

PLAY and WIN
Aavuru Aji stories.

Part – 2

Mysore D. Swapna

PLAY and WIN *Aavuru Ajji stories.*

Part – 2

A collection of children STORIES

AA 36 to AA 62

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PREFACE

Different titles were thought of (by the author) for this set of stories (! only events and episodes). This is a report on activities of Kalpana (an imaginary volunteer teacher) who played with primary and pre-primary children with a view to educating them while just enjoying games. Thus EXPERIMENTS in EDUCATION with the VERY YOUNG – that is too big a title since only fringes are touched. ENJOYABLE EDUCATION EPISODES is more apt.

PLAY and WIN was another title inducing curiosity. What do you win ? There is no race, competition, prize in the whole program ; just be together and participate in the activities. Then I the author tried to explain (to myself) : Kalpana wins in her true purpose (viz. impart some values in the form of fun), meanwhile she wins the hearts of child participants, their care-givers and hopefully educators. Kalpana the central figure in the stories is called Aavuru Aji(meaning the grandma of the remote place). Hence the title: **PLAY and WIN – Aavuru Aji stories.**

No theories, no pedagogy, no morals, no disciplining and certainly no tests or exams. Just play – play ! physical with or without accessories or equipment, play mental with words known , unknown, new; play brainy with questions, guesses, play with joker only fun sensible or just non-sense.

Swapna the narrator had had experience of these activities. Though Kalpana is imaginary and aavuru (that town) can be any ooru (any town), the events sure had taken place more or less as reported. So one can say these are truly done and tested activities; successful or not was never known because it was never evaluated. A few cases of failure and disappointment are mentioned in the respective episodes.

Discussions among elders, explanatory notes, author's comments etc. are given in special font (italics). These need not be read out or explained to children. These are only for interested readers.

The normal font is used for event description. The author hopes some reader may like to apply these methods in a group or class room. I call such a person VT (volunteer teacher). A booklet of mere activities is given under each episode for quick reference by VT. We are planning to compile the same as a BOOKLET of ACTIVITIES for below –ten (B- TEN). This author believes in no-cost or low-cost teaching aids, so material needed list is also given for each episode.

When I made the subject index I saw too many under 'teaching aids'. If at all any volunteer wants to use these episodes for educational purposes, please note any game, fun, outing or discussion all can have the ulterior motive of education or personality development, With this in mind, any intelligent VT can invent many other modes and methods. I have given here a few samples which I have seen and liked.

The team which prepares these material consists of committed individuals voluntarily serving the society , be it spending [useful – to both] time with children or teachers or any other random work. Readers who can build on these ideas , please transmit to us – we will be grateful.

Mysore D Swapna(pen-name)

May 2024

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AA 36 MY BODY IS MY BOOK

[TEACHING AIDS]

The Veerandra where Swapna and Elizabeth met the primary school children looked empty on that day. Children had come with just a water bottle or not even that. Elizabeth explained to Swapna that today will be the day of announcement of results of examinations. No classes, so no bags. Announcement of results will be over very soon. What will they do with the children until the midday meal is served? [Note for foreigners; In many schools in (funded or aided by the government in India, lunch (also called midday meal) was served to ALL children, free].

Elizabeth said, in many schools they leave the children free to do what they like as long as they are within the school premises.

In our school our teachers of non-exam subjects engage the children.

Some children joined the conversation. We show our yoga to our yoga teacher. We all sing along with our music teacher. Physic sir (physical training) repeats his Saturday all school assembly program. Swapna this conversation reminds me of what Kalpana used to do. Some days she purposely leaves out books, notebooks. Not even blackboard.

Elizabeth: For all classes?

Swapna: Kalpana mostly dealt with primary school. So for all primary classes, yes.

Elizabeth: what and how did she do it?

Swapna: Let us demonstrate with these children today. I call it “my body is my book” method. Thus the day’s program began with English. When the program began, a small child asked “can I say in our language?” Elizabeth said certainly yes, when you start learning English you may remember what we played today with your elder sisters and brothers here Elizabeth started the game, “Show me your head”. Answer by sure. This is my head”. This goes on with only very important (or essential vocabulary) parts of the body. C5 (5th class) said. We all knows these and much more.

In that case you should be able to say more. Swapna said, “We will come to you soon; before that think and be ready with what you will say after showing your nose”.

Elizabeth carried on; “show me your ears”.

C1 (1st standard) Ram;

“This is my ears” with two hands reaching to his ears. Expectedly there was commotion (= random noise, many talking) in the group Class 2 (2nd Standard) John told Ram C1. See Suma said, “This is my nose” as she touched her nose. You should touch your (one) ear and say,

“This is any ear”. Elizabeth said, Suma is right, and also John. By that time Sabeena joined the discussion. “Ram can touch his ears with his hands and say “These are my ears “am I right Elizabeth said. Suma and john were right it they show one ear. If they show one ear. You (Sabeena) are right if two ears are shown”.

“Swapna: Elizabeth complete the class;

“SINGULAR AND PLURAL”.

Soon the turn of the seniors (5th class) came and Swapna asked “ show me your nose and say more “ Class 5 (5th class) Alex said, : If I had my Alexa I can say many more sentences” Sabeena said, “Hen you”. Need not be here playing with us” Swapna said “no quarrels or pulling logs” C5(5th class) said “we breathe with our nose “some child asked, “what is length?”. This was explained in the local language and by a yoga looking demonstration.

Then Elizabeth turned to alex and sabeena “say more”. Just at that time a garbage carrying municipality van passed by. Sabeena immediately said, “We smell with our nose “.

Elizabeth said, see our nose does two good things. So also our other organs.

Before she could go further sabeena said, there is one more done by nose. See our visalaakshi here. Her specs is supported by her nose. All clapped hands except visalaakshi. Instead sabeena has not said anything new. In tamil, specs is called “nose-glass”. (hen sabeena was heard saying, i don’t know any tamil, swapna

Said “enough of English learning”).

Maths teacher Bhaskara Sir had already ‘joined the group. High school maths is boring for me, the teacher and the students. Let me try with young students. Elizabeth said. “We are not teaching any class here. We just spend time on the topic ‘my body is my book”. Bhaskara said. “I know” and then he took over.

“ONE” B. (Maths teacher Bhaskara) he said. Show me one. Many children showed one. Many children showed one finger. One child pointed to her head.

Then B said “five”. Then “two” it went on world until five. When it came to “six” some c5’s (5th class students) said “balls in an over before B could say anything, Sabeena said cricket is not part of the body. But Visalaakshi said “Insects have 6 legs”. This was approved. *{later it turned out that there was a popular children’s song in Tamil, mentioning this}*.

Since our number system is based on 10 it is easy to use our fingers (of both the hands) to do simple arithmetic operations like + or - . Having said this Bhaskara asked whether the seniors would try. They did and made questions also without speech and the juniors could answer too with fingers.

Elizabeth said. “Unlike English which needs a knowledge of new words, maths is more suited for this method viz using body. She also suggested a kitchen and Dosas or Iddlies could also be used to play with multiplication or division.

The elders agreed and since time was over this ‘demo’ was postponed to another day.

AA 37 COOKED FOOD FOR MOTHERS

STORY BOOK

Sabeena was unusually silent that day. Suddenly she went to Elizabeth and was seen whispering something in her ear. Elizabeth was heard by all, telling her i.e., Sabeena, “Sure you can ask Swapnaji, she won’t mind” Swapna asked “Is that something I should worry about?” Elizabeth said, “Perhaps, please hear from Sabeena herself- (Actually Elizabeth said “from the horse’s mouth)”.

Sabeena said, “Swapnaji! You tell us a lot of stories about ajji’s of olden days. Why don’t you tell us other usual stories?”

Swapna said “I thought all of you would have already heard from your parents and grandparents even when you were all younger.” A chorus of voices said “We don’t mind listening to them again. Certainly we would like to hear from you or the friendly teacher here”. Elizabeth said perhaps we should go traditional.

Swapna told Elizabeth “This gives me an idea. Why don’t we make ‘parenting’ or ‘grandparenting’ a common Indian touch.

That is how the short 5 to 10minute story telling sessions started. It is unnecessary for this author to retell the known stuff. Stories of Panchatantra, Vikramadithya, short Episodes from Ramayana, Mahabharatha, anecdotes by Ramakrishna Paramahansa etc., are pan-Indian. In addition local folklore also were known to women from those areas. (The author apologises for his inability to list region wise stores.)

For English-knowing women, this list is augmented by globally known children's tales such as Cinderella, Seven Dwarfs, Thumbelina, Aesop's fables, Fairy Tales.

Swapna said with worldwide web being available to all and also in local languages, anyone can increase their information asset, certainly stories.

Elizabeth said that Swapna is being unfair to women working person or not, any woman is busy most of the day including Sundays and holidays. Any extra time she should be given the choice for her own entertainment and relaxation be it gossip on Telephone or serials in TV or singing whatever songs she knows or reading on her own.

Swapnaji accepted and said that she agrees fully with Elizabeth. Her words were true even for a 'free' woman of advanced age such as herself.

Sabeena said you two are talking among yourselves and all of us are bored. Elizabeth said we are sorry, Today I will tell you the story of a man who became invisible. Many said, we know it. There was a children's movie in Hindi. Elizabeth said mine is a shorter one known to many generations all over the world.

After the satisfied children left saying "We want one story every day"

As usual after the children left Elizabeth clarified her doubts with Swapna (can I say, a discussion took place). Elizabeth told Swapnaji " See madam how much social work is there yet to do for persons like us" Swapna said,

“Most of us think that there are books, CD’s videos etc., for any subject but we forget that everyone does not have time to acquire, learn, select and transmit. Some ‘**cooked food**’ will help.

Swapnaji! in the modern digital age ‘cooked food’ like you suggest are dime a dozen. Other than well illustrated print versions, there are audios, videos in all languages.

Swapna: I am aware of that. Very creative minds produce them. Attractive, interesting amusing,

Elizabeth: “so?”

Swapna: So or therefore, our supply to caregivers will be only to remind them of what they already know. Such as the title, a synopsis and moral if any. Real story telling is left to the caregivers.

Elizabeth: I now get it, just as the digital coaching cannot substitute for teachers like us, any tool cannot replace the personal interaction.

Swapna: Did I tell you about “**song book**” to children of the Ashram in my Asha ajji stories.

Elizabeth: Yes I liked the idea. Our NCC and Scout masters also. Swapna said that she would tell what Kalpana did in her time.

She built up contacts with the mothers of the preschool and primary school children-From children she found about grandparents also. She sent a questionnaire.

*Do you tell stories at least one evening or night/per week?

*If so do you make it up every time?

*Do you have a stock of stories in your mind ?

*Do you have your own notebook of stories to be told children?

Kalpana knew that the answer to the last question will be negative. People depend on available books or CDs . She then had suggested starting one so that the children (as well as the story teller) will have new inputs.

38 TEACHER-TRAINING TO TINY ONES

[CHILD TEACHER]

While Swapna & Elizabeth were waiting for the young ones to assemble, Elizabeth asked Swapna whether. Aavaru ajji Kalpana was a teacher's trainer.

For that question, Swapna answered that aavaru ajji was a worker; voluntary worker; believed in practice with sound theoretical basis. Before the discussion could go to depths, the sounds of children coming could be heard. Swapna said let us talk about it in AKA meeting with teachers "Remind me then".

Swapna must have been influenced by this question posed by Elizabeth. So that day's game for children was **'pretend to be a teacher'**.

From 4 year olds to 14 year olds, this game was an instant hit. Extremely popular with or without elders' encouragement, this game was played by the children. Very dear 'nice' teachers as well as 'grim, fierce grumpy grannies were mimicked by one or another of the students.

Only frame (glass-less) specs on the nose, a stick in one hand, a piece of chalk in the other transforms the child into the teacher, of course a ' kadoos ' (serious) unsmiling face to match is a must.

Swapna and Elizabeth allowed a round of such drama acting. Then Swapna said 'I wish to make you even better teachers; give tests to your students'. Sabeena

said, “We are already doing it.” Elizabeth was surprised. She said “show”.

Sabeena: “Who is the most bad person?’ Some said: “Ravana” wrong. “Satan” wrong. “ Mrs x, maths teacher” correct.

Child 1: “Who is the only very good person” “Rama” wrong “God” wrong “Amma (mother) right;” Appa (father) right. “Grandparents”- right.

