

# PLAY and WIN

## *Aavuru Ajji stories.*

Stories of grandma from a far-off town

A collection of children STORIES

PART 1 Stories AA 1 to AA 35

Mysore D. Swapna

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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, no competition, no 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 Ajji( meaning the grandma of the remote place ). Hence the title: **PLAY and WIN – Aavuru Ajji 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 a 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 readers 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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## AAVURU AJJI STORIES

### AA1. MIRROR, MIRROR [1]

[SEEING A MIRROR]

Swapna to the readers:

My story starts from a school in the present time. I get to any school which would welcome or at least tolerate me, a rank outsider in their premises. I reach well before the school starts and my story- telling starts as soon as I get a victim [ 'bakra' in Hindi] Let me begin today's report by saying that I just gate-crashed here.

Kalpna was an experienced teacher and a resourceful person. She was my close friend too. [She is the one I refer to as aa or aavuru ajji

She had also told me that in case of children, alone or in a group, a smile could be as good an 'ice-breaker' as an offer of ice-cream

Thus, I just smiled at c1 [child 1] and indicated a place near me,. I just opened my standard shoulder bag and slowly took out the contents one by one. The usual stuff viz. Eatables, water bottle, were there but I did not even show any of them. They can wait for the end of the session; if at all any session took place on this first day. A small compact set mirror, comb and hand kerchief came out.

Now c1 came forward to look at the mirror in my hand. I gave it to her. . Then some more children were near me. I asked them to sit. I asked c2 [child 2] if she wanted to see her face in the mirror. Actual words were; "' Do you want this?' [In the local language this will be only one word - to be precise 'beka?' Kannada].

C2 just nodded her head, her eyes almost speaking the words: "May I? .I gave the mirror. When she tried to return it to me, I just gestured that the mirror can go around.

*One child [let me call her c10] who in my opinion must use the mirror did not come forward. [It is always the case, isn't it? We, the democratic minded, want utilities to reach the needy; but the truly needy group never knows about it; or do not come forward to use it ; they have to be encouraged, invited, cajoled to come forward and claim what was meant for them]. I sent c1 to encourage c10 to come near. Of course children have their own ways of including other children.*

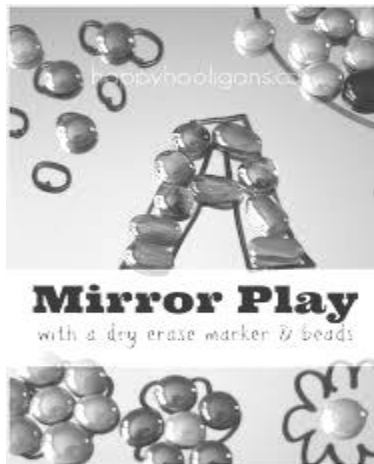
*I ran the comb all along the already existing central partition of hair all the way to the back of her head. Then I gently combed both the sides. When I started plaiting one side c1 came with open curiosity.*

*C10 said in general to both me and the others: "My mother was not well today". I asked c1 ; " Do you want to plait the other side?" She did not say anything but took the bunch of hair in her hand.*

*[for the sake of readers who are not familiar with school etiquette in India such as foreigners –girls at the school level wear double partition of hair with central divide parting], Non-symmetric or other fashions are rare. In fact this is one way of finding if a girl had passed out of school and going to college] This is my account of my first day in the school with a mirror and a comb.*

*Except for the main characters of these stories personal names of others are not important. In this narration c1 is a child – when boy or girl has to be mentioned it will be b1, g1 etc. similarly s1, s2 for students*

*If some readers like to have specific names I suggest c1, c2 etc can be substituted by your own Chandana, Sahana Christina, Susanna Chandni, Shabnam etc.*



## AA 2. MIRROR , MIRROR {2}

Kalpana and Darpana were friends. Both were living in aavuru. Darpana got a good job in another town.

It was Darpana's idea that a full length mirror helps children both in looks and outlooks. She said so while gifting her mirror to the school

Anyone could have seen, if only they could observe, the difference in the appearance of girls. – Shirts smoothed, ties adjusted, hair adjusted by the lithe fingers of oneself or of her friends, ribbons neatly tied mostly by others. On top of all these minor actions one could hear a lot of giggling, good-humoured taunting etc.- These were some of the immediate results [of the mirror on the wall of the school.]

Some students shied away from the mirror or its vicinity since they knew they were poor.

This observation made Kalpana to realise that a mirror can lift the morale of the fair and gifted. The same

can also do the opposite to the under-privileged. Then she asked the assistants whether they could assist such students. Some asked how and then Kalpana said, “Just be observing them as you had done and let me know. **Afterwards we could discuss what can be done.**”

Kalpana had a firm conviction that second-level employees will certainly have a soft corner for fellow humans of the same class. This turned out to be so true that those girls who were shy [ or reticent or unwilling ] to look at the mirror could go to a small room where the assistants were ready with oil, comb, soap, towel etc, and also physically ready with a will to help. One could see that those who emerged from this room directly go to the mirror. One can also see them mutually grooming one another. **There was camaraderie here, not vanity or competition.**

Did you like the story?” Swapna asked the students.

