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## Promoting Moral Literacy in the Foundational Stage under NEP 2020 with the Sherdukpen Folktale *Ha Sat Sat-Dong Sat Sat* as an English Textbook Lesson

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the integration of Sherdukpen folklore into English language teaching, as envisioned by India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, at the Foundational Stage. Specifically, it analyses how the Sherdukpen folktale *Ha Sat Sat Dong Sat Sat* can be used to nurture LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) skills alongside moral reasoning. The folktale is examined as a culturally grounded resource for engaging students, developing linguistic competencies, and instilling values like empathy, diligence, and accountability. A lesson design based on the tale is proposed, featuring structured activities that align with the emphasis on holistic, value-based moral education outlined in NEP 2020.

**Keywords:** Sherdukpen folklore; National Education Policy 2020; moral education; LSRW skills

### 1. Introduction

Arunachal Pradesh, which attained full statehood on February 20, 1987, is home to 26 major tribes and numerous subtribes, with Itanagar serving as its capital. Most tribes possess their mother languages, many of which lack written scripts, although efforts are being made in most cases to develop these scripts. To address communication barriers, the state has adopted English as the official language and as the medium of instruction in education.

The West Kameng district, headquartered in Bomdila, includes six tribes: Aka, Bugun, Monpa, Sajolang, Sartang, and Sherdukpen. The primary school students from these tribes often face difficulties with English language instruction due to unfamiliar

contexts in their textbooks. The NCERT has provided guidelines to help design practical teaching tools, ensuring that educational materials incorporate locally relevant considerations to meet the diverse needs of students.

Among the tribes, the Sherdukpen community is traditionally settled in West Kameng, particularly in areas like Rupa, Shergaon, Jigaon, Thungri, and Doimara. Rich in traditions, the tribe's elders are eager to share their folktales in translated forms to enhance children's English language skills. This initiative not only helps preserve the tribe's cultural wisdom but also improves children's understanding of their surroundings, fostering a commitment to protect and promote their cultural heritage.

Folktales serve as vibrant reflections of cultural spirit, values, and social norms, making them remarkably effective vehicles for cultural understanding in the language learning process. These narratives enable students to establish personal connections with the material as they delve into pivotal issues such as community, morality, and conflict resolution, each offering timeless lessons that transcend cultural boundaries. As a result, students find common ground with narratives that originate from various cultures, enriching their educational experience.

Incorporating these narratives into language learning is not merely advantageous; it is essential for fostering empathy and cultivating a broader worldview among students, a trait that is increasingly vital in our interconnected world. The engaging storytelling format naturally captures students' attention and encourages active participation. Techniques such as dramatisation and group discussions heighten interest and create a collaborative learning environment where students thrive.

Moreover, inviting students to share their own cultural stories promotes a sense of pride in their heritage while fostering deeper linguistic skills and enhancing their cultural appreciation. This holistic approach ensures that language learning is not just about acquiring skills, but also about cultivating a rich and empathetic understanding of the world. In doing so, we empower students to become more culturally aware and responsible members of their community, contributing positively to the shared fabric of society. Sherdukpen folktales demonstrate the enduring power of storytelling as a medium for moral education and cognitive development. Their ability to engage learners while preserving cultural identity makes them invaluable in educational contexts.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 charts a vision for Indian education that is both foundationally strong and culturally rooted. It advocates the use of indigenous knowledge systems and moral storytelling to cultivate not only cognitive skills but also ethical consciousness, emotional maturity, and cultural pride. This vision aligns with pedagogical innovations that leverage local traditions and folktales to teach language in ways that are meaningful and contextually resonant.

Sherdukpen folktales, passed orally through generations in Arunachal Pradesh, embody moral instruction and collective wisdom. This paper examines the pedagogical application of Ha Sat Sat Dong Sat Sat, a Sherdukpen tale that embodies the values of hard work, humility, jealousy, and justice. Through this narrative, English language

educators can foster critical ethical reasoning while reinforcing LSRW skills—fulfilling NEP 2020's call for a holistic educational framework that prepares learners to "read, think, and act with integrity."

## **2. Language Development under NEP 2020 in the Foundational Stage**

### **Defining the Foundational Stage (Ages 3–8)**

NEP 2020 reorganises school education into a 5+3+3+4 structure. The first "5" constitutes the Foundational Stage: three years of pre-school/Anganwadi (ages 3–6) plus Grades 1–2 (ages 6–8). It emphasises play-, activity-, and discovery-based learning, offering "flexible, multi-faceted, multi-level" experiences across language, numeracy, music, and movement, aimed at achieving "optimal outcomes in communication and early literacy and numeracy."