Swapna and Elizabeth congratulated Sabeena and the children. Told them that a question can be asked, many answers can be given by the teacher and students can select the right one.

Elizabeth told Sabeena in her ear and told the students: “Sabeena will give you an example”.

Sabeena “Which of the following is sweet?” Idli (b) puri (c) laddu (d) pickle.

Everyone knew the answer. Then Elizabeth said: I give a small lesson. See if you can make a test paper out of it.

Lesson: OUR FOOD.

We eat food. Idli, puri, dosa, rice all these are parts of our food. Laddu, payasam, jibeli are sweet dishes. We take a little pickle which is ‘hot’ (like chilli-pepper) along with our curd-rice.

Elizabeth asked the children to make a question paper based on this lesson.

Sabeena quickly said: “Which are parts of our food?”

Another said: "Name some sweet dishes"

Another said: "Write about pickle"

Swapna said children, you are all correct. To answer these questions, we should have read the lesson and remember. [Swapna said, aside to Elizabeth "called **comprehension question**"].

Now let us make a question paper with answers given. Sabeena, the smart one, said: "We have one already. She repeated the earlier question. Yes you can 'tick' the answer. Such questions can be answered even if you do not remember the whole lesson (by heart). [Swapna aside: "**MCQ - multiple choice questions**].

Now Elizabeth whispered in Sabeena's ear.

Sabeena asked another question. I will ask questions: you say right or wrong.

Laddu is sweet. Yes or no No.

Pickle is food. Yes or no No. .

Elizabeth said: these are some type of questions. Also called **true or false**; yes/no; right/wrong.

"These are useful to learn mathematics". said Swapna
Even Elizabeth was surprised. "How come" Swapna said, let us directly experiment with the children here.

Say true or false	$2+2=4$	true
Say true or false	$2*2=4$	true
Say true or false	$2+3=5$	true
Say true or false	$2*3=5$	false

Swapna said "See, they could answer".

Elizabeth said, "I got it now, let me try"

"1, 3, 5,...." Are all 'odd' numbers. **True** or false

"2,4,6,...." Are all 'odd' numbers true or **false**

"2,4,6,...." are all 'even' numbers true or false

Sabeena: asked if they could play this game next time.
Then she told the other children.

"All of you bring questions, some with yes/no, some with choices; read your textbook. Make your own questions don't copy the questions at the end of the lessons".

Before closing Swapna asked Elizabeth. How do you like avaru ajjis idea of teacher's training?

AA 39 – MOVEMENT- TRANSPORT

[TEACHING AIDS]

Swapna and Elizabeth were by this time an inseparable team. One day much before any child came Elizabeth asked Swapna your Aavaru ajji always had games fun all extracurricular activities. Did she ever think of making lessons and syllabus by fun and games?

Swapna: I would like to answer. But children have started coming. Shall we make this the topic for our next teachers' meeting?

Swapna: Do we have a chart on vehicles or transport on our school library?. Elizabeth went to get. Meanwhile Swapna started a dialogue on travel. Who had gone to any other place; other than here, either a village or town Some have never seen anywhere else except some relative's place or to a temple nearby.

How did you go?

Many by scooter, auto rikshaw etc some by bus very few by train. By father's scooter to the zoo or an exhibition By auto rikshaw to go to temple or to bus stand.

T(E) Elizabeth came with the chart. Then just identification of vehicles was done. Only 50-60% have travelled by bus for long distance. They had no idea of the distances. If mom takes only a water bottle, it is near, within the city. If she packs eatables and lot of water, they will be travelling long distances.

One child said, I know once mom had a box with change of clothes and lot of snacks, then we will come back only tomorrow.

Less than 20% had travelled by train. Almost all had been to a bus stand. Some have not even seen a train or been inside a railway station.

Dialogue turned to child 1 asking, shall we go by train?

Elizabeth said let all of us go see our railway station. I'll get permission from the station master. See this picture here.

So it was, what Aavaru ajji did years ago was repeated here They got to see an engine (black, hot, too high, dirty) and inside the bogies of an empty stationary train.

Elizabeth showed seats, to sit on, berths to sleep on. Child 1 came running and said, come, see they have toilet and wash basin here. Child 2 asked do they have kitchen too?

It so happened that the train they were in was long distance express train. – One bogie was a diner, looking just like a restaurant – The senior officer and the station master were kind enough to order snacks for all children in the dining car.

Elizabeth explained, See how many people this one train will take. Perhaps 500 to 1000 persons?.

Elizabeth said for anyone, anywhere seeing a train is a great experience. It is a great experience, travelling in one , tat too overnight. . It was decided they will all go somewhere, along with their family.

Further discussion revealed that many children's grandparents were in a place, where there was no railway station. They go by bus only.

Swapna: See, this small chart had led to railway network, roads, and land transport.

Even we teachers have not been inside a ship or airplane. We can see only in pictures (i.e. movies)

We should also do this activity. Children! Ask Elizabeth madam to please coordinate with headmistress.

AA 40 INSTANT DIARY

[HAPPY BIRTHDAY]

It was neither a Wednesday or a Saturday. In the group of children, Swapna found one child not in uniform. Being a girl child, the difference was standing out. Looking at the curious look of the Swapna's face Sabeena, the major assistant of Swapna.. said, today is child (2)'s birthday.

It is time that Sabeena is given a name. Like Elizabeth she had become a fan of Swapna. (and also of Elizabeth) Let us call her Sabeena. Now for all AA stories (which belong to time long past), present time has a team of three, Swapna Sabeena, Elizabeth.

They all saying "happy Birthday' to child (2)

Swapna then asked: Does anyone have Birthday this week?

"No; but next week, yes." Swapna noted down date and the name.

"Do all of you know your date of birth?"

"No Only some. Parents know."

Swapna said: "Ask your parents and bring it tomorrow."

To Elizabeth Swapna said: "Could we have date of birth of all these children from our school records?"

Elizabeth: Sure, I'll get them.

Next day there was a calendar on the wall and the data recorded. Whether the child brought sweets or not, Swapna had and this was distributed by the birthday boy/girl.

A discussion on what they did at home on their Birthday, followed

“went to a temple early morning”

“Special payasam (kheer, sweet dish) prepared

“I had new clothes” “me, too” “me too”

One said “Their parents are planning a function in the evening with neighborhood children”

Elizabeth said: “We should include balloons from next time.”

Sabeena said: Birthday person should blow, tie, and give to everyone.

Swapna: Let me tell you what Kalpana used to do. As you know some days are ‘colour-dress days” ie. You don’t wear ‘uniform’ Aavaru Aiji had told her assistants to watch what they wore on those days. They reported that some children had the SAME dress on every ‘non-uniform’ day.

Aavaru Aiji knew that the family could not afford many sets of clothes for each child.

Kalpana noted down these ‘special’ children’s birthdays in her diary.

Instead of calling by any other name, Kalpana called them, they are my ‘special children.

Earlier that week (the week in which a child’s birthday falls) Swapna arranged to send a packer through the assistants. [No one ever opened and saw, but it could be guessed – Good dress for birthday a few sweets – a box of sweets for distribution]

Thus a diary on the wall helped to observe birthday of children on a more equal basis [equitable is too big a word].

Swapna said Kalpana and Mangala were influenced by ASHA, ashrama aiji, who made sure all the children in her ashram got equal treatment, which was on par with an average family in the society.

Some (naughty) child asked: Swapnaji will you start here such a program?

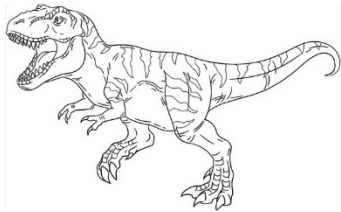
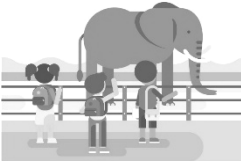
Swapna said: Elizabeth madam and I will discuss it. But certainly we will sing happy birthday and share sweets.

AA 41 LET US CALL A SPADE WHAT?

TEACHING AID]

Story telling, playing games, just talking, gossiping, (in child's language talk about what you like) had been the routine in Swapnaji's preschool time program. As the readers of this series known a T(E) (English teacher) got interested in these activities and became Swapna's chela (fan). Let us call her Liz, Beth, or her full name Elizabeth.

Elizabeth came with a bundle of books and pictures and asked Swapna. "Can I do an experiment with your children" Do not call Swapna said "Let us be with the children and do what they like."



It was a book she had prepared for children who could read English. An example page:

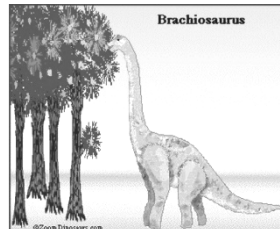
Sabeena went to ****

She saw ***** It was very tall.

There was one ***** in a *****

There were three ***** near.

They were inside *****



Sabeena, the young fan of Swapna; volunteered to read.

- Gate with 'Zoo' written— G -Giraffee

-Tiger -Cage - Elephant - Fenced ground.

Whether Sabeena already knew these words or not, she could read.

Elizabeth, "Sabeena, could you help child 1 to read?"

See like this: I went to ... (stop here)

Let child 1 fill up and then repeat; child 1 was much younger and could not have known 'cage' and 'fence' It turned out to be true. Both said local word for these is fine.

Then she told child 1, can you tell the same in your (=local) language. It turned out to be great reading. One text: two languages.

Then one of the children (whom their mother's from North India seeking admission in this school) came forward "I can also read" Beth said: "Do"

He stared "I went to ..."

Elizabeth said: Sabeena has read in English.

Child 1 has read in local language.

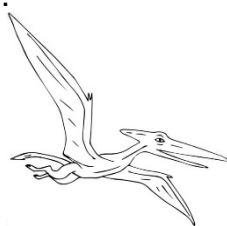
"What do you want to do?"

He said, "Is that so?" (in his language).

Then he read; as good as child1, but in his own language (the new verbs were only 'went', 'saw', 'were' – and there was no problem guessing the meaning.

Elizabeth was visibly happy. She said "well done children". Session over.

Sabeena asked "do you want to take back the book" Elizabeth said, "No, let it be here".



Did you observe that all the three used the English word 'ZOO'. For the animal's names variations were there, but not for 'giraffe. My point was that the common words in English and local languages is a great way to accelerate language learning. That was the aim of the_____

Swapna said this is what we did with the mothers (see Expresso) Education).

We always do the same with the Indian languages. Like 'bus' 'car' 'bungalow' 'hospital' 'police station' etc.

Perhaps Swapnaji with your charisma you can tell Teacher (Sc) to use this method. Why translate electron, oxygen, hydrogen, etc which are like (your name, my name) proper nouns, See I have a book all our neighbourhood children want to look at. They have seen a horror movie released recently. She had cut pictures.

Title: Dynosaurs

This is a It is very big.

This is called It has wings. It can fly.

This is called It is small. Ate grass.

See all over the world irrespective of language the name given only is used.

Why can't we treat other given names as THEIR OWN.

A spade can be of spade. Our version is not exactly the same. So it will be called____ “.

AA 42 SUMMARY REPORT

[RECALLING]

For some reason there were only a few children - Sabeena and two more - As usual Elizabeth plus Swapna.

Of course, one to one interaction could have been done. But Elizabeth said myself with these children will make a list of what they have done with you and what they liked.

What they brought back to me, I call "SUMMARY REPORT"

My dear readers of the stories! The author (i.e. Swapna) calls these 'stories' for want of a better name – I could have called them events, anecdote etc... Here except Aavaru Aji, Kalpana and AKA, Mangala there are no central characters or stars. Every event is described as interestingly as this writer can. But it appears that Elizabeth and Sabeena liked many of them and would not mind more of the same. All these are already written down here..

Encouraged by their summary report and favourable rating, I Swapna gave then some tips which were not even worth writing as anecdotes or events.

(1) Preprimary boys and girls play the same games – whether in KG classes, or play homes, or Anganwadi or in their homes. Thus hand outline, tracing, handprints, fingers' point (with ink or any other), counting with fingers, run and catch, hide and seek, go around oneself (rotate) fall down, ride pony or elephant or elders' backs jump

over a rope, crawl under a rope. drum with spoon and plate etc etc.

Any mother or grandmother will give many more activities for young ones (toddlers) Sometimes toddlers they even demand it.