C1 said, “Kalpana had done long back what you have done now and here. I like it “

“Me too, we all like the story” this was C2 and others .

One feeble voice was heard.” Where was the story? No hero, no animals”

Swapna asked if anyone else thought the same way.

C1 said, “ Yesterday I was the star of the story, passing the mirror and coaxing C10 and the others.”

C2 said, “In Kalpana’s time all the poor students were the stars.”

“In that story the real stars were the super aunties, the assisting staff.” said another child.

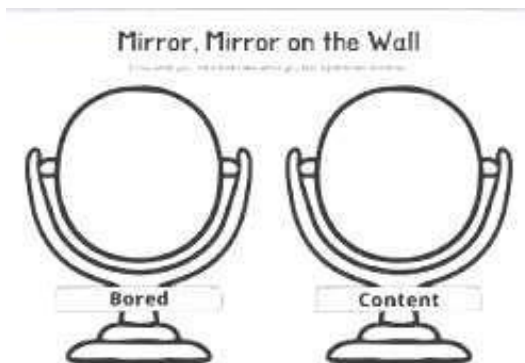
Swapna asked “ How about Kalpana aunty?”

All agreed “Yes, she too”

Swapna asked “ How about Darpana aunty?”

All agreed “Yes, she too”

*[note for foreigners: Swapna, Kalpana , Darpana are truly given names to girls all over India . Here they have their meanings also. Dream, imagined, mirror respectively]*



### **AA 3 MIRROR mirror on the wall [3]**

Swapna asked “No uniforms today, is it a holiday?”

Someone said, “Don’t you know madam, it is ‘colour dress day’?” Now Swapna recalled that in any school in these parts [of India] one day in a week, usually Saturday was ‘sports dress day’ i.e. white and one more day was usual or casual dress. Of course irrespective of the colour of the dress cleanliness, plaits, ribbons were just routine.

Before she could unload her shoulder bag and before she could summon children, she saw in front of her, a truly colourfully dressed person in a saree and matching blouse. She was much taller than Swapna’s clients.

This person introduced herself and said she was a teacher in the school. “Students were talking about you and I thought I could meet you, if you don’t mind”.

Swapna said “Welcome. I just spend time with the young ones. See, here are my friends of two days”

By this time our small group was in place, with a chorus of “Good morning, Madam” each child saying it two times. It was obvious that the greeting was meant for Swapna aunty and the teacher, one each.

*Activities began. Swapna had with her today a few mirrors which many ladies use. It is called a make-up mirror set. It has an ordinary mirror and another a gentle concave one which the user employs for finer work like applying kumkum or kajal [ for non-Indian readers; kumkum- mark on the forehead; kajal – black eye lining] . Parents would not approve of a make-up kit for young children even though it is a household item. Of course they are right said Swapna, any extreme make-up even lipstick is inappropriate for school children, She had taken the bold step of exposing young children to such an article and T1 could soon see why.*

*Even the experienced teacher, T1, was surprised at the enthusiasm shown by the students. The usual checking one’s face in the [ordinary] mirror was done.*

*Then the magnified image attracted all the students without exception. Some opened their eyes wide to see it magnified in the mirror, some with open mouth to look at their teeth. One says, “Hey, let me see your railway gate” [ this is an euphemism for a mouth with front teeth missing}. The other replies, “Go, Go to the railway station”*

T1 was truly impressed by the interest shown by the students. ‘

One activity- just a few minutes- everyone is involved’ she wondered.. MAKE-UP MIRROR Swapna explained to T1 , which can also be heard by the others: “See this mirror is plain like a slate. The other mirror is slightly

curved. Like this palm when you receive 'Prasad' from the priest in the temple. [*for non-Indians : Prasad or the offering by the priest is reverentially received by cupping hand - prasad can be holy water, a leaf, a flower , holy ash or even a tasty sweet*]

[ MIRROR [1],[2],[3] above are short versions of the same title earlier given in the booklet SALAD PLATE OF AJJI STORIES- FOR A DETAILED AND MORE READABLE VERSION SEE THAT BOOKLET ]



## AA 4 CATCH ME, IF YOU CAN

### [PLAY USING MIRROR]

It has become common in the school, that some primary school children (now the number was in double digits) come much earlier than the school-starting bell. They were surely waiting for Swapnaji.

On that day, Swapna came **stood** outside said “Good Morning ”, removed her chappal and placed it near the entrance [\*To non-Indians: chappal- slip on shoes].

Child 1, the child who met Swapnaji on the first day, now her assistant, came and put her sandals near Swapnaji’s footwear. Not a word was spoken; there was now a neat row of footwear outside the room. Swapnaji said “very good” and all entered the room.

Now, about the room itself. It was never a class room. It was a small walled area, perhaps used once for storing construction material. We need not ask who gave this place to Swapna or why Swapnaji chose etc. Irrelevant for our story. It was not interfering with the school - Some little free space without ANY furniture – Good enough for Swapnaji’s interaction with a mixed group of students (of varying ages and classes).