### **NEP 2020 on Language Learning in School Years**

- Mother tongue medium: The NEP promotes instruction in the home language or local language until Grade 5, with bilingual bridges to English.
- Early multilingual exposure: Citing the "2–8 year sensitive window," it encourages multiple oral language exposures for cognitive and socio-emotional development.
- Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN): Achieving FLN by Grade 3 is declared a national mission.

### **NCF 2023 and Curriculum Goals for the Foundational Stage**

The National Curriculum Framework for the Foundational Stage (NCF FS 2023) translates NEP 2020 into curriculum goals, emphasising:

Language Focus NCF FS Guidelines Classroom Implications Home language as medium: "Medium of instruction will be the home language to the extent possible." Local teacher instruction and materials in the mother tongue.

Oral language development: "Develop oral proficiency in at least two languages." Songs, rhymes, storytelling, and role-plays. Play-based literacy: "Reading and writing begin with picture books, phonemic games." Story corners, sound-symbol games, and letter tracking.

Progressive milestones: "Recognise letters, write simple sentences by age 8." Benchmarked goals across Grades 1 and 2.

### **Prescribed Competencies**

By age 8, students are expected to:

1. Listen & comprehend: Follow stories and instructions (NCF FS CG 1–3)
2. Speak & converse: Use meaningful dialogue and questioning (NCF p.52)
3. Read: Track print, identify symbols, read familiar words (NEP §4.5)
4. Write: Label drawings, write short L1/L2 sentences (NCF CG 11.2)

The teacher's role includes fostering multilingualism, utilising local contexts, and selecting culturally embedded moral stories, such as Sherdukpen folktales, for ethical and linguistic development.

### 3. The Folktale: *Ha Sat Sat Dong Sat Sat*

To appreciate the pedagogic potential of the folktale, it is essential to experience its narrative structure and embedded values. The following story is shared in full to preserve its cultural rhythm, ethical depth, and narrative arc.

The folktale *Ha Sat Sat Dong Sat Sat*

Narrator: Sang Tsering Mosobi

Village: Jigaon, West Kameng, Arunachal Pradesh

Long ago, there once lived two sisters named Rinchin and Wangmu in a village. The elder sister, Rinchin, was more beautiful than her younger sister, Wangmu. However, she was not well-developed as a character. She was stubborn, envious and greedy. She was married in a well-off family in the nearby village and led a comfortable life. At the same time, the younger sister remained poor and lived a very pitiable life in the village.

One day, elder sister Rinchin asked her younger sister Wangmu, "Sister, my vegetable garden is turning into a weedy ground, could you please help me to clean it tomorrow? I will pay you for it in kind." Since Wangmu was poor, she had to earn her daily food by working in other villagers' fields.

She replied, "Yes, of course, why not, sister! As you can see, I do not have any other means of earning a livelihood, so I am searching for work to support myself. I will see you early in the morning in your field tomorrow."

The very next day, Wangmu arrived at Rinchin's field and began to root out the weeds. Meanwhile, Rinchin reached the field in neat condition. She did not lend a helping hand. Sitting on a flat, wide stone, she said, "Wangmu, since I have already taken a bath, I do not want to get myself dirty in this dust. Could you please come up here and pick out lice from my head?"

Wangmu could not deny her sister's request and sat to find lice on her head. The day passed. In the evening, Rinchin thanked her and gave her a small piece of raw meat as a gesture of appreciation. Wangmu put the meat into her bag and made her way back. However, the piece was too small to feed her children. She stopped to rest and fell asleep. When she woke up, the meat was gone. She found a footprint and followed it up into the mountains.

In a cave, she saw a huge older man with a magic bowl. He chanted "HA SAT SAT", and rice appeared. Then "DONG SAT SAT" and curry appeared. When he slept, Wangmu crept in, stole the bowl, and ran home. She tried the chant—and it worked. She rejoiced and thanked the deity of the holy mountains.

Rinchin visited Wangmu and saw her joy. Upon hearing how she obtained the bowl, Rinchin tried to imitate her. However, the older man, enraged at the theft,

captured Rinchin. She pleaded, blaming Wangmu, but the older man did not understand and carried her away.

Rinchin remained in the mountains. Wangmu lived happily with her magic bowl: HA SAT SAT, DONG SAT SAT.

Story Text (Simplified for the Grade Level)

Once upon a time, there were two sisters. Rinchin, the elder, was rich but selfish. Wangmu, the younger, was poor but kind. One day, Rinchin asked Wangmu to clean her garden and pick lice from her head. Wangmu worked all day and got only a small piece of meat.