All these, much before or along with any toys (simple or expensive) I Swapna like ALL of them, except a few new ones like smartphones, animation in TV etc.

(2) When the child becomes slightly older gender divide starts. All girls play with pebbles, tamarind seeds, beads etc. Then they go to hopscotch, skipping. During the same age duration, boys take to bat-ball, kick big ball, marbles shooting.

At this age, Kalpana gets in. She purposely mixed boys and girls so that every one learns and plays everything. She thought this aspect makes for future viz.. get rid of gender bias.

(3) Almost a generation ago, there was a status divide (call it economic divide) among all children. Some play in the mud barefoot. Some mothers can never allow their children to go out without shoes. Some have never seen a gym, or tennis court, or dance program, do not know about comic books, fairy tales etc. The affluent ones had exposure to one or more or ALL of the above.

Kalpana with the help of ASHA could get over this divide at least on a few occasions.

(4) TV, tape recorders and such gadgets were new in Kalpana's time. –

Some houses did not have any and can't even dream of one. At the lower there were houses without a

refrigerator, gas stove, mixer grinder etc.. not to talk of two or four wheelers.

The maximum the children of these houses can dream of was bicycle, radio, one set of good clothes during Deepavali or birthday.

Kalpna or any well meaning teacher or social worker cannot solve this problem. But the under privileged could be exposed to other side occasionally.

When I, Swapna presented these above points, Elizabeth was really confused “I thought you are a fun loving person and want to spread moments of happiness around... YOUR REPORTS says such a log of anguish and negativity.

I (Swapna) said If you feel so “Never tell about this to Sabeena or other children: These ideas are about them, but beyond their understanding.

So let us chalk out simpler easier ways of gender equality. Then think of equality exposure irrespective of social status.

As long as Swapna’s memory goes that was the end of the topic for Elizabeth. But not for Swapna... She remembered how Mangala selected just the sports, just the form of art including music (vocal or instrumental), dance or drama. EVERYONE means including those unwilling will be given a chance to try. That means ALL would have sung a sone, solo or in groups - And some will be selected or opt on their own.

As far as Swapna was concerned, the above was a summary report since details got blurred in her mind.

AA 43. DIY PICTURE BOOK – fails

[FAILURE]

Swapna brought with her many colourful charts suitable for young children; fruits, vegetables, animals, vehicles, etc. The children carefully hung them on a tight rope. First it was just reading or identifying each picture. Then Elizabeth took over.

Elizabeth : “Can we play a game?”

“Sure.”

“Make two teams. From team A one person names one from team B. A says a word, eg. tiger. B should go and place a finger on the tiger. Done, 1 mark. Not able to, in the count of 5, 0 mark.” Real fun part in this game is, all of A team would be counting 1, 2, etc loudly.

Swapna : “Elizabeth, do not curb (silence) them; making noise itself is fun. Winning or scoring comes later.”

Then came the part of the game. It was given to Sabeena. “You conduct.”

Swapna took from her bag a large number of squares. They were pictures cut from the charts.

Swapna : “Sabeena, this is for younger children.”

Sabeena : “ I know; don’t say ‘tiger.’ Give this figure to one child. He should go and match it (with the picture on the chart).Again noise 1,2,3,.....

Elizabeth said, “The child is young and gets distracted by loud noise. So this part of the game was done in silence. Sometimes, help from the crowd, “Not this chart; the next one on the right.”

Next game was played :

Eg. banana and banana. Since the connection can be in their local language / mother tongue, they can say “ We get banana from the banana tree.” If it happens to be some other tree : “We do not get _____”

If cow + milk, cow gives us milk.

If cow + grass, cow eats grass.

After all the types of games had been played, Swapna told one AA story.

Swapna(to children): “Did you all like this game of pictures?”

“Yes, sure.”

AA Kalpana in her town also liked to play such games. She did something more, it was do-it-yourself books. One child pasted pictures; with blank spaces in suitable places others should read it correctly :

_____ forest lion etc. or an essay _____ elephant. It (picture of Zoo board) _____ sugarcane.

Present time

Sabeena : “Can we take these pictures and make our own books ?”

Swapna : “We are happy just playing. Even Kalpana stopped the game of DIY (do-it-yourself) books.

Elizabeth :I thought so. See in English : Cow eats grass. In our languages Cow grass eats.

Swapna : That was one reason. Another was complaints from many parents. Comic books with holes. Textbooks with pages missing. Family photo albums cut, mutilated. All newspapers and magazines damaged.

AA 44 SCRAP BOOK SCRAPPED FAILURE]

It was a day of disappointment for Elizabeth and Swapna. No children to play with or tell stories to. Then Swapna said you are the bakra today (victim) Sorry no choice for you. With this introduction she said Kalpana consciously scrapped a project of hers.

Kalpana had heard of Ashamatites keeping diaries & calendars and being proud of showing to all. She too wanted to copy the concept. So her children were given a scrapbook. As in the case of any children anywhere many items found place in these books. Leaves, petals of colorful flowers, butterfly's wings, peacock's & other birds feathers.

Of course cine stars, cricket heroes. Kalpana had even planned to have a discussion of how the owner got the item. This she wanted to do when she found a snake's outer skin in one note book. It was a mistake. The parents came to know and they got truly frightened. .But Kalpana knew that there is no risk in getting a discarded coat viz. snake skin. But even Kalpana got shocked when she saw photos of hungry crying children, sketches of broken little, raised hand, pies items here fig with 2 jointing out teeth labelled father demon.

Kalpana was not a professional psychologist. But she had mixed with sufficient number of children to know what a juvenile trauma is. That is any item that reminds the child of a shocking or traumatic event.

Swapna: So, Elizabeth what do you think happened?

Elezabeth: Some parents complained.

Kalpana: Immediately told all children to scrap the scrap books.

AA 45 ROUTE MAP, LANDMARKS*[MAPPING]*

Swapna told Elizabeth and the children that maps help us to travel and has many other purposes. Giving an appreciative outlook on maps is good for all of us. The writer gives below a simple event.

Swapna: Children, do you know what a map is?

Sabeena: Yes, I know. India map it is like V hanging from a large rectangle or trapezium.

One voice: With water on 3 sides.

Swapna: How many of you are ready to make a map?

Sabeena: No one. Even Elizabeth or you cannot make. India is too big.

Elizabeth: How about this town?

Sabeena: Yes, make many trips by scooter and auto.

Elizabeth: Ok, how about a map of this room?

Sabeena: Why, we know, it is here.

Elizabeth: If you want to tell someone where you hear stories.

Sabeena: Yes, we can make. See we all sit here like a circle, around Swapnaji and you. And these are the walls. And this is the door.

Elizabeth: Very good, this is a map.

Swapna: If you write its length and breadth in meters or feet, it becomes a true map.

Elizabeth: If somebody makes a picture of our playground it will be a map. How big it will be. Much bigger than this room or outside veranda.

Elizabeth: If you show where running tracks, games courts etc., it will be a map.

Swapna: Let us now go back to play.

Kalpana told the children to make a route map. i.e., length and how to go from the school to each one's house.

That was well done. How to find the distance. If you go by scooter or auto you can find the distance on the dial. Otherwise see how much time it takes to walk.

After seeing left turn and right written turn she said that will not give the right idea. So she said use East, West, North, South.

Now they got many maps. Then she said if there is another way to the house, walk and make that map also, put them together. Then Kalpana said the school, your house. Many landmarks may be there on the way. Mark them.

To those who did not know what to show as landmark, she said any permanent, or famous structure.

A huge tree, temple / church etc.

Multi story, building, cinema theatre, Bus stand, Railway station. If there is a four road meeting place it is called a circle. Usually a name would have been given.

Next Kalpana said ask your elders or read street sign and write the names of the streets. Your small map is done.

Swapna: Do you think we can do that here?

All sure, we can. We will from tomorrow.

Sabeena: When I go to another city with my parents, I will write down straight, turns etc.,. (some nameboards) and timing.

Swapna: Kalpana did this from Pune to Nasik by bus and it matched well with standard maps.

AA 46. ONE TWO – ONDU ERADU

[LANGUAGE LEARNING

]

This is a direct report from Mysore Sw, was with the children “GM Swiji” GM Madam” Swapna :“What shall we do today ?”

Voices “Play”

Elizabeth : “What ?”

Many voices; names of many local games;

Swapna: “Sabeena ! Talk to them and decide” (after a while)

Sabeena: Madam; they want ‘Kere, dada (lake band/bank)”

Elizabeth: Children ! come, draw a big circle; all to you stand around (outside)

Sabeena where we stand is dada (bank) the circle is kere (Lake) correct?

(“Kere” “ Dhada” many times; suddenly “Kere” out c1, c2 out). It is not fair, let us start again ;

Elizabeth: Madam you also come, please”). Elizabeth tucking the saree up.

(after some “Kere dada” suddenly “Dhada”.....Dhada”)

(madam is out, Madam’s saree is wet all laugh)

Elizabeth: Swapnaji can I conduct? “Sure” Now it became “ Horage, Olage”(Kannada words)

After almost all out,

“let us all pay again

Swapna: “ in out” “ inside, Outside” “Water, Hand”

Swapnais practice; the person just out will be the conductor soon sabeen was “out”

Sabeena : “undher, baaher “ Successfully played. Once sabana said “Sister, it is not allowed; one leg in water and one leg outside : you have to jump”

This is the next day’s direct repost:

“What shall we play today?

“Where, Dhada, it was fun”

“We did it yesterday: today another”

“Musical chair”

“We cannot bring so many chairs”

The group settled drawing small circles on the periphery of Yesterday Lake (big circle. No music of tape recorder.

Gently tapping a spoon on a metal plate was ok. After c1 is’out she cancels (rubs off) one chair and takes over the ‘bell’

Soon Elizabeth madam was dragged into join the game. As expected, she was soon but. It was her turn to conduct she started with “vandmaataram” vocal and when she stops, it was time to stop next child out took over; she sang the same; probably they knew the anthem and the child also likes to hear her own voice.

Elizabeth “All stop...stop listen”

“It is not ‘ONDE’ Maataram; it is VANDE’ Maataram. It is not kannada you know it went on.

When sabeena was ‘out’ she became the conductor “ Saare Jahaan se achcha” Eliz told her this is an alertness game; only two lines will so and repeat.

We will learn full songs of “Vande and “Saare” with meaning another time.

If was the privilege of the winner of “musical chairs” to distribute chocolates

The third day

“What shall we play today?

“Khabaddi” “ we need a ground”

“Khokho “for that also

“Bat ball” “something will break”

“Bomb the city” Liz said “ That game is suitable for a large number of people

“Tug of war” we should bring the thick rope from PT room so next time

“Hop Scotch” Certainly you can do SW it his knee problem so next time

One small child c3 voice “SLIPPING”

It is not slipping stupid it is SKIPPING” “you stupid’ I said SLIPPING only “Correctly

This produced laughter

Swapna: “Someone please bring my should bag; Take one rope”

C1 “This is a new nice skipping rope”

“Let me try” “ I will try” “ Give it to me” sown; Now the game each person will get 3 choices (=rounds); the total will be the score Swapnaji apologised her arthritis.

One child at a time jumped; counting began; all 1,2,3,4..... eliz said Now Sw Ji will count...

“ ondu, eradumooru... the group laughed good hum order by at sw's Kannada accent’

Sabeena's turn to count she said ek do Hindi.

When elizabeth's turn to jump came it was fun she had to gather her sarees plaits and tuck at the waist the top of the sari tied around her waist.

C2 My mom does this when she washer vessels”

The winner was declared based on the total score of 3 rounds

Elizabeth was out with only single digit.

One problem came up

C4 was 5, 20, 3 =28

C5 was 9, 10 , 9=28

Swapna: Two first prizes: OK

Elizabeth: Actually should be given

Swapna: Some people will give 1 price to C5

Swapna: Eliz! We had games for the last 3 days why is it worth writing about you can tell us in our A & A Meeting

Elizabeth: you can tell us why 2 prizes Ok.

AA 47. THREE in ONE

[LANGUAGE LEARNING]

Swapna had brought 1 to 20 number tiles 10 show and tell game same children one show another tell.

She made 3 teams one for the local language, another for English the third language, another for English the third for Hindi (In this South Indian town the third language was Hindi the nationally popular language to India spoken and understood by large number of people) in any case these were 3 languages taught in school; if there happened to be Sanskrit, Swapna would have made a fourth team.

