. The migrant workers from villages working outside Odisha were detained in the Containment Zone. They faced many difficulties in returning to their villages. After returning to their home they were kept in Gram Panchayat Containment Zone. After that they returned walking to their village. The Companies where the migrant workers worked were also closed. The workers found it very difficult to sustain their families. The Prime Minister started the distribution of LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas) connection and Gas Cylinder free of cost to the eligible beneficiaries. In order to protect us from Corona Virus
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he has publicly announced everyone to wear mask. He has also told everybody to wash hand at least 20 times a day. The scientists are carrying out research to control the Corona Virus. We faced a lot of difficulties to work for our livelihood and for our school study.
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My name is Anjana Jhodia. My village is Ratapada. My village has two handpumps. All the people use the water of these two handpumps for their cooking. Our village has 3 hamlets. People of our village are engaged in agricultural activities. They cultivate paddy, ragi, potatoes, brinjal, tomatoes and other vegetables. The people of our village wake-up early in the morning and take cows, buffaloes, and goats to forest for grazing. There are two schools in our village. One is Anganwadi and the other is Govt. Primary School. Children go to the Govt. Primary School to study. People of our village go to the hillock to collect dry timber. Children also go to the hillock to collect fuel wood for cooking. The name of that hillock is 'Suaja Pani'. There is a forest near to our village. In the time of festivals people go to this forest to get green leaves. Our village has an orchard. There are fruit bearing trees like mango, litchi, orange, banana and also many flowering trees, plants and bushes in this orchard.
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In our village there are sixty households. About five hundred people live in our village. For their livelihood they are engaged in agricultural activities, masonry and daily-wage labour. There are two streets in our village—Majhi Sahi and Harijan Sahi. There are three tube-wells in our village. All the people fetch water from the tube-wells. The boys and the girls of our village go to study in the Govt. school. But half of them do not go to school. In our village many festivals like Chaita Parava, Mandia Rani, Mali Chega, Gai Parava, Jhankara Puja, Patrabudha Puja are observed and celebrated. In the festivals, various Gods are worshipped, in the hope that people in the village would live happily and not suffer from ill-health. People get their drinking water from 9 wells in the village. In the middle of the village there is a flowering hibiscus bush and the temple of Patrabudha. At the end of the village there is the temple of Shiva. The villagers go there to worship. There is an Anganwadi Centre. Small children get dresses and shoes, and also eggs and suji to eat. Children of four years age go there. Near to our village there is a small river. People of our village take bath and wash their cloths in the river. We have many animals like

ABOUT OUR VILLAGE: KUTRUJHIRI

Rebati Majhi, Class-VI, Village: Kutrujhiri
In our village there are sixty households. About five hundred people live in our village. For their livelihood they are engaged in agriculture activities, masonry and daily-wage labour. There are two streets in our village- MajhiSahi and HarijanSahi. There are three tube-wells in our village. All the people fetch water from the tube-wells. The boys and the girls of our village go to study in the Govt. school. But half of them do not go to school. In our village many festivals like Chaita Parava, Mandia Rani, Mali Chega, GaiParava, Jhankara Puja, Patrabudha Puja are observed and celebrated. In the festivals, various Gods are worshipped, in the hope that people in the village would live happily and not suffer from ill-health. People get their drinking water from 9 wells in the village. In the middle of the village there is a flowering hibiscus bush and the temple of Patrabudha. At the end of the village there is the temple of Shiva. The villagers go there to worship. There is an Anganwadi Centre. Small children get dresses and shoes, and also eggs and suji to eat. Children of four years age go there. Near to our village there is a small river. People of our village take bath and wash their cloths in the river. We have many animals like
Cows, buffaloes, goats, hens, and other animals and birds are raised. Asha Didi looks after the health matters of the villagers. We go to her whenever we suffer from fever, loose-motion, scabies, and other such ailments. We go to the forest to collect dry twigs and branches of trees for cooking.

Around our village, there are many big trees and creepers, and many kinds of birds and small animals live there. There are four small shops in our village. We buy daily consumable things from those shops. The hillocks near our village are covered with forest, and there is a river very near to our village. So we need not go any big distance to fetch water or collect fuel wood. All this about our village makes me really happy.
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My name is Mamata Jhodia. Village Ratapada. Block Kashipur. School Agragamee Mukta Gyana Kutira. Before the Pusha Parva is observed we clean and wash our house. We also wash our cloths. Early in the morning everyone goes to take bath. After that they begin cooking. When cooking is completed they roast Alasi and pound it to make flour. Than they prepare pancakes out of ragi flour and take them to place at the meeting points of paths and roads. All the households distribute cooked rice, curries of leafy-vegetables and Alasi pancakes among themselves. Than they put on new cloths and go for dancing. We the children also go for dancing. The young men of our village bring sound-systems on rent. With the music blaring from the sound-systems and also playing Mahuri (a wind instrument) and drums all the young women and men of the village dance. In the evening all the young men and women get scattered and venture to steal vegetables from the back-yards. They place the stolen vegetables at Nishan Munda. Than the vegetables are boiled in water on the community fire and the boiled vegetables are distributed among the households. The young women and men continue to dance the whole night long. In the morning the elders of the village go to every family collecting ‘putkies’ (contributions) of fish, dry-fish and vegetables from each family. If a family gives...
ABOUT THE FESTIVALS OBSERVED IN OUR VILLAGE