Today (meaning that day) The December sun was bright outside. Swapnaji said what shall we do today? She knew and had come prepared to do some activity, but it is her way of planning by asking (democratic! why big words) could we all stand in the sun?

How about some play?

Then the game of ‘CATCH ME IF YOU CAN’ began.



Swapna took out the plain mirror from her shoulder bag, gave to child 1. By this time, Child 1, Swapna and all the others were in the sun; the bright sunshine and the cool breeze in this South Indian (tropical) weather was fine. It should be perhaps until the school bell time.

**It is time that Child 1 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.**

“Sabeena! shine the light on me” said Swapna. Now one of you stand here? Catch me if you can” When Child 2 came to Swapna and hesitated to touch the elderly ajji like aunty, By the time Swapna moved away and light was not any more on her. But Sabeena clever as she is, had turned the mirror so that the slab (rectangle) of reflected light was again on Swapna. Quick to see his Child 2 touched Swapna and said “you are caught”

In the next few minutes Swapna was made to sit in a corner, child 1 was directly facing the sun in another corner. Sounds of “catch me” “caught you” and lot of laughter.

Soon, the midmorning sun was hotting up and added to vigorous moving and running. Swapna could see the children a little hot and sweating. She called a halt to play.

It is hot outside. Can someone say how to play “CATCH ME IF YOU CAN ” game indoors? Child 1, clever as she is, went out and turned the mirror in such a way that the reflection came inside the small room. Now

someone said we cannot play here; there is no place enough to run.

Swapna suggested: “How about only one running first and afterwards others?” “Let us try” they tried and it was difficult to target a person from the small area available for reflected light. The slab (rectangle) image got inside somewhere.

Swapna again suggested: No need to target a person. The image can be on the wall.

Reflection moved, Children moving along the side of wall; jumping to catch the image which was high on the wall stooping, bending when the image went down. Just as the outdoor game, this indoor game also was raucous. Finally, “all game, no story today”.

One said “Sorry Swapnaji, tomorrow”.



## AA 5 SOLAR LIGHTING – AA STYLE

*[APPLICATION- MIRROR]*

“Are we all ready for another Aavuru Ajjii’ story?” Swapna asked the children.

After getting OK. She began showing charts and maps as if it was part of geography class. Pre-school children could be heard asking the elders “is this a game?” Swapna said that Aa [ avuru ajji] played with charts to make even young children interested and that she {Swapna} would try to do the same .

Suddenly there was power-cut. There was no chance of electricity that day. Dim lights were not enough to discuss maps and charts. Anybody else would have postponed the class for the next day or later. Not Aavuru Ajjii. She said we should find some way. She summoned the science teacher and asked how he can help. While he was thinking about batteries or other light sources available in the lab Aavuru Ajjii asked: “Do you have a large mirror?” Immediately science teacher (sc) got the hint and arranged a mirror on blackboard stand in the sun. The students who were familiar with ‘catch, caught’ game manipulated the blackboard stand so that the reflected light will fall on the maps and charts.

No matter if the teacher and the students were in dark or dim light, charts got illuminated. Later for the elder group similar game was played with maps . One child’s finger on the map. Where are you now? Answer given, finger moved to east, west, north or south . Where are you now? Guess and answer, Swapna explained..“Where is the story?” One child asked. Swapna had to be frank. All the events are not like stories with a hero villain etc. But it was some fun. Wasn’t it ?



## AA 6. DANCING IN THE RAIN

*[GET WET]*

It was still raining; heavy on one day; nothing next.

Swapna saw the rain was heavy enough to get wet and not violent with thunder and lightning. She told the children that that day was good for ‘**dancing in the rain**’. She asked: “How many will come?”

These children had always been chastised for getting wet. To intentionally go into the rain... was unthinkable. Then Swapna’s admirer (whom we called Sabeena) came and asked should I wear my shoes? Swapna: No, we are not going to the road or wild places. Only in the open cemented place: Barefoot is the best”

Now Sabeena and Swapna were in the rain They raised their hands. Slow movements, smile, enjoying. Hand like a bowl; drink the drops that fall. Or make it a dance movement. Neither Bharatanatyam nor Kuchipudi. If someone knows and shows classical poses or movements, it is fine. None also is OK.

Soon everyone was in the rain except one. That was Elizabeth. Children tried to drag her in.. She said, “Excuse me, I have no time to go home, change and come”

Child 1 asked, “How about us?”

Swapna: “You are asking now. Let us see”.

Strict rules: No jumping, no splashing water on others; Groups dance also OK.

Elizabeth: Started (from her safe place in the verandah).

Rain Rain .....

One child who knew nursery rhymes joined “ Rain Rain, go away”...

Elizabeth: “No, no, in our place it is:

Rain rain come down  
Come Come to our town  
We want to play  
Come to us today.