Show by one group tell be another one by one at the end 1 to 20 in all the 3 long was learnt

Elizabeth asked Swapna: why was this necessary show pictures tell is always done in class certainly in primary classes:

Swapna thought Elizabeth, you got the point while conducting the game.

The same exercise alone 3 times by 3 teachers at different periods due to parent's effort and enthusiasm, the child gets to say upto 100 in English – some may not reach that even in local language at the same time, certainly not in Hindi.

This game will equalise don't you agree?

Elizabeth: Sw! I like your method But it is time consuming , see how long it will take if children start writing to keep it playful and enjoyable is another task.

Swapna: Are you happy with what we did today?

Elizabeth: sari children how about you?

Nacres: Good super Nice Achcha

AA 48. KAVERI THAAYI, RAAVI AKKA

LANGUAGE LEARNING

As usual Elizabeth and Swapna were well in time. Elizabeth learnt that Swapna had a large store house of Kalpana stories, her own games, etc. Only on a few occasions she came prepared for the day's meeting with primary school age children.

This year in January, the day next to Sankranthi, she came ready with sesame seeds (thil in hinds) and jaggery (*gud* in Hindi). She mixed and distributed to all and asked, "What did your parents say when they distributed this ?" (Elizabeth wants to remind the readers of these stories, the present was in Karnataka). One child said : "Yes. I know. Take jaggery and *thil*. Spread goodwill. (*YeLLu bella thagoLLi; oLLe maatthu aadi*) "

Swapna said two lines meaning the same is in Marathi also (*thil goL gya ; gode gode bhola*). Another occasion was Ugadi day (also called *gudi Padva* in Maharashtra). Swapna brought neem flowers and jiggery. Saying was "Treat bitter and sweet as the same."

Other than such occasions Swapna's programs were impromptu! i.e. as it happens at that time. This time Elizabeth wanted to offer the topic to Swapna. She asked Swapna, " You told us that a girl called Raavi came to AKA's school, showed how the same subject can be done in two languages at the same time ; even by the same teacher."

Swapna :, "Yes, certainly"

Elizabeth : "Can we do it at primary level ?"

Swapna : “Since Kalpana could not manage 3 in 1 method of teaching, you wish to see whether 2 in 1 works. Let us see.”

When children came, there was no story today. Swapna made 3 teams from among the children present, One was the local language team; The second was English; the third was Hindi.

Sabeena said : “ I know today’s game; we did it with skipping. Number counting in 3 languages.

“Exactly”, said Swapna. The game began and went on. Domestic animals eg. Cat, dog. Wild animals eg. lion, tiger, went on very well in three languages. When it came to kitchen items like salt, sugar it went on well with some hesitations. Sabeena was there to provide Hindi (she may call it Urdu; but spoken word is the same in Urdu and Hindi mostly).

Sabeena said : “This is no game at all. In our house my mother makes us say what we eat in three languages everyday, So we know.”

One child : “It will be fun; but it will delay your eating.”

“Yes it does, but we enjoy; more enjoyment is when neighbours come. My mother tells them welcome in three languages. Fun is when they go, they also say goodbye in three languages;With Kannada AND Tamil neighbors it will be interesting.”

One child : “Why ?”

Elizabeth : Translated it will be “I’ll go and come.”

Then Elizabeth told the children how universally used words are used in our languages also; and all over the world also. Examples were car, scooter, bus, bank, gun, giraffe, etc.

Children were very young; they were not polarized by local extremists. Some even said, it is _____ in Tulu, _____ in Malayalam, etc. Youth (innocent youth) is the time of “more the merrier,” Also “You give; I take,” “ I have; you take.” Offering, sharing.

So Swapna said it is not just two in one; it is many in one – both in time and in person.

In one child you may see many persons. You just observe how their words and body language change with other children, parents, grandparents and neighbours and strangers.

Something else happened. Sabeena gave homework to others, “Bring words in three languages.” Then she gave one subject each to one child. One was days of the week which even Elizabeth thought was a great idea.

Swapna said her neighbour’s 6 year old daughter appoints herself as a host. What is your name? Basava :*banni*. Christina *welcome*. Ahmed *aadaab*. Now listen to this. This is an audio recording of a recent function in our house. If Tendulkar comes – no problem *yaa yaa basaa*

AA 49 ART APPRECIATION

[CREATIVITY]

As soon as children arrived, Swapna announced: “We will have a class here today” and waited. As expected there was reaction : “We came here to play; no class”.

Elizabeth called Sabeena and asked her to clarify. She said : No teacher , No black board; each can do what he or she likes but with paper and pencil”. Now one could see smiles.

Sabeena had requested the office attendant, the previous day, to get ready a few items, dozen each. Writing pads (In school parlance it was called ‘exam pad’); pencils, sharpener, eraser. These were distributed to children.

Elizabeth took over, “Today is drawing day. Only pencil and paper. You can draw anything from this list. She gave a list.

Swapna said, AA(Aavooru ajji) in her time gave a list. I do not remember. So Liz madam made one for you .

*Sun / Moon and Stars / Night sky / Day sky / Smiling face
/ Cat / Dog / House / Tree / /River with fish / Road /*

any one or two topics can be chosen.

Each child was given a number, and that number should be on the drawing sheet. The title (name) of the drawing need not be written . [Actually, many would not know how to write]. Before collecting the sheets, Liz., individually asked the artist (= author of the piece) “What is this? “ The answer was recorded with the children’s given number.

The sheets were redistributed randomly and the receiver was asked the name (= title) of the drawing. This was also recorded.

Liz., and Swapna could not imagine (could not guess) anything, The second child identified, the drawing as some subject matter. It was almost a 50% match
Examples:

Criss-cross horizontal and vertical lines , cage in a
zoo with a lion inside

Elliptical arcs highly inter twined - bird's nest

Shaded black patches with X's and Y's inside

Stars and birds in the sky(no question about birds
in the night sky)

Many other sheets with no identifiable (or describable) patterns were labeled by the receiving child.

A second sheet was distributed to the children .
The topic can be anything other than the topics given by Liz., madam.

There was an amazing 100% co - incidence between the topic guessed by the receiver and the topic given by the author . Even titles like

Baby crying / Mom in the kitchen / Spider man on the top of the pyramid / New moon Night / Shadow of giraffe .

When Liz., & Sabeena wondered about how detailed the titles were. Swapna said it is due to CAMERADERIE.

The English teacher almost chided Swapnaji for using too big a word and turned to children and explained that the children were all friends among themselves.

When the receiving child makes a guess, she or he would find the author somehow and ask is it? And then only go to Liz., for recording. If could not guess at all, the author will be asked.

Liz., was amazed at the respect given to the creator by the receiver. It was always\, “I’d thought so too” never “where is this or that detail?” certainly the children enjoyed the “class”, especially the “judging” part.

After the children had gone, Liz asked Swapna, “Where is T & L (teaching and learning) for AA to do this activity? Did AA not correct obvious short comings? Like multitude of birds in the dark sky, or fish and boat being the same size, or spider man walking over temple tower”...

Swapna said : “AA never liked regimentation in education – Certainly not in creative concepts like drawing. Kalpana would even exhibit many of the intriguing drawings along with interesting titles and invite and encourage parents to view them. Swapna ., summarized :

Art is for Imagination

Creativity

Expression

Definitely at primary level. Art will evolve later.

AA 50 CIVIL ENGINEERING or SOCIAL ENGINEERING?[SHARING]

On that day Swapna the narrator directly began her story telling.

AA, (she is a new one, let us call her Anne) was new to Bombay (now called Mumbai). She was to meet HM of a school in one of the many (more than 50) suburbs of Bombay. With the courteous and efficient staff of BEST (Bombay's bus service) she reached the suburb. Finding the government school was easy. The only difference was, there in Bombay, it was called 'Municipal school '.

After reaching the school, Anne had a problem. She asked to meet the HM, whose name she did not care to note down. "Which school?" asked the gate man. "Are there many schools here?" asked Anne. "Yes madam, don't you know, there are three schools here".

Anne: "I want Municipal middle school"

"Same madam. There are three. Do you want first floor, second floor or third floor?"

Anne thought, let me just make a beginning "Show me the first floor school".

That was the HM of the Marathi school. Anne asked about how come there were three schools in one building. This is common in Bombay, HM of Marathi School said. Here in this suburb, ground floor is Marathi medium. First floor is Hindi, second floor is Kannada (this

may be some other language in other areas), Top or third floor is a terrace hall for general use.

Anne asked, “How about the staff?”

She got the answer: “3 HM’s 3 sets of teachers. We share the building’s facilities.”

Anne said: AA , Kalpana told me to meet you and ask about common programs with different mediums of instruction.

HM [Let us call her Shilpa Salgaonkar said, Kalpana is quite forward in educational methods. We just follow old system. This common quadrangle helps in many ways. We time share the place for physical training. But Saturday morning the whole school could be seen with bands, march etc .Flag hoisting is a common activity. Receiving VIP’s and celebrating Mahatma Gandhi’s birthday are all done in the quadrangle.

Anne then had a meeting with all 3 HM’s together and said “space saving” is great.

Shilpa salgaonkar said, “In all of Bombay’s municipal schools, you can see his kind of “space saving”. Anne madam, don’t know where you are from. Here in Maharashtra for more than hundred years, school education up to 10th standard is free in govt. schools. Of course here in Bombay they are run of by municipality. They cater to the poorer section of the people. As you know Bombay from the day it became a City evolving from seven islands, was literally built by labourers from interior Maharastra and other states of India. Hence you see in the working class population people speaking

different languages Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Hindi and of course Urdu.

Civil engineering wise this structure helps.

At this stage, Elizabeth the elder teacher-listener of this small group said; “Children! Swapnaji uses big words like civil, engineering etc., it just means building making is easy. One building- three schools right!

Sabeena said; Like my house. We are on the first floor. Owner lives on the ground floor.

Elizabeth: Or like a house with many floors.

Swapna: Or like the big school nearby. Common ground in the middle. Smaller classes on the ground floor. Higher classes on the first floor. Everyone comes to prayer before the start of the schools, assemble on the ground. Salute the flag and say national anthem.

Another child: “On the stage boys beat the drums on Saturdays and we march... left, right, left.....

Elizabeth: Swapnaji, now you can tell us why Anne the HM from another city came all the way to Bombay.

Swapna: Yes, this is where we started the story.

Kalpapna, our AA had told Anne the HM to go and see Bombay school. Anne asked Shilpa Salgankar about this Bombay municipal schools Anandayi shala, also called ash.

(Swapna added this Asha is different from ashrama aji Asha. Here Asha is a short for enjoyable school. AaSha Anandalayi Shala 2 letters in Marathi).

Madam, this is one benefit of mega cities like Bombay. (Swapna: mega means big) We have Universities with department of social work. They come to our schools to tell us about many topics. Healthy habits, good food, vaccination, environment etc.

Students from all over India come. They come as a group and conduct awareness programs in each language. Once a professor came with them and saw what was happening.

Anne asked; “Just for this information, did AA send me all the way here?. I could have telephoned you.”

Shilpa said: Sometimes “seeing is believing”. Tomorrow is Saturday. Please come before 8 am.

Swapna said if I tell you what happened on that Saturday, my story ends. Can anyone guess?

Sabeena the smart student said, it was a school function. Some big man came. He bored the children in English. All clapped. Sweets distributed.

Elizabeth: Yes, Sabeena is right. 3 languages of India Speech in the fourth. Honouring the VIP is the aim. Nice that it was over in one time in the quadrangle.

Swapna said would it be Asha, enjoyable? It would be boring business. So that was not.

Swapna said, they demonstrated some big science. Perhaps ‘Rocket’ launching.

Swapna: you are almost on the dot.

Now let me continue.

AA 51 Sanskrit

[heritage]

When Swapna was wondering whether Elizabeth would come that day, she appeared. Not with any apology for being late. Not alone either. There was a person in _____. This one was a female of the same age-group as Elizabeth, from the face Swapna could see, _____ the rest of the frame was covered by white clothing.

Elizabeth introduced. This is Kumari my classmate from college. She is in a spiritual group.

Kumari said, a group of us were returning from an early morning program of Yoga. I saw this girl (pointing to Elizabeth) on a scooter slowing down for our group to go. I called out her name and she came to meet us. The result is I am here.