On her way home, Wangmu lost the meat. She followed footprints into a cave and saw a big, older man with a magic bowl. When he said, "Ha-Sat Sat", rice came out. When he said, "Dong-Sat Sat", curry came out. Wangmu quietly took the bowl and ran home.

The bowl gave Wangmu food every day. When Rinchin saw this, she became jealous. She tried to copy Wangmu by sleeping on the road with meat nearby. However, the older man came and took Rinchin away, thinking she was the thief.

Wangmu lived happily with the magic bowl. She thanked the mountain deities. Moral: Greed and jealousy lead to trouble, but kindness and patience bring reward.

#### 4. Moral and Cultural Insights from the folktale Ha Sat Sat Dong Sat Sat

The narrative presents a vivid contrast between two sisters—one humble and kind, the other vain and greedy. The ethical framework of Ha Sat Sat Dong Sat Sat is grounded in traditional wisdom that rewards virtue and punishes vice, a structure common to global folk literature but localised here through the Sherdukpen worldview.

- Rinchin's downfall, rooted in envy and pride, reveals the consequences of injustice and entitlement.
- Wangmu's eventual happiness, earned through hardship, reflects the cultural reverence for perseverance, selflessness, and gratitude.
- The magic bowl serves as a metaphor for divine justice—accessible not by status but by moral integrity.

These elements make the tale an ideal vehicle for moral reasoning, character education, and cross-cultural reflection—core pillars of NEP 2020.

#### 5. Exercise: Moral Understanding through Language Skills

Purpose: To integrate moral reflection with foundational LSRW learning.

##### A. Moral-Focused Comprehension Questions

1. Why did Rinchin call Wangmu to work in her field? What does this reveal about her character?
2. What quality in Wangmu made her help despite being poorly treated?

3. What does the magic bowl symbolise in terms of fairness and virtue?
4. How did Rinchin's jealousy result in her downfall?
5. What lessons does the tale teach about humility and generosity?
6. Do you think Wangmu did the right thing by taking the bowl? Why or why not?
7. Which of Wangmu's qualities would you like to learn from? Give reasons.

## **B. LSRW-Aligned Tasks for Moral Education**

### **Skill Activity Moral Focus**

Listening to Audio drama + reflection questions, Empathy and awareness of ethical emotions

Speaking Role-plays + character reflection dialogue, Perspective-taking and moral evaluation

Reading: Compare character values in a chart from the tale. Critical reading of virtues and vices

Writing Diary entries, letters, or short essays on moral decisions, Self-expression and ethical reflection

## **6. Teaching LSRW Skills with the folktale *Ha Sat Sat Dong Sat Sat***

### **Listening**

- Activity: Audio narration
- Tasks: Event sequencing, sound-symbol recognition
- Outcome: Enhances attentiveness and interpretation

### **Speaking**

- Activity: Enact scenes, ethical debates
- Outcome: Builds vocabulary, fluency, and ethical dialogue

### **Reading**

- Activity: Annotated text reading
- Tasks: Identify character traits, reflect on values
- Outcome: Strengthens comprehension and cultural literacy

### **Writing**

- Activities: Creative perspectives, reflections, alternate endings
- Outcome: Develops expression and moral agency

## **7. Vocabulary Practice**

### **Word Meaning Use in Sentence**

Magic: Having special powers. The magic bowl gave food. Greedy, wanting more than needed, Rinchin was greedy and jealous. A large hole in the mountain. The older man lived in a cave.

Footprint: The mark of a foot on the ground. Wangmu followed the footprint.  
Delicious, Tasty or Yummy. The food from the bowl was delicious.

Exercise: Fill in the blanks with the correct word from the list above.

1. The older man lived in a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Wangmu was not as strong as Rinchin.
3. The food from the bowl was \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Rinchin's \_\_\_\_\_ made her lose everything.
5. Wangmu followed the \_\_\_\_\_ to the cave.
6. Alignment with NEP 2020

The proposed lesson supports NEP 2020 goals by:

- Promoting foundational literacy through contextualised LSRW tasks
- Embedding value education within culturally rooted texts
- Encouraging bilingual, experiential learning
- Integrating indigenous storytelling into mainstream ELT

This fulfils NEP 2020's vision of preparing "rooted and responsible" citizens who think, communicate, and act ethically.

## 9. Conclusion

Ha Sat Sat Dong Sat Sat is more than a folktale—it is a transformative pedagogic tool. By mapping its ethical arcs onto structured language learning, this Sherdukpen tale aligns with the educational goals of NEP 2020. It supports linguistic development, fosters moral insight, and honours India's diverse cultural heritage, making it a powerful model for value-embedded English education in the Foundational Stage.

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