Swapna: said Kalpana,...Aavaru Ajji had a similar version

Rain Rain don't go away  
Little Rani wants to play  
Rain Rain please come  
To our place, you're welcome.

When the rain stopped ALL were soaking wet, except one, the saree- clad English Madam.

Swapna had taken all the precautions. She through Elizabeth got permission to send the children back home, and option to come back.

Swapna had taken with her a change of clothes for herself. For the others she had a number of pajamas of different sizes, gowns for the children. These were taken out and approximately size matched. During this time Elizabeth got everyone dried with the towels, which she and Swapna had brought.

Being somewhat new to this South Indian town's rain, Swapna had been careful to bring some malams (rubs, ointments], inhalers (with menthol). Elizabeth with extra caution burnt some incense powder (used in temples, during poojas at home, and in durgahs) and the whole place became a little warm and quite aromatic.

Some hot milk laced with turmeric arrived. While slowly drinking this Swapna told how AA Kalpana and their children danced in the rain.

Swapna described the number of things AA Kalpana used to do in the rain; They found wind direction using towel umbrellas and just the slant of the rain Kalpana taught them how to reverse the wrong folded umbrella by keeping it against the wind.

Each one was given 1 m x 1m plastic cloth and see how far they can go without getting wet.

Kalpana had a number of gowns, jabbas and kameez...After toweling themselves everyone was given a rubbing of malam (ointment) and sent home.

Aavaru Ajji went later to visit the homes of children to check.

In spite of all precautions a few children were not sent during rainy days. Many gowns too did not come back.

Yet Kalpana had this program during the rainy season.

Of course Kalpana and Mangala had the bigger program of hugging the clouds’.

Swapna: I can try to recall some lines from the nonsense rhymes they used to chant. Perhaps I am making it up myself.

*Pavus padla paavus padla*

*Dongravar padla dongra zaala geela*

*Pavus padla paavus padla*

*manjravar padla manjra zaala geela*

*[ pavus - rain – Marathi – geela –wet  
other words not important ]*

This is like in English  
*rain rain rain*  
*rain fell on the plain*  
*rain fell on the cat cat got wet*  
*rain fell on the mat mat got wet*

In this area we can encourage children to make their own nonsense rhymes in their own language. Liz said, “They have already done and I give you a few lines “

[maLey- rain, odde- wet Kannada-  
 other words just for rhyme]

*maLey maLey maLey joru joru maLey*  
***maley mele** biddu maley aagittu odde*  
***thaley mele** biddu thale aagittu odde*  
***kai mele** biddu kai aagittu odde*  
***mai mele** biddu mai aagittu odde*

*maLey maLey maLey joru joru maLey*  
***katte mele** biddu katte aagittu odde*  
***batte mele** biddu batte aagittu odde*  
***bussu mele** biddu bassu aagittu odde*  
***hasu mele** biddu hasu aagittu odde*

*maLey maLey maLey joru joru maLey*  
***naayi mele** biddu naayi aagittu odde*  
***thaayi mele** biddu thaayi aadaLu odde*  
***bekku mele** biddu bekku aagittu odde*  
***kokkare mele** biddu kokkare aagilla odde*

[ last lines bekku- cat      kokkare- crane (bird)  
 Cat got wet – crane did not get wet]



## AA 7. MONSOON FOR US

[PAPER BOATS]

Swapna said Aavuru Aji worked in schools in a coastal area where monsoon was heavy. Hilly areas where monsoon rains created hundreds of streams and dozens of waterfalls. She can take children and show actual effects of rain on land.

Swapna further said, "We also have good rains in the monsoon. Nowadays there is an office where scientists can say when rains will come."

"Are you sure?. My papa gets wet every time it rains."

Swapna said, well, it is not much here. But nowadays we can be ready with umbrellas.

How many have umbrellas and raincoats?

Only a few said yes and showed "See Aunty?

Swapna: "Very good. Tomorrow and day after please bring. Tell your parents that there will be rain."

One bold child asked: "How do you know?"

Swapna: "It is here on this page in newspapers Also on TV and radio. Or you can telephone the office. I told you just now that there is a special office to study weather."

Child 1: I should tell my papa.

Swapna: He will know; but he should not go out in a hurry without umbrella.

Swapna: OK, if it rains what shall we do?

All: "Get wet, dance and bring change of clothes".

Swapna: No, it may be very much rain. Let us do some work today and see the rain from here, safely.

Child 1: What work.

Then Swapna brought a thick plastic sheet/board and kept it slanting in the slightly higher part of the quadrangle. Under this she made children keep small rocks etc.. to imitate a mountain. Similar set up was made at another location. This will be enough today.

Next day they all saw rain falling and streams flowing. Then they spread some mud and sand.

The third day also this continued. When finally the rain stopped, Swapna and children had a field day. Literally 'a field day' – out on the quadrangle.

Swapna: asked what do we see here?"

Some elder children showed - see rain falls on the mountains - Rivers flow down.

Swapna showed how water flows as per the slope - with turns and downward like a river - This is how rivers are formed.

Swapna: Let us see where they go.