Swapna asked; “Was it not many years ago you had seen each other? How did you recognize each other ?” To this question the newcomer Kumari answered, “ I knew it is difficult to recognize me in this elaborate costume but Elizabeth is the same girl as she was. That is why I called her name.” Elizabeth added, “Once she was near I could see the face and the same voice. Kumari I still am thrilled by your voice which you can raise when debating or teaching and make it melodious when singing. Haven’t you learnt classical music?”

“Yes, also classical dance, both of which help to recognize folk or tribal customs in our social interactions.

Swapna said, “You said you did some spiritual work, could you do a brief session with our children?”

Elizabeth said, “That is the reason I dragged her here.”

Kumari said, “ I have come across social groups calling us to do bhajans (group singing), pravachans (religious discourse), children sat through the program unwillingly. Can I tell them THE IMPORTANCE of SANSKRIT in a way they will not get bored.” Having agreed the three waited for the children.

Without much ado, Kumari started the session, “ I heard you are all experts in three languages.” Sabeena said, “Surely. We know many words in English, local language and Hindi.”

Vijayalakshmi said, “ Tamil also.” Thankamma said, “ Malayalam too.” Bangarappe said, “In our house it is Telugu.” “See you (actually we all) are lucky easily we get a lot of knowledge.

Sabeena the bold and smart one of the group (called child 1 in our stories) showed off to the newcomer. I can ask “Are you hungry ?” Child 2 said, “ I can also ask “Doi you want food / chocolate ?” in three languages. Kumari congratulated all of them. Shall we learn one more today ? No classes, no books, no lessons. Just talk. Ok.”

Then for each item the children mentioned, Kumari gave the equivalent. Elizabeth asked, “Do you know which language it is?”

Sabeena: “ It is not Urdu; it is like Hindi” Vijayalkshmi found a chance to be one up above Sabeena. “Don’t you recognize ? It is Sanskrit. Our shlokas are in it.”

Kumari said if you know basic words in Sanskrit, it is easy to understand Hindi, right Sabeena ?” “Yes, sure. Half of Urdu is also Hindi.”

Kumari avoided any mention of grammar or greatness of the language or great works in Sanskrit. She just gave numbers 1 to 20 and 100, 1,000.

Here Elizabeth said the English word 'century', 'centum', etc. are near. Swapna, why even ten in your decimal system sounds akin to Sanskrit word.

Kumari said perhaps our discussion and observations can be another time. I will just say the words for some fruits, animals, the 5 elements. Probably you can say in English not many words for the sun, the earth, etc. In Kannada synonyms are plenty. All due to Sanskrit.

"Sure we will," said Elizabeth. Kumari said, it also gives a good feeling if along with your singing, you know the meaning also. Then she asked what are the group songs the whole class sings. Rashtrageet (Jana gana.....), Vandematharam, Naadageethe (in kannada). Then Kumari explained Vandematharam. Sabeena said, "I know Saare jahanse and meaning also" "Yes, it is in Urdu."

Fortnight, waxing & waning periods of the moon, etc. was known to elder children. Zodiac signs (names of raashis were added)

Intelligent children [ALL ARE, aren't they?] wanted to show off to the shwetha vastra guruji aunty [white clad sacred woman] their stock.

It started with Vijayalakshmi saying " Does anybody know who is ekadanta?" .

Sabeena followed "Who can ride a dvi-chakra vaahana?"

Thangamma : "Who are thri moorthigalu?"

Bangarappa: " Which are the chaturanga?"

Someone else named pancha pandavas

Discussion among the elders: If our mathematics teacher were here, he could tell how polygons are named. But we can say about triangle, rectangle. Triakone or thiribhuj for triangle, chathurbhuj for rectangle.

Kumari: At least one part of mathematics viz. terms used will be easier.

(Author's note : This is as such too long for a primary school kid. Any volunteer who wants to do this activity, get a list of Sanskrit words written in local language and also local words & Hindi if possible).

AA 52 GUESSING GAME

[LEARNING AID]

Before any children turned up Swapna & Elizabeth were there in the school. Swapna asked Elizabeth: “Are you aware of a famous popular IQ game called **20 questions ?**

Elizabeth : Is it about guessing what is in your mind ?

Swapna : Yes the same.

Elizabeth : I vaguely remember we had played in our college days . Tell me more.

Swapna : One person imagines a word , writes on a piece of paper and keeps in his pocket, The other is allowed a total of 20 questions. Any number of wrong guesses allowed.

Elizabeth : Now I remember usually the guessing person starts with mineral, vegetable, animal ?”

Swapna : I was wondering whether we can introduce a simpler version of the same.

Elizabeth : It was much above the head of many college students. So it was popular within some groups only. More popular was ‘ **guess the movie game.**’

Swapna : That will be in these times also. Like **dumb charade.**

On that day only a few children turned up. Swapna said it was good in a way. We can test the new game.

Instead of 20 questions only 10 were allowed. Only 3 wrong guesses permitted. A typical game was like THIS

word was written

Challenger is called an elephant or Ganapathy .

Guessing person is called a monkey or Hanuman

Elephant : Tell me what is the word ?

Hanuman; Living or Non-living?

1. Elephant : Non-living

2. Is it in this room ? : Yes

3. Tell me, is it black or white ? : Black

4. Tell me, is it a shoe ? : No

5. Tell me, is it a big or small ? : Big

6. Tell me, do we write on it ? : Yes

7. Tell me, is it BLACK BOARD? : Yes

[Readers of this piece, remember. This is a narration or story. Instead of just reading out, if you 'play' with another, it will be meaningful certainly if children are around you can try]

The above example is over after 7 questions. Another similar tricky version :

Questions 1 to 4 were the same, & answers also

Question 5 Big or small ? Small

Question 6 Can we write with it ? No

Question 7 Is it Charcoal or paint brush ? No

Question 8 Is it kept in a box ? No

Question 9 Is it on one person ? Yes

Question 10 Is it hair ? – Yes

Elizabeth : One of the indoor games, did AA Kalpana play this?

Swapna: I would say she invented it. Certainly she must have played with different age groups.

Elizabeth :Sabeena, did you like this game?

Sabeena : Yes

Elizabeth : Did you all like this game?

: “Yes” “ Yes” 6 times.

Elizabeth : Only 6 “yes”es, you are 7 children

Swapna : Madam I have alredy said “yes”. You don’t have any memory madam.

Elizabeth : Naughty girl! Speaking to a teacher like that!

Another : Madam you are not a teacher here. You become one among us.

Swapna : Elizabeth can you find some use for this game in classes. AA or A&A never said about using this game for teaching. If you find it will be a first, after AA long time ago.

Elizabeth : let me discuss with our teachers.

Swapna : Try maths first.

AA 53. LOGICAL GUESSING

[*LEARNING AID*]

In the last AA session, Swapna had asked Elizabeth whether the game of 10 questions can be used in Teaching & Learning. In this session Swapna was surprised to find not just Elizabeth but many of her teaching colleagues.

Elizabeth : Our friends said they would try. The best place to try, they thought, would be with the children who are already familiar with the game.

Swapna :Sabeena, do you want to welcome them?
Sabeena did a good job.

T(M) Maths teacher took over,

Same game with numbers. You can keep [imagine – keep it a secret] any number from 1 to 100. Player [= guesser] can ask ten questions . The number keeper [= challenger] should honestly and correctly answer. Only 3 direct guesses by the player are allowed.

T(M): Here is my number

(1) S: Is it 100? -No. one guess x

Elizabeth : Warned S... Only 3 wrong answers allowed.
So you should ask general questions.

(2) S: Is it less than 10? No.

(3) S: Is it less than 50? Yes.

(4) S: is it divisible by 2 : yes

(5) S: is it divisible by 3: Yes.

S: 5 answers are over: The number is between 11 and 49 both 2 & 3 can divide. So in 6 Maggie (multiplication table) to herself 6x4 6x5 6x6 6x7 6x8

Qn 6: Is it divisible by 7 ? No.

[S:to herself - I have just 3 more questions]

Qn 7: Is it greater than 30 ? No.

Qn 8: Is it 24? _____ Yes

T(M) was so happy that this game worked

Swapna : Fluke chance, Luck,

Elizabeth : Let us find out Sabeena, Swapnaji says you were lucky, shall we try again ?

Sabeena : Hesitantly. I don't know madam. I was lucky the first time.

Swapna : No shame, if failed .Isn't it so children!

Children: Sure, sure, S is good and brave. She can ask questions to high school maths teacher.

Elizabeth :Sabeena! Don't worry, no nervousness.

Game again

Same questions upto the 7th question

Qu 7: is $ir > 30$? Yes

Qu 8: Is it nearest to 50 or 40 ? ...40

Qu: 9: Is it 36_? _____ Right

How did you do it? Can you explain? Sabeena said:
Number can be divided by 2 and 3

Therefore it is a part of 6's , multiplication Table.

>30 only 36 and 48 : because 42 is already no x

I took a chance on 36 . that was luck.

[< 30 Only 24 and 18 and 12 :because >10].

After this successful game, Elizabeth addressed the children.

Children, our teachers want to play more games like this?
Are you all ready?

Children: Sabeena is clever. She knows what questions to ask. We will not know how to ask questions.

Social Science teacher said, If any of the elders help you to frame questions, it is Ok by me.

Then he said he will be the challenger

See I have written here a name from geography of India.

Now try.

CI: Can anyone of us ask you?

T[ss] Yes, you are all in a team. Any one can ask. You can also consult Elizabeth madam or Swapnaji, but they will not ask.

A typical game is given here: word from geography of India

Q1; is it a mountain ? No.

Q2 : Is it a City? No.

Q3: Is it a river/ Yes.

Q4 Is it a South Indian river? Yes

Q5: Does it flow in Maharashtra and Andra Pradesh ? No

Q6: Does it flow in Kanataka & Tamil Nadu? Yes

Q7: Is it Kaveri ? Yes

All the teachers were happy and congratulated the children.

The children said, now we will ask the questions among ourselves, you watch. Sabeena . Here is the answer chit given to Swapnaji. On this chit is the name of one of the teachers.

Q1: Is the teacher present here? Yes

Q2: Is it the HM ? No. guess1 X (Wrong)

Q3: Is it a Sir or Madam? ----- Madam.

Sabeena said We can ask the name one by one & get 3 out of 5 is a good chance. But we will go by description.

Q4: Is her mothertongue Kannada? yes

Q5: Is her hair white? No.

Q6: Does she come by scooter? Yes

(Children whispering?)

Black hair & scooter.

It can be one of the 3 only. We can ask one by one we will win)

Sabeena (aloud) we will go by questions only

Q7: Does she mix (friendly)with us the children ? yes

Q8: has she played with us here? yes

Children all:

It is ;ELIZABETH MADAM

HM came forward and said certainly this game can be played for teaching and learning process. See if these young children can be logical certainly high school children can be made to be much more logical.

All of you teachers consult and see if you can take from your syllabus, and let us report to Swapna madam.

Children were sent away after distributing the standard eatables

Swapna said “See MCQ [MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS] are the current fashion in all levels of competitions. This game will help some logical thinking other than just guessing or memorising the one correct answer.”

Elizabeth: YOU GUESS IT RIGHT

BUT SAY HOW YOU COULD GUESS

ALSO SEE WHY IT IS THE ONLY CORRECT GUESS

AA 54 MAKE FRIENDS AND A BUNDLE GAME

[MATHEMATICS]

Swapna and Elizabeth had gone to buy eatables for the primary children. So they were late. As they entered, they could see that the laughter suddenly stopped.

Sabeena with a specs frame of paper on her nose and a make shift stick (twig of a tree) with her, standing near the blackboard. Obviously all of them were up to some mischief

Elizabeth (pretending to be serious, in a high tone). What is happening here?

Swapna: (smiling, and in a soft tone) They are just playing 'teacher game'.

Sabeena: Yes, madam, sorry.

Swapna Do you like your teachers?

Quite; Hesitating; unwilling "yes".

Swapna: Ok (Let us ask Sabeena), Do you like Elizabeth, madam?

Sabeena: Yes, Swapnaji,

Swapna: Why? (Before Sabeena could answer) other voices "because she plays with us".

Elizabeth: So , can we say, we are all friends?

"Yes mam"

Elizabeth: Sabeena! Do you like your lessons? Which subjects you are afraid of?

Someone said. All teachers; all subjects.

Sabeena: Not true. Only Maths. Teacher puts x in red pen on our notebooks.