Mamata Jhodia, Class-V, Village: Ratapada

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Less than the expected then the elders punish the members of the family with mock blows. After the collection, big cooking-pots are placed on the community-fire burning in the middle of the village for the collected food materials are cooked. All the villagers together partake the food there. In the evening all the young women and young men go together collecting alasi, ragi and jagri from all the families and pound them together and prepare cakes. Then the young women of the village give the make-up of woman to the young men. And from the house of the Majhi the young men now in the disguise of women carry the freshly prepared cakes in a procession. The alasi-cakes are distributed among all. At last everyone goes back to their own homes.
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The name of our school is Odisha Adarsha Vidylaya, Kashipur. My name is Pryanka Majhi. I study in class six. I was studying from class one to class five in Agragamee Mukta Gyana Kutira, Kashipur.

Many festivals are being observed and celebrated in our village. They are the Chaita Parava, Gai Parva, Amabasya, Shiva-ratri, Deepavali, Malichega, Jhankara Puja, Mandiarani, Ganesha Puja, Ghanta Jatra and Patabudha Puja. Patrabudha Puja is observed during the month of December. One day before it we clean the front yards of the village and we also clean our cloths. After that we all gather at Bada Sahi (the main entrance street) and our mothers give a fresh layer of cow-dung mixed with water to the place where the worship is to be performed. The young girls decorate the floor with jhoti (rangoli). Than the chief of the village along with the village elders lead by the Jani (the village priest) go to the Jhankar (the sacred groove of the village) and cook rice, dal, meat and other foodstuff for the offering to the deity. After the offering is made the children of the village eat first and then only all others of the village partake of the food. When everyone has finished eating than begins the playing of drums and other musical instruments. All the ‘Guru-Mais’ (female priests) of the village (there are a number of Guru-Mais in a village each one versed with the worship of one particular deity) begins to dance. Then the chief Guru-Mai take the goat that has been brought as sacrifice on her head and dances to the beat of the drums. When dancing is over the goat along with the cocks and hens are sacrificed. Coconuts are also offered. Than sound-systems are brought in and all villagers begin to dance together happily.
The name of our school is Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya, Kashipur. My name is Priyanka Majhi. I study in class six. I was studying from class one to class five in Agragamee Mukta Gyana Kutira, Kashipur.

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The young women and men of neighboring villages also come and join with us in dancing. The place where the rituals are observed was being decorated beautifully. Things like coconuts, rice-flour, sugar, earthen lamps, flowers and also eggs were being acquired earlier by all the families for this festival. The festivity continues for two days. All the villagers eat together all their meals. They also take liquor brewed by the villagers for the occasion. Children wearing new dresses go on marry-making and dancing. All the women and men of the village dance and it is all full of fun and happiness. We all believe that if the Patrabudha Puja is observed properly than all the residents of the village live well. Thus we observe this puja sincerely.
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I am Rina Majhi of village Katali. In our village Chaity Parava is observed in the month of April. While this festival is being observed all the people of our village are found to be happy. When Chaita Parava is observed that day first of all we take bath and go to collect raw mangoes. We carry the raw mangoes and cocks or hens to a particular spot outside the village and place them there. Dishari (the village priest cum medicine-man) after his ablutions come to that spot and break the raw mangoes into two from the middle. Then he cut the throats of the cocks and hens separating the heads from the bodies. Our mothers take their baths early in the mornings and cook rice, dal, raw mangoes and mutton and take them in a chadhua (big plate) to particular spots as offering to the ‘istha deva and devi’ (the gods and goddesses of the family). Only after the offerings were made they partake of any food. We, with our friends, all along continue to play happily. After the mangos are offered to the deities we along with our friends go plucking mangos and eat. After this the girls of the main street come to our street for the game of smearing mud and cow-dung on each other. Even the grown-ups join with the children in this game. As the Chaity Parava is being observed all the families sacrifice cocks and hens before their family deity and are happy to cook and eat the meat. Every family also cook and eat rice, dal, vegetable curries along with meat.
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After taking the food girls go together to play many games. After the game of smearing mud on each other we go to the river to take bath. All the male adults of all the four streets of our village go together for hunting. They capture the wild-boars, barking deer, rabbits and bring them to village. When night begins to fall the captured animals are tied to the wooden posts and carried around the village while people dance around them. Children also join them in the dancing. After the procession is over the animals are killed and the flesh distributed among all the households. But the households from which no member has participated in the hunting does not get the share.
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Aragamee Night School Learning Centres

Demo class by Edu staff Chaitanya Jakesika at LC Kalakani

Demonstration of teaching from Kau Dake Ka Wall chart

Edu-leader Gauri Jhodia teaching in Parajasila Learning Centre

Edu-leader Hemanti corrects a student in Ratapada LC

Edu-leader training in progress

Edu-leaders learn songs to teach in Learning Centres

Kaliajodi village Learning Centre Visit

Kalia Jodi Learning Centre Parents Meeting
Our Writers

Banita Jhodia  Rupuni Jhodia  Lipi Nayak  Jamuna Majhi

Munni Majhi  Mamata Naik  Anjana Jhodia  Rebati Majhi

Mamata Jhodia  Priyanka Majhi  Rina Majhi
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