Then they saw after making path through mud and sand, they reached the gutter corner of the quadrangle.

Elder children said: That is the sea.

Some clever child came with a stick, Can I make a river? Yes, here. But really it needs great engineering.

## AA 8 - DANCING CLOUDS

*[WALK THROUGH]*

Kalpana had always great time with primary and middle school children.

One of her favorite games is called dancing clouds. A large Rangoli map outline of India drawn in the ground. Idea of water cycle and the major monsoon rains (southwest) together was **demonstrated** in a crude dance form.

In the real Aavaru ajji series, instead of describing the procedure, Swapna made children do the dance. Some water bottles and buckets were used - A blue length of saree/cloth/veil/ was used for sea – Brown for mountains.

Two sets of buckets were used -large one on the Himalayas -smaller ones in the Western Ghats.

The sun shines , water in the sea shows unrest- strong wind blows – cloud moves in the direction of the wind – stopped by mountains [i.e. brown hands pushing dark forms , clouds- water pours into the buckets

Kalpana called geography teacher/class teacher to discuss after the show. Why were children squatting on the blue saree. Why did they start jumping up and down. What is the white veil carried by child 1 child 2 child 3. On the hills black veil joined the while veil what do you understand.

This were neither rehearsed questions nor taught earlier just impromptu. Mostly children could guess and ‘ feel’ though unable to describe scientifically accurately. If no answer came the elders helped,



## AA 9 MY BOAT, YOUR BOAT

[*PAPER BOATS*]

Like the other days in August, that day also, rain had stopped and water was flowing slowly Swapna brought the children out.

“Do not get into the wet area. Let us be here on the verandah.”

“Which is the north., Child 1, you go and stand there”

“Which is the east; child 2 you go and stand. Child 3 can go to the west

Elizabeth got the idea when C4 said, may I go to the south, she said “No need, we are all here.”

Elizabeth thought our quadrangle is almost a square. It does not matter; a map can be imagined.

Swapna had earlier noticed that the north side of the open area was slightly higher. Many streams of water were flowing, ending up in the gutter on the other sides.

Swapna told the children, what we see here tells us about the origin of rivers. For once Elizabeth intervened and took over.

“Who understood what Swapnaji said just now?”

Some elder children (perhaps higher classes) raised their hands. One said where child 1 stands is the Himalayas Child 4 raised his hand, where child 2 is, it the Bay of Bay of Bengal Where child 3 stands is the Arabian Sea.

Elizabeth asked, “Shall we go in and listen to the story of Aavaru ajji about Indian rivers?”

Some younger children said, “No-No going no Let us make boats.”

Swapna requested the office assistant to bring the content of waste paper baskets. Many boats were made. Each child was chasing his/her boat until it reached the gutter or sank.

The office assistant (let us call her Chinnamma) joined the fun. She gave a large piece of paper to Elizabeth and said with a twinkle in her eyes, “Children, let us see your madam’s boat.” Elizabeth made a boat and put it in the water. Chinnamma said “Children, watch!”

In less than 30 seconds – the boat sank, right near where it was released”. Elizabeth pretended to be angry and said, “Chinnamma! What did you do to my boat?” Chinnamma said:” “Children! Did I do anything?” “No madam, you got a blotting paper” All children laughed.

Swapna said, blotting paper absorbs (did she use the word ‘drinks’) water, becomes heavy and sinks.

Chinnamma, made a boat for the smallest child and gave it to her. She let the boat in water. It went “zoom” with the flow, without sinking. Elizabeth explained it was a glazed paper from the wrapper of a chocolate box.

One resourceful child got from Chinnamma a piece of thermocole and threw it in water and watched it jauntily dancing going up and down. By this time, all the children were with Chinnamma. One got a large piece of thermocole. Another brought hairclip and struck it on the thermocole. It was child 1 who came down from the North. This was gently put in the water. No sinking; the piece of thermocole carried the (heavy) hairclip nicely.

Elizabeth asked, “Who will tell about this?”

Child 1 was ready. This is like a ship carrying loads. I could put a toy car also.”

That day, Chinnamma was more happy than the children. She felt like a teacher.

## ***Paper Boats (1913)***

*Day by day I float my paper boats one by one down the running stream.*

*In big black letters I write my name on them and the name of the village where I live.*

*I hope that someone in some strange land will find them and know who I am.*

*I load my little boats with shiuli flowers from our garden, and hope that these blooms of the dawn will be carried safely to land in the night.*

*I launch my paper boats and look up into the sky and see the little clouds setting their white bulging sails.*

*I know not what playmate of mine in the sky sends them down the air to race with my boats!*

*When night comes I bury my face in my arms and dream that my paper boats float on and on under the midnight stars.*

*The fairies of sleep are sailing in them, and the lading is their baskets full of dreams.*

*Poem © Out of copyright  
Rabindranath Tagore*



## AA 10 TIC-TAC-TOE

[ FIELD GAME ]

It was early August and it was heavy rain outside. Yet the sincere fans of Swapna were in the school much before bell-time. *[Swapna may boast about it, but she won't, because of her innate humble nature. But as a reader we may say the power of story telling on young children. Swapna would not even grant this simple observation. She would say "what stories? There is no beginning no suspense, no climax. I am only narrating events".]*

But one could see there was a kind of bonding between a grandmother figure and young children. This bond motivates both the parties.