Swapna: Elizabeth is your friend; So, you are not afraid of her. Suppose Maths becomes your friend.

Sabeena: It will be very good.

Elizabeth: Let us make friends with Mathematics Swapnaji you will be a newcomer, here. Sabeena wants to be friends with you.

Sabeena? Welcome, new person.

Swapna (as a role play): Can I join you?

Sabeena: You look quite a bit older than us. But if you like to be with us you are welcome.

Maths [Swapna] : (keeps quit)

Sabeena: What is your name?

Swapna: I am Arithmetic.

Elizabeth: I thought Maths comes to visit you.

Swapana: We are a big family. All are called Mathematics. I am one of them, named Arithmetic.

Sabeena: For a quiet person you have talked too much. Will you join our games?

Swapna: Sure.

Then do we play tic-tac-toe- Hopscotch – Bat, Ball Cricket.

I am arithmetic I keep scores of each person or each side, correctly.

Sabeena: (after a while) Ok we played so, much. Do you know any games?

Swapna: (maths) It is called Ulta Seedha game. For this you should know how to write numbers.

Swapna: All of us know: Writes 1 to 10

(Note: Ulta Seedha – Topsy Turvy, upside down)

Swapna(Arithmetic): Let us write 1 to 9 on separate tiles.[4 x 3 paper which Swapna always carries] Each one of you hold it for Elizabeth madam to see. OK Elizabeth ma'm.

Elizebath: Right.

Swapna: Now make Ulta - Turn it upside down. Some have no meaning, Some remain the same .Let us say, they are the winners.

Swapna: Game is like this. Put all face down. Pick one of your choice and show. If it is readable they get one point. Not readable 0 point, Each plays 5 times. Best score is the winner.

Elizebath: It is very easy. We have just scan [= look for] 0, 1, 8 as we usually write will be ok.

Swapna: That is the game. These are called Ulta Seedha same numbers. 689 are called Ulta Seedha jodi numbers.

Sabeena: I know 6 will become 9 and 9 will become 6, on inverting. That is why in UNO card game they underline 6 and 9, to avoid confusion.

Next level of Ulta Seedha game was:.

To write a two digit number which reads the same Uлта and Seedha. Obviously 11, 22, 44 etc. But there are others also, real Uлта Seedha 11, 88.

Swapna: Then to write 3 digit numbers.

[Before biscuit distribution time the blackboard was full of numbers. First pair was 69,96. Last 609,906,etc.]

That day Swapna had really brought a big (1 kg) Box of glucose biscuits. This is called bundle or packets game.

Elizabeth opened the big packet. Small packets scattered around. Let us count how many. There were ten. Let us open one packet and start giving one each. One packet was over. How many got (biscuits). Sabeena counted ten of us. Only we did not get, Sabeena, Elizabeth mam and Swapnaji. So how many in a small pocket? Ten see how many small pockets in the box? Ten. So how many can be given biscuits? One child started putting one by one into the box, ten, twenty... ninty.

Sabeena: Plus 10 in our hands. $90 + 10$. Counts on fingers 91,92... yes 100.

Elizabeth: We could have done like this also, $10 \times 10 = 100$.

Sabeena:Yes 10 times adding is same as $(\times 10)$ i.e., multiplying by 10.This is really a bundle game.
(note:Bundle-in social slang, means 'bunkum').

But the newcomer Arithmetic can play with us. So she is a friend, right?

AA 55 SHOW OFF' and LEARN

CHILD TEACHER]

Elizabeth was early. So were the children. Swapna was not to be seen. Elizabeth said "Today Swapnaji is late. Are you all ready to do some classes?". Together a big "No" was heard. Elizabeth must have expected this, though being young, she was as much of a teacher as any senior could be. I knew the answer. By classes I did not mean I (or any teacher), will take classes. You... she said again You will conduct classes. One by one and all the others will be students.

Elizabeth started with the youngest perhaps in kg class child, "Show me your nose" .The whole class was supposed to touch one's own nose with one finger. C1 indicated two elder children, you are wrong... you also wrong". Elizabeth's said "yes, Class1 child is correct. You were slow. The other was holding your nose as in a yoga class. You should only show".

Another child Class 2. Write English "see". Everyone wrote the letter C ok. Now write "dee" child of Class 2 looked at Child of class 1 and said "wrong". Elizabeth saw and it was left, right inversion as many children do.

Elizabeth asked the Class 2 child " Why wrong?" Class 2 child said it is Ulta. Undaunted Child of class 1 said "Ulta or Seedha dee is dee". Thus the show – off went on, almost each child getting a chance – when it came to the turn of the higher classes C5 (5th class asked Elizabeth "will they know? they are only in primary classes". Elizabeth "try; if they don't know, you can always tell, That is the purpose" Class 5 asked "Who was Shivaji?".

Simple answers like “a Raja” “a Maratha” “a strong man” were heard. Class 5 was not happy. Elizabeth asked “What did you expect?” Class 5 showed his book, “See, it is written here “He was the creator of Swarajya” Elizabeth said “That is what YOUR teachers want from YOU. But these children were able to answer you. They were also right”.

Another Class 5 (5th class) asked “Who won the race; hare or tortoise?” Many from higher classes knew the answer. Very young children, probably those who were not exposed to their parents’ story telling did not know. Class 5 proudly said “It was the Tortoise”. It was clear class 5 was happy to show off. Class 2 (second class) asked “How? Tortoise is slow like a snail?” Class 5 did not have a ready answer. Elizabeth said, “See, you have to tell, read your book and tell in a way Class 2 will understand and follow the story.”

By this time, Swapna came and joined the group. Good Elizabeth let all children show off and feel proud. At the same time they learn by testing others.

Elizabeth said, more than declaring right or wrong, explaining is the benefit.

They agreed. Perhaps we should take the idea to high school. School (written) exams just show you are either right or wrong and tell you your worth in percentage. This method has to say why you are wrong or where you went wrong (as in mathematics).

(Does the author need to say the last paragraph was AFTER the children left?)

AA 56 BELL THE CAT – MATHS

[MATHEMATICS]

It was a day of conflict, It was a day of compromise; It was a day of challenge; It was a day of changing. It was a day of friendly game of who will win, with the primary children as pawns.

Swapna realised these are too big or too complicated words for the children. So, she said, this is for the readers of these stories.

As the readers know, by this time, that avuru ajji's anecdotes revolve around the concept of play and learn; enjoy and educate. Elizabeth, the English teacher had already become part and parcel of the programs. She became so much involved in Swapna's activities that she started putting avaru ajji's ideas into practice. Her experiments, of course, were done in making English learning enjoyable. In addition she thought it should be done in learning of any languages. That was easy since most of the Indian languages share a common grammar and usage. She wanted to make maths the bugbear subject fall in line and along with Swapna did try. That is how biscuit packet in place of 'abacus' for telling unit, digit concept. Even the traditional game of sequential filling of holes was used for adding, dividing. (pallauam kuzhi in Tamil; Aligulimane in Kannada)

So, Elizabeth involved the maths teacher Shri Bhaskara into this scheme. Swapna soon discovered how even a rational man like Bhaskar can be dazzled by show.

He brought the CEO of a company promoting 'abacus' program. He came and in 30 minutes, made 8 to 10 year

olds very good in adding or subtracting 2 numbers-started with 2 digits and went up to 4 digits.

Another time Mr. Bhaskar brought a modern day English speaking person who was expert in Vedic maths. He came and in 60 minutes made 8 to 10 years olds very good in multiplying two numbers or finding the squares - started with 2 digits and went upto 4 digits.

Swapna allowed (according to her own words, “who is she to allow or permit etc., we are all tiny parts of the world’s game of life and society”) Elizabeth and Bhaskar to test their theories on the children.

Both the methods namely abacus and Vedic maths were great attractors for children like magic shows’.

Swapna said Vedic maths is just short-cuts though based on strong number-manipulation logic.

She also opined that ‘abacus’ is just transferring from brain work to finger work.

If they happen to entertain children, let us do it provided you have the knack and expertise. Swapna confessed that she herself never developed those skills.

While the three elders namely Swapna, Elizabeth & Bhaskara were engaged in these discussions [shall I say ‘confessions’] some slightly elder children were having their own loud ‘discussions’. Bhaskar said, “Quiet’. We are talking here” Elizabeth got up and went to them and had a quiet conversation with one of them. Then she said, “Sir, I think they are doing our work’.

The children arguing among themselves were elder (older than 10) They were talking about fractions and

division. Now that they found mr. Bhaskar helpful, they put forth their problem.

Student 1: $1/2 + 1/2 \neq (1+1) / (2+2)$

But $(1/2) \times (1/2) = (1 \times 1) / (2 \times 2)$. Why is it so?

Elizabeth: That is the rule of maths.

Student 2: But Swapnaji told us \times is just many times plus.

Math teacher: Elizabeth & Swapna both are correct.

See $(1/2)$ is there first.

Another $1/2$ comes. And joins

Now see you have full 1.

Elizabeth: Let me explain. I have a box you put $1/2$ (say biscuit) into it. Sabeena comes and puts $1/2$.

Now the box will contain 1 (biscuit)

Bhaskar: Now let me tell you like Swapnaji used to tell you. "Sabeena! Come: have this biscuit".

Sabeena: It is only half a biscuit".

Bhaskara: Assume it is all we have. Now wait don't eat. Munni is coming what will you do?

Swapna: Munni, come! Let us share this piece of biscuit".

Bhaskar: "See, this is $1/2 \times 1/2$

Elizabeth; It can be read as half of half. i.e. $1/4$ (small piece)

Swapna Bhaskar sir, if you come down from the teacher's platform and away from blackboard, you get simplified

explanations. They may not be strictly mathematical proof or logic. But they will make maths student-friendly.

Swapna then emptied her shoulder bag on the ground; asked the children to separate them by shape. Result was.

1 big square; 2 rectangles; 4 small squares.

Bhaskar got the hint. Played the game of

$$1/2 + 1/2 = 1, \quad 1/4 + 1/4 = 1/2 \quad \quad 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 + 1/4 = 1$$

Elizabeth: Swapnaji, you are partial to squares. So saying she called Sabeena to bring cardboard and scissors. They together made:

1 big square: 2 big triangles; 4 small triangles; Played the same, game.

Sabeena: Elizabeth madam. you like triangles. We can play dosa game if we have circles. & they had one big circle of colour paper. Folded once to show $1/2 * 1/2 = 1$. And other mathematical operations [oops! Big words – plus, minus, into, divided by]..

Swapna: was it fun? All: yes,

Swapna: was maths easy? All: easy and fun

Elizabeth and Bhaskar said that this kind of games are worth, (though looking simple and therefore called silly by serious teachers. Where was the conflict?

AA 57. FIT MOTHER

[SPORTS]

Dancing in the rain was a small event we described earlier – when a child got cold and cough perhaps due to getting wet in the rain, Kalpana had applied some lotions covered with her shawl and sent her to her house with an escort. As expected, the child did not attend school the next day. Third day, AA sent a note, “How is the child?”

An amazing thing happened on the following Saturday. The child came to the school with a woman, This incredibly young looking shiny skinned woman went directly to the PT sir and thanked him. PT sir said, “It was not me and the lady came to AA. I am the child’s mother and I am very happy she had come to a school where teachers dance with the students and that too in pouring rain.”

Present time

Swapna stopped the story here. Please remember it is AA, Kalpana’s time and place. It is heavy rain during monsoon and they say (I am not sure who) such a rain does not do any harm. It is only such a rain which lasts 5 minutes, clouds sunshine which creates problems. This may be true because I don’t see rain here, even though people pay money to go to amusement parks to go on water slides.

Swapna continued the story. Let us call her FM (Fit Mother for want of a general term). She told her audience of young children, “See, your parents do not allow you to get wet in the rain, if you do, quickly change clothes and dry up.”

One child said, “Otherwise, you will get nose block and fever.”

Swapna : “Correct. I was just saying that only just now. Did you notice? “

“Yes but Kalpanaji purposely went out to hug the cloud, get wet.”

Swapna : “That is the reason I tell this story. Kalpana believed that ALL do not get sick. Today’s story is one fit mother also liked the idea. Remember, it is many years ago, your grandparents time.

Elizabeth who was listening to this short question and answer session, asked though hesitatingly, “What do you think?”

Swapna: “If I tell Kalpana’s opinion will you be satisfied ?”

Elizabeth : “I should have known; you are a true chela (cheli) (fan) of Kalpana.”

Sabeena : I thought you are only Kalpana.

Swapna : “I will tell what FM said to AKA and teachers in the afternoon meeting. For children, see our body and nature (like water) adjust (in English it may sound odd but OK in local language). Illness comes when germs (bugs) are there like dirty water, bad air, etc. She did not go into any detail. Remember, AA audience is mostly pre-school.

AA 58. SKATE, SWIM – BE FIT

SPORTS]

Next time before school Swapna and Elizabeth were waiting for children. Elizabeth asked whether in Aavuru Roller Skating champions were produced or ARE being done.

Swapna : “I have to be honest with you. If such a thing had happened in the slums of Mumbai or as in Camila’s case in a small town in Maharashtra, some reports even at that time would have come up. A search of old newspapers will give you the information. Actually such champions were not produced, firstly because in those times athletics did not include this sport (and of course many others).

Secondly, Camila was a small time champion yet her mind was broad enough to see her sport is not the greatest. She believed in physical fitness; that is what she promoted.

Elizabeth: “ Ok, I get it, Kamala (let us call her by her real name) did not believe in a handful of persons top in a handful of events.

Swapna : You got it. It is like our Educational Institutions. We do not aim to make nobel laureates or officers in IAS or captains in the army or airline pilots or CEO’s of multinationals. We give healthy mindset, basic grounding in subjects and give the children the necessary opening for opportunities which may come in their way.

Elizabeth : Yes we are stepping stones for a FIT MIND.

Swapna : “This is what happened. The association between Kamala and Kalpana gave rise to the same motto. Be a stepping stone for a FIT PHYSIQUE.”

Elizabeth : “See our schools good, bad, average are functioning. Unless some shooting (as in U.S.A) takes place or some disaster, we are not newsworthy. Any innovation we do, as Swapnaji you are doing here, will not be known or even worth reporting. The same would have happened to champion Kamala.”

Swapna : “Or to AA or to AKA or to ASHA about whom I should tell you sometime.”

Elizabeth : Today our talk has become a seminar.

Swapna : Nothing serious like that when young ones are here. Let us talk the same subject with them in their own way.

Swapna : “Good morning children! Did I tell you about ice skating or mountain skiing?”

Sabeena : “No. We have only ice-cream.”

Child 1 : Also ice in the freezer

Child 2 : We have seen in the movies

Child 3 : Eskimo build their igloos with ice

Child 4 : It is ice in Antarctica

Child 5 : Certainly in the Himalayas and many mountains

Elizabeth : They wear long paddle like shoe and slide down the mountain slope.

Child 5 : “ I know it is called skiing. (*for the readers, spelling or writing is doubtful but Child 5 can speak the word*)

Elizabeth : They wear a sharp blade-like shoe and slide on ice. It is called skating on ice.

Swapna : “ See in our earlier story a FM (Fit Mother) liked her child dancing in the rain. Her name is Kamala. She had also never seen ice. She tried ice-skating in America. She also became a champion.”

Sabeena : “She came to India, right? “

Elizabeth : “Yes, to Maharashtra.”

Swapna : “Is there ice in Maharashtra?”

Elizabeth : “That is why she found a similar one called roller skating. Under the shoe wheels are there. You can slide on smooth ground.”

Swapna : Our city has this sport. Very costly but we can borrow and try. Who will? All raised their hands. Elizabeth madam will arrange on a Saturday. You all must bring your mothers.

Thus a rich man’s sport reached ordinary children, though for a while.

Swapna : “Fit Mother, Kamala wanted every girl to learn to swim. Do you all want to learn swimming?”

All hands were up.

Swapna : Elizabeth will tell you how Asha ajji did it in her ashram. Swapna to Elizabeth : We will try exposing all girls to really learn swimming.

Elizabeth : Girls! Tell your mothers, “We all go to learn swimming. If they ask how, tell Elizabeth madam and Swapnaji will arrange. You can also come.” About boys we will see later if necessary.

Thus “Learn to SWIM; DON’T DROWN” was Elizabeth’s slogan.

AA 59 SPECIAL PT

[*SPORTS*]

call them dwarfS, midgets or what else. They are physically challenged-but our rules do not give any credit to this handicap.

But Kalpana did. She came across such a person through a social worker friend of hers. Kalpana came to know that our welfare society never thought of supporting or even recognizing a handicap called dwarfism. Congenital, it is rare in occurrence and also poor probability. Though not conclusively studied and proved it is believed that it is hereditarily transmitted.

But such a condition exists. Even among midgets some anomalies are possible. All these tidbits Kalpana came to know through the social worker. (Swapna told Kalpana do not call them 'midget'. In English it is a derogatory term. Let us call them 'height handicapped').

Wapna asked Kalpana if she could find a job for Babal (for Babhubala) at least as office assistant.

Thus, Babal became a part of her establishment. All the students knew he was much older than them but somehow his size made him look younger and friendly too. Thus he came to play volleyball with the school players.

Elizabeth asked Swapna "you already told us about Mangala finding a circus dwarf (sorry height handicapped man) and helping him continue his studies. Is this the same story".

Swapna: “No, this is another town, a smaller place. See Kalpana is a name I have given to aavuru aiji. Aavuru can be different places. Kalpana can be different persons. So don't be confused”.

Elizabeth: “That is ok. How will you tell our primary school students, all the observations of your social worker. Won't they be confused?”

Swapna: They will be, not relevant also. But I will tell the story to children with this person Babal. Just you see. When children came she asked the children if they have seen a ‘small person’. A few said “yes, in a circus”. Someone said “in a serial on TV, He helps the police”. They are handicapped persons but they usually are very good in something. Swapna asked if they want to hear a story. Naturally children said “yes”.

But Swapna said before going to the story of a small built big person let us talk about an actual small child in our mythology. Somebody said Rama,. Another” Prahlada Dhruva. Swapna said “ none of these . I am waiting for more famous legendary child about whose ‘leelas’ movies had been made,. “ I know” said Sabeena, “ it is Krishna” many voiced said I knew iknew

Swapna: “What is special about Krishna”

“He was a child-god”

“He was very naughty”.

Swapna: “Yes. Tell one kind of naughtiness”

“He will take away butter”

“He will eat and give to other children too”

“Butter will be over”

“Pots would be broken”

Sabeena: ‘He was a small boy. Did not the mother keep butter at a high place’?

“Yes, still he got them, Know how.” They showed a TV”.

“I have also seen; boys climb and stand on another’s shoulder”.

Swapna: “ Elizabeth! Could you please find out if the children are brave enough to do that. She and Swapna did talk to children and said many were ready.

Swapna: Said, “Ask everyone to wash their feet and come”. Yes, everyone”.

When the children were busy washing their hands and feet (someone took towels from Swapna’s bag). Elizabeth and Swapna tied a rope tight across at a height outside in the quadrangle. There was a bundle tied to the rope at its centre.

That bundle is the butter. Let us go, get it. After letting many children jump and try, one went to bring a stick. No sticks, or ropes. Krishna never did.

One child: “How did he do it?”

Swapna: Like today’s Maharashtrians do it. Along with a group of friends, they make a pyramid.

Elizabeth offered to arrange the children. Tall and strong. ones stood at the bottom. On their shoulders stood a few more. Yet the bundle was higher. One more climbed up on the second group. He was about to jump and get.

Swapna said no jumping. No one. If one jumps also all will get hurt.

Elizabeth then lifted the smallest child and held her strongly and she would do it .(Narrator: It is called “Dahi Handi” ‘pot of curd’ in Maharashtra)

Story

Let us hear AA story. On one Janmashtami (Krishna Jayanthi) day, AA with her children went to see a “Dahi Handi” program on the street. In one impressively high pyramid the last one looked like a child but was really dwarf (‘small man’). AA congratulated him (“said ‘Shabash’ good, super!”)

One day a telephone call to HM said “May I see you after school?”

“Why after school?” “I want to see you madam when there will be no boys around” said the extremely feminine voice. HM asked “How about the watchman”. “Please madam I want to see you alone. “Please madam not even any children.”

(Swapna said; “Remember those were the days of old landline phone, not even with a caller-IDfinder.)

HM asked a teacher to be around in the next room. “A mysterious woman wants to meet me; please be ready for anything happening).”

The person came accompanied by a social worker whom AA knew. The social worker said: “This person here would like some means of earning. I know this is a girls’ school under you and I hope you all will not make fun of his feminine-voice”.

AA: “What was he doing earlier”.

Swapna: “He was in AIR , All India Radio . He was given roles in dramas and some announcements where female voice was needed. Now his chances are rare”.

AA: I did not know AIR (All India Radio) had such opportunities. What happened?

Swapna: Earlier female artistes were rare in AIR, except for music. Now everyone is in the job-market and Babal has no chance (Babal is his name).

AA: He can be the PT madam’s assistant if hee likes. We can only give him just enough to live by.

Present time:

J: Is this the story for today?

Elizabeth: AA was nice. She gave support to ‘poor’ persons.

One child: Did he play alongside the girls?

Another child: Did he teach how to speak in a drama?

It was school-bell, children, you all think about it and I’ll tell you tomorrow about Babal .

Next day, children had come early. As soon as Elizabeth and Swapna arrived, each was saying, “I know what our Babal can do”. Elizabeth said “shoot”.

Sabeena said, “one by one”;

C1: He knows radio dramas; he will teach them.

C2: He knows how to play “Dahi Handi”, he will teach children that.

C3: He will make pyramids with children.

C2: I already said that.

Swapna: All of you are right; Let us see what he did.

Story

As all dwarfs, Babal was also short in height. Let us see, around 4'. Sabeena come here, not even that high; See only this much (putting her hand on another smaller child's head). So, when this 'small' teacher runs with them, all children want to run.

Babal's voice was such that he can never sound harsh. The (earlier) PT Madam was very happy.

As all dwarfs, Babal's hands were short, and looked deformed. He could not stretch his hands almost 2 feet like other children. Any raising of hand was just inches above his head. So any writing he did was less than half of the blackboard. But he never bothered to write much; only some sports field sketches, or tracks.

But unlike other dwarfs his hands were extremely muscular and strong. Whether it was a gift of god or his body building, he would not tell. But someone called him 'bahubali' (strong arms) and shortened form Babal stuck on.

Swapna: The story is longer; Sabeena distribute eatables; let all eat and come back.

Present time

When the children were away, Swapna asked Elizabeth should I tell them the special things Bahubali did.

Elizabeth: "Like what".

Swapna: "Like weightlifting; body building" etc., in young children.

Elizabeth: Why ask me? Tell the story as it happened.

Swapna: Story will be interesting; If these children want those gym-like activities are they advisable? Do experts prohibit such activities?

Elizabeth: I'll find out soon and let you know.

Swapna: What I or we 'think' is not important. Are some things physical are undesirable at young age?

Elizabeth: I know some are undesirable at older age. Even yoga, if you begin later than 60, or if you have sciatica or some complaints.

This story stopped here on that day. Another time, after Elizabeth and Swapna had cleared their doubts, the story continued.

Story

With Babal coming, everyone ran and ran like experts. Even 100m dash was done by pushing against starting blocks to gain speed. But all barefoot.

(Someone asked: "Why?". Swapna said it helps to improve mind power, I may say, but really, Babal was barefoot during workout)

Story

Weight lifting was his specialty. Before real weight lifting t dumb bells, bar-bells had to be tried. Young children in those times were not exposed to these. Today's trainers

start with water bottles (plastic ones plenty lying around 500ml, 1l, 2l, etc.,). Olden days plastic was rare. Only in hospitals one saw them. But in those days fuel was wood and some like casuarinas or bamboo were smooth and round. Babal picked up those and made children practice with them.

Flip or somersault was the craze. A note was sent to the parents. "Do not let them do somersault at home; unless it is on a thick sofa like bed". In school he used the sand pit. He had to find head scarves to save the girls' hair.

Elizabeth: He could have joined Asha's group; they had large sand area and also a sand track.

Swapna: I don't know whether this Asha was anywhere near Kalpana's avuru.

Elizabeth: You mean, the person helping Babal was not Kalpana.

Swapna: I don't know. My stories are true events but all mixed-up.

Swapna asked: "What are the sports events here in our school?"

Many voices and it turned out,they were: Short distance running. Sack race. Lemon and spoon. Three legged race. and a few others like threading a needle etc.