All these observations apart, rain outside, children inside, too much noise (of the rain itself) So, what could be done.

Suddenly at the same moment both the eldest and the youngest remembered. The latter said: You said you will teach a game. The former, "Yes, yes, tic-tac-toe. If all want to play, bring your slates."

Now watch, we will play CY (child youngest) with Swapna. One slate, 2 players. *[author's note: I hope the description of the game is not needed]* Children showed many more games using just the slate and chalk. Some were more suitable with a sharp pencil and paper *[like Joining numbers 1 to 10 arranged in a mesh]*.

When the rain stopped at last, there was water flowing in small (tiny) streams. Swapna asked who wants to see boats in the river. Of course, everyone. When one child took out a notebook to tear. (obviously) off a page, Swapna told her to stop and put the note book back in



the bag. Then she took out from her shoulder bag, newspaper or wastepaper. Now, many boats were made and they had great fun outdoors. That was the end of the day.

The next day, there was no rain. The ground was not wet; some places were slippery but the sand area was wet but OK to walk on. Swapna suggested: How about playing tic-tac-toe on the ground? Of course with overwhelming yes. Children's pair with a twig each proceeded to make the 'board' for the game. [#] Swapna suggested to use the first letter of each one's name as their symbol and write so and so wins at the end.

When the whole area was filled with squares, Swapna said, "We will leave it as it is". The purpose of leaving it as they are was known when Swapna was showing them to the teachers. She was explaining that there's a pattern in winning. Traditionally the winner (or the starter) uses the centre square. Swapna said, "Please see whether there is a pattern. Look at the second move: it can be one of a) a corner b) side. [The board being symmetric it does not matter which because all corners are equal and all sides are equal].

Maths teacher quickly made a table out of the data in front of him and aha! There is a pattern. I can find out the reason, if I think a little...Swapna said "Very well, you got it. But please do not reveal the rule. Let the fun of the game remain".

**Even tic-tac-toe is educative, in addition to fun and pastime.**

## AA 11 RUN HORSE RUN

*[HEARTBEAT, SCIENCE]*

Swapna saw one day that her tiny friends came without any books. Looked at the eldest, a questioning glance. Today is health check up day. Many teachers will be busy. So no classes. Swapna asked who will tell me what will they do today. Someone suggested that they will tell aunty by action.

Three of them went behind a cloth curtain. When we opened we see one person with a string around the neck, another with a notebook and pencil, a third person with an old wooden plank on the ground. All the rest were the students to be checked.

First, child 1 came: She is the Doctor. One student stands on the weight machine, says something; notebook person writes. Child 1 next goes to the wall, nurse puts a notebook on the head and height is noted. Now it is doctor's turn. Child [patient] sits on a stool. A rolled paper becomes a torch light.

Doctor says "Open your eyes and shines the torch; Say 'aah' shines the torch into the mouth. Grin and show your teeth. Now open your mouth and show. Then the string stethoscope on the chest. Take deep breath.

Then nurse comes, puts her finger on the hand of the student, supposed to pulse check. Swapna said thank you doctor, thank you nurses.

Meanwhile one child (2) came running. She was panting. Swapna asked "Did you come running?" Child 2 said "Yes, I saw you have already started, so I rushed."

See it tells; see how she is breathing like a dog which had chased a scooter”

Can anybody tell me why” Some elder children got the right clue.

When we run we do lot of work. So we need lot of air and oxygen. So our lungs work hard.

Swapna said it is fantastic.

Swapna soon got back that day to the school to look at the health check up. She waited for the program to be over and approached the doctor and nurse and said something to them – soon a nurse brought the stethoscope and showed each student her own heart beat and one of her friends’.

Swapna asked: “Did you hear ***lub, dub?***”

Then the nurse asked them to run around the ground rather fast. When they came back, they were asked to hear their own and friend’s heartbeat.

Swapna asked: Do you hear? One said First it was ***LUB - D..U...B***. After running ***Lubdub Lubdub Lubdub Lub dub***, Doctor and nurses explained why.



## AA 12 JUMBLE, ASSEMBLE

[NEATNESS]

English teacher Elizabeth was walking slowly which was unusual for her agile activities. Visalakshi who came running dashed on her and the pile of books which Elizabeth was balancing on both her hands fell and scattered on the floor. Visalakshi said “ayyo! “Sorry madam”. A big “oops” was heard from other children. (“ayyo! “Equivalent to ‘oops’”). Elizabeth said “Does not matter. Now pick them up and arrange them in a neat stack”.

On the top was a book titled “Jumble, Assemble”. Swapna took that and in a, mock wonder tone, said how did his author know what we want to play today. Elizabeth said, “Shall I read out (the book)?” Swapna said, “Let us play the game we have and then see the book.”