Swapna: Perhaps it was like that in aavuru also. After Babal came, many new items came up.

Rope climbing. Pole climbing (also called Malla-khamb), Weight lifting, muscle display.

Sabeena: 'Muscles' for girls! Is it okay?

Swapna: AA thought it was very good for girls for feeling power and self-confidence.

Elizabeth: Babal could have added slogans like :

I AM STRONG.

I WILL STAY STRONG.

YOU CAN ALSO BE STRONG

Did this continue? If not why?

One, the school system and education department did not get convinced about the new events that too for girls. Second, Babal got an offer from a government training school (Army or Police I don't remember)

AA 60 SANTA CLAUS IN OUR CLASS

It was December, From the first week of December, all over the world, whether religious fervour sets in or not, shopping spree starts. India is no exception. Even in our small town, December fever began.

In India, as anywhere else in the world 'where the British ruled there was a sizable population of Christians, and certainly 'churches' Not to mention 'convent schools'

Thanks to media, the image of Santa Claus or Father X-mas- with a big belly, large red coat and cap, flowing beard – was well known even to children.

Swapna was planning to go to the school quite early that morning. She was surprised to see a Santa Claus at her doorstep. She simply said: "Who are you? Why this make up (for me)? He came in, closed the windows and the door, drew the curtains. To allay any fear, he dropped down to his knees and bowed to her:

Swapna: "Ok big boy, Why?

The man removed his huge face mask to reveal the familiar face of a Bollywood hero. He said: [For non-Indians: Bollywood is equivalent to Hollywood . B for Bombay- Hindi cinema].

"Madam, you do not know, You are well known and in Bombay (now Mumbai) too, where my bread and butter lie. I always wanted to know how I fare with children without Bollywood build-up. I had to sneak away from the press and others this morning and I can't hide too long. May I go with you to the school?"

Swapna just nodded: Santa Claus said: “Let us go by my vehicle today” Usually Swapna walks or pedals to school. This day children near the school saw a car with windows closed. They saw soon an old fat man and Swapna get out.

On the way Santa Claus told Swapna “You can call me BB (for Big Belly Santa Claus). For all of you, I was a circus clown one day.

Swapna told her students, “Our retired circus clown, and today’s Santa Claus, Big B will tell you stories instead of me. Children! Say Good Morning and welcome Big B. Sure enough so many voices.

That day was hilarious. Big B with a big coat had come with some great teaching aids, which he took one by one from his coat pockets.

On this town in down south, with very young children whose Hindi or English was not very great, this person could spend almost an hour. Not a minute of silence or boredom.

From one pocket a brown frog came out – Croak croak corak – B put his one ear very near to the frog. What are you saying? Again..... – children he says namaskara to all of you. Children laughed. From the other pocket of the coat the brought out a green frog. It was jumping up and down – Big frog said CRAKKE... B said it means “chup; quiet” – Immediately the small green one obeyed.

Toad the teacher and frog the student said nursery rhymes, learned A for Apple, said (paada) maggi in Hindi etc.. with Big B as the interpreter. [*Elizabeth to Swapna: This gentleman friend of yours knows **ventriloquism***].

Then Sabeena took over the stage. She said thank you Santa Clause. Now let us see whether you can do what we can do.

Then Sabeena and her friends demonstrated how to make the shapes of A, B, C etc... with fingers. She said 'O' is easy.

B managed easily 'I' 'T' even 'A' but some were tough. Even with 2 hands and 10 fingers some were not easy.

Since B wanted to interact with children directly neither Swapna nor Elizabeth entered. They were just spectators.

Children used the local language liberally mixed with English words, B doing similarly with Hindi, the session was going on. A lot of body and sign language was used. Occasionally Sabeena could help.

In the end B delivered a big bag – A lot of chocolates and some stuffed toys could be seen.

Meanwhile a child who had just came in shouted "Hey, Santa Claus!" ran and sat on his lap and asked "Are you really Santa, let us see". Before B could say anything the child pulled at his beard. When the fake hair partially came off revealing part of B's real face many who have seen his photos were shocked or thrilled. That was the end of the session.

He left in a hurry saying, "Good wishes to all.. Share everything without a fight."

Elizabeth said if he had not become an actor he would have been a good teacher.

Swapna said - This reminds me of a Nobel Laureate who came to the school as a street man. That can be an AKA story.

AA 61 DEMO PROJECT

TEACHING AID]

That was a day around Gandhi Jayanthi. (Oct2, observed in all schools in India). Elizabeth and Swapna were surprised to see Bob and Thimma entering the primary school lugging a huge box..

As our readers know that the ajji's (grandmas) lived, worked and were legends in an earlier generation even prior to Swapna. Swapna had the good fortune of interacting with them as a friend and was exposed to and inspired by their ideas and innovations in education. Swapna applied the methods of one of them (aavuru ajji) to make a few minutes of enjoyment to primary children.

Bob was a social worker at the present time and known to Swapna through common friends. How Thimma in his late teens came to know Bob and Swapna is not known. But today the group was there.

They had a mission. They wanted to meet the HM and get permission to engage the children.

It seems that Thimma suggested to Bob that we try with a small group of interested children before reaching a large group. Hence they are here. Bob got to work with his small gadget. Meanwhile Thimma was with the children.

Do you all know the standard saying about Unity and strength? C5 (class 5) said it is the same like you said " Union is Strength ". Elizabeth the English teacher said, in higher classes we tell the proverb.

"United we stand, divided, we fall".

C3 (class 3) student opened his hand and then made it into a fist and mimed a boxing action. Someone told a proverb on fist in the local language.

Bob came in and said Thimma is going to show you another kind of strength. Thimma showed with his two hands fingers Intertwined. Surely it was quite strong. To make it participatory, Elizabeth took over the concept.

Two children first did shake hands. This could be easily separated. They tried different ways. Finally intercalating fingers was found to be the strongest.

Now Bob came in. This is the principle behind making cloth – cloth as all children know is made of threads. Children now began to act smart. When cloth tears we can draw out long long threads.

Sabeena showed her smartness by pulling Visalaakshi's knee length hair and "see by plaiting this hangs straight. Otherwise in strong wind her hair will go haywire (this is a hard word in English- Local language is easy) and Vishalaakshi will be like Bhadra kaali. [To which Vishalaakshi said you always look like a ghost] [*note for foreigners- Bhadra kaali is imagined as a fierce powerful goddess with open unkempt hair*]

Some boys said they make kite-flying threads almost like rope by twisting.

Swapna asked Bob whether testing his idea with children was over. Bob said "No, this is only the beginning. Then he brought out from his huge bag, a hand held loom. He said "I saw this in Assam. There every household makes

their own towel like clothes by this tool. I want to see if the children liked the idea.” One by one they all tried and they were excited. Would you like to make a saree, or dhoti or towel? “Sure”. Bob said let us make a very small towel. He had brought with him a frame with pegs- strings were wound round the pegs along with the lengths. Another bundle of string was attached to a solid runner which can be pulled from either side.

[Bob told the elders; these are like warp and weft of a loom. If there is exact equivalent in the local language use it. Otherwise tell them the long ones are main and the small moving one is cross. Like main st and cross st.]

After the demo, children were excited. Do they make all the clothes we wear, in this way? Bob asked Swapna to answer. Yes, in olden days 6 or 9 yard sarees’ long thread will occupy the length of the Weavers’ Street. The cross strings will be inserted manually and tightened. Thimma said that was the only practice many hundreds of years ago. Then the handloom with rollers for threads came. Am I right bob sir?

Bob: “Yes, you are almost right. Those were single person operated handlooms. Then came power looms.’

Swapna asked children if they had seen one- Some had seen in their grandparents’ villages. One said there was one in the local silk factory.

Vijayalakshmi said in their village cots were made using coconut fibre (coir) ropes. One can sit or sleep on it.

Sabeena said cots made with jute ropes or thick cotton tapes were more comfortable.

Swapna explained. Bob was an engineer now doing what he called 'hobby work'. In sugar cane growing Kabbur he tries to use the throw away parts to make fibres and use them for weaving. Elizabeth: "Clever of him. Perhaps he had worked in his native place with coconut fibres."

Before going, Bob and Thimma wanted to distribute eatables to all (both children and adults). What have you brought? What a co-incidence! Same as Swapna used to share. Puffed rice and biscuits.

Elizabeth: Are you satisfied? Can we come to your programme

Bob: Pilot project worked. Now I can go to HM for a program to which you are all invited. We will inform the date and you can come in our van.

AA 62. NO ONE HAS TIME

[FAILURE]

In spite of the goodwill (shall we call it 'fame') of the children towards Swapna for all her activities with them, the crowd around her was not big. It averaged about a dozen, occasionally reaching 20. But there was a core group present everyday well in time, not missing any pre-school time gathering, willing to do and cooperate with whatever Swapna says or does. This aspect was satisfying to Swapna... as any social worker knows.

Not only was this core group honest and serious, but they became friendly also. Some of the names the readers know: Elizabeth, the English teacher, Sabeena a smart child called also as C1, Bhaskar sir, the mathematics teacher, Chinnamma, office assistant. This resulted in boldness to ask questions to Swapna.

On this day, conversation went like this:

"You say you are a story teller. Right?"

Swapna "Yes"

"Do you make them up?"

Swapna "No"

"Are they from any book, like Pancha Tantra?"

Swapna "No"

"Does somebody tell you ?"

Swapna: "Partly yes, partly no"

"How is that?"

Swapna: "Can anybody here answer this question?"

As usual, the chieffan of Swapna army, namely child 1 took over.

Child 1: Swapna Aunty told us first day itself that she will tell us AA (Aavuru Ajji) stories. So Swapnaji has seen Aavuru Ajji and done all these activities in her school.

Other children: "Yes, yes, we forgot."

In that case we should see the nice aunty Aavuru Ajji. What was her name?

Swapna: Kalpana.

"Where is Aavuru?"

Swapna: "It is a secret"

"That means you will not tell us"

At this juncture Swapna was in a dilemma. She had to either confess that she made up a Kalpana or tell them the truth of Kalpana. She decided to tell the truth.

She started with an extensive pre-story sermon. But soon realized that it is not necessary with young children who know only black or white. So she said: "Yes Kalpana was a true person, but I changed her name. She and myself were great friends. I have helped her in many ways. You can say we were twins. That means she was not very old."

"Can we visit that place called aavuru by you?" another.
 "Is she still at Aavuru?" third one .

Swapna: Now I have to tell you the truth.

Aavuru is not one town like Mysuru. Wherever Kalpana, my friend lived is Aavuru. That is I call it Aavuru.

Swapna said to Sabena, “You tell us what does Aavuru in Kannada mean?”

Child 1 [Sabeena,] : It means ‘that town’.

Swapna: That is all. It says it is not here.

Sabeena, So there is no Aavuru. So all are imagination.

Swapna: No. Kalpana lived and worked in many places. So Aavuru is true but can be anywhere.

One could see some disappointment, looking at the faces around.

Child 1 asked “OK, can we go to one place They may be playing these games even today.”

Swapna: I have to tell you another truth. All Kalpana’s games did not continue.

Child 1: “Are the games not like what you show us here? Then they must be good”

Swapna: They were and are nice, fun. I just repeat some of Kalpana’s games. But there was no one to continue.

Someone: Other teachers or Headmistress must have seen. Why can’t they continue?

Swapna: Children!, will you quietly listen to me. It will take a while.

Child 1: Let us all silently listen to Swapnaji OK? “Ok “Ok” many voices.

We have heard only some stories of AA. First one was mirror. One day someone pushed another. His head hit

the mirror, Mirror broke. There was blood. So no more mirror.

“Did police come?”

“No, nobody wanted the police in the school. It was only a small wound. Plaster was applied.”

Another idea was sunlight brought to the hall. That was a game. To a big room we need masons and buildings. It is not easy.

Children, you can understand. At home, your mother or elder sister combs your hair etc. Here teachers cannot do to so many children. At home they will be doing to their children.

I am a retired person, I help you here and go home and rest. But your teachers have to do more work. Nobody wants to do more work.

This was the story of Aavuru Ajji. She started many good programs. **But she had no one to help her, because NO ONE HAS TIME.**

Child 1 ended the discussion by saying “Swapnaji! At least you are giving us your time”.

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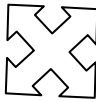
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