Elizabeth said I have brought a game for you. Bring the box from my bag. Visalakshi quickly went to Elizabeth’s bag and before Elizabeth could warn her she pulled the box out. Again “Oh ” and “Ayyo”. The contents scattered on the floor. Elizabeth said now collect and put back in the box. They were pencils for you, so it is ok. If they were laddus?” Children: “All will be wasted”. Sabeena said if they were eggs “UGh” was the expression.

Swapna: This helps me to begin today’s activity. She brought out a few 4 piece puzzles and gave to the younger set. They could easily do it. Many said they had done that at home. Those who have not done at home, now can assemble, said Elizabeth. After one round of simple puzzles , which was over in a short time, the

pieces increased in number to 6,8,12. Even those who had puzzles at home tried here. One said, these are new pictures and more colours.

The next day Elizabeth was accompanied by another woman whom she introduced as a colleague. Let us call her Ganga (and G for Geography which she teaches). G had for long cherished the idea of bringing geography to very young children. No need to wait for formal introduction of the subject.

Today she brought 4,8,16 piece puzzles of the outline map of India. She had cut them into squares so that students can easily assemble by looking at the specimen picture. Then the same was made into random shape cuttings. This could only be solved by a few. But after seeing the Assemble, the young ones said if only we had tried a like more we could have also done it. Shape cuttings. This could only be solved by a few. Silly' things but after seeing the assemble

Children happy was she said she could fry world map with high school children.

Seeing the elders being happy with 'silly' things done by children like her, we said, "We do Thin every day in our house". Everyone was surprised. "What do you do?" Someone said "she is only talking, ( Sabeena said this; she said ' throwing ' word- Phenking [in Hindi]) we forgets the cap of her water bottle so her mother has given her a water bottle whose lid will hang by the bottle when opened". We said "About water bottle what you said is true. About breaking and assembling what I said is true. I'll show you". True to here words we brought next day a box. It was a 'train-set'. You assemble everything,

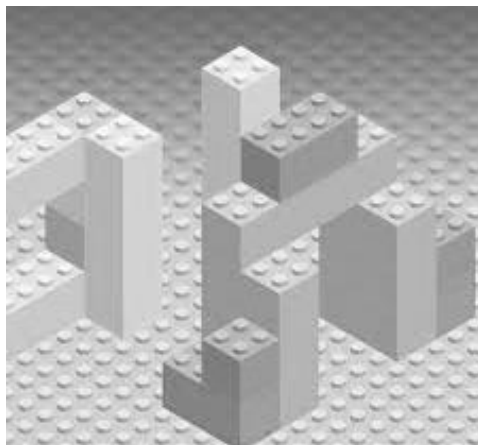
from the tracks, to signals, bogies, engine etc., Elizabeth with a view to giving chance for the others a chance to self-learn, told Vishalaakshi you are the 'director' for this. Even elder children will come and ask you when they don't know how to do. This activity occupied most of the time.

When the children got up to go Vishalaakshi looked at Elizabeth. "who will put them back in the box?". So Elizabeth had to make everyone stay back until the pieces were neatly put in place.

Swapna was highly satisfied. This is what Kalpana aavaru ajji called it "Do and Learn". She used to say "A place for each thing; and every thing in its place"

Elizabeth said this statement looks like the principles of management in Japanese. Our MBA friends show off with such statements.

Swapna: We do not need Jargon to play with or impress children. They are natural and so we can also be.





## AA 13 WRITING ON THE [WALL]

*[BLACKBOARD]*

As always that day quite a few students had come well before bell time. Of course now a days Swapna had come prepared herself for any unseen situation. That day was cold with a drizzle. So, quadrangle (open space) was ruled out. All huddled into a small space. Swapna's kitbag contained a roller blackboard for any impromptu teaching help. But this one she found was very willing and cooperative school. [In fact she had a few fans among the teachers]. So she had got a blackboard fixed on wall of the small room.

By this time a routine had evolved in this small group. Following a signal from Swapna one senior student says "I am ready" or just "ready" and sits down . All the others follow one by one and form a neat semicircle around Swapna. Any newcomer will take a few minutes but can easily follow suit. [Swapna had suggested only the word "ready" No other vernacular equivalent. Any non-Indian reader of these stories, please note, this and a few other English words are used as such in most of the Indian languages (spoken)]

When about ten "ready" sounds were heard, all were seated. Swapna "Today we cannot go out. Shall we sit inside? If you take out your slates, we can do something. I have some sheets of paper for those who do not have slates.

"I have a question paper here We can write the answers" "No, no, cheating Swapnaji. You too! We came to listen to story, not write exams"



“OK I will tell you a story from AA’s school. But to tell the story I have to use the blackboard, all right.”

Kalpna once wanted to know how all students get A+ (or high marks) and only a few can read. What she did I will show on this blackboard. She wrote:

Fill in the blanks in the following, using the same letter twice: (all in small letters)

B - - K      B - - T      W - -K

Do you think the children in AA school, Could write? Shall we see what you do? Take your slates and write, High school students will help me check.

Some wrote the expected answers. Some others have written BARK, BANK, BACK, Some have written BEST, BELT. High school students explained ‘The same letter’ in the questions: ANSWERS: BOOK, BOOT, ‘BEET’ ok but our children may not know.

When AA asked the English teacher, she said, “We explain the question”

AA then went to question papers in other languages. Here, equivalent sentences in English are given.

*(for the readers)Write the antonyms of: (some words) justice, day, .... Write synonyms of: (some words) the sun, water )...*

*[For non-Indian readers: many synonyms from ordinary usage can be found in most of the Indian languages].*

It turned out that all the language teachers explain or read out the questions Only the so called ‘final’ important examinations (called ‘Board exams’) this is not allowed.

These discussions were not of interest to Swapna's young children.

*[These aspects , Swapna said to herself, she can highlight in AKA story meeting in the teacher's meeting.]*

One child asked where is the story?

Another asked: What happened next? Swapna then explained how AA school children were happier than anybody else because English question papers contained local language also and some examples too..

In language questions papers, though the strict grammar terms 'synonym' 'antonym' were used, examples were given...

Swapna asked. Is this a story with a good ending?"

One child said: Yes, yes.

Another child said: Can we have similar in our school?

Swapna: You have to ask your teachers about that.

*[It became another AKA story]*

*[author's note; aa kaala ajji are stories involving another friend who was HM of a high school- swapna narrates them to teachers at the present time]*



## AA 14 COMPETE WITH ELDERS

*[BLACKBOARD]*

What Aavaru Aiji did with young children was to allot lower half of the big blackboard to children and each was given a piece of chalk. In the allotted square each can write/draw etc. until the square is filled or the chalk is over. Any noise is just overlooked.

In the end you could see all sorts of things. Smiley; Circle, egg; just rounds, long lines; simple smear like white wash.

Swapna remembered that AA never ignored ANY creative work by children. The simple way is to ask: "What is this?".

Answers can be amazing. The child with a whitewash said: "It is a dark room; there is no light." What is in the room; "Don't you see a black cat?" For this child white can be black. No logic, no arguments.

There are no rules. Swapna realized each child is an artist with imagination, skill may be lacking.

Some may write A, B, C, D or multiplication tables or a tall tree. They ape the teacher, which is also OK for Aavaru Aiji. Expression is what was needed and it was there.

Swapna had a problem; other children also wanted their portion of the blackboard. Sometimes convince the earlier child to erase and hand over the space to another. Sometimes, "Tomorrow you will get this space".

## AA 15. WHERE WILL I WRITE ?

*[BLACKBOARD]*

As usual Elizabeth, Sabeena were there to greet Swapna. Soon many children arrived. Swapna said, 'Let us learn how AA learnt a new subject. First we will read. First myself or Elizabeth. Next one of you. Then while one of you reads, another write on the board. Shall we start ?'

Elizabeth had selected some random lesson which will be easy for anyone to understand, she knew this was a mixed group, not one class or one lesson to be learnt in detail.

She read. Sabeena repeated. It had only a few sentences. 'Heat water. It becomes steam, goes up. If cooled, becomes water again.' We know how to heat. How to cool is given in picture in the book.

Elizabeth : 'Who can draw a picture ? Let her draw on the board.'

One child came. Elizabeth showed the picture. It was simple so that any child can draw. C1 went to the board. 'Where will I write?'

The blackboard was full of nice decorative drawings. Flowers, leaves, peacock, mangoes, garlands. All the four sides filled with nice colourful drawings. Only a small area at a height left. The space was meant for the teacher.

Elizabeth explained. It seems the Education Department wanted to make the class room colourful to make it interesting for the children.

Sabeena : 'Yes madam all outside walls are full of colour. Even people going on the road, stop and see. Comics, jokers, animals many things.'

Elizabeth : 'Did you or any children draw such nice drawings on the black board?'

C1 : 'No, madam. Some people wearing long kurtha pyjamas came and they had paint, brush and all things with them.'

Swapna : 'Ok. Some good artists have probably been asked by the Education Department,'

Then she said, 'Children today we cannot use this blackboard. Nice drawings are there. Each one shall we take out slates and continue ?'

Elizabeth : 'Outside walls are fine. Why would they interfere in teacher's work ?'

Swapna : 'Lets ask HM in our meeting.'





## **AA 16 PICTURE SEEING**

(NO HOMEWORK, NO EXAM, NO TENSION)

It must have been early or late July. Monsoon was busy in almost all parts of India Yet some children had already assembled in the usual place, as Swapna arrived. After customary greetings, Swapna said, “No outdoor today; indoor only; we can play spelling like ‘D-O-N-K-E-Y’

“There was a voice you mentioned it last time, “What is tic-tac-toe” – OK. We will play that next time.

I can tell you what Aavuru Ajji Kalpana used to do. Now it is the beginning of the school year. Children get new books. Aavuru Ajji goes to a class. She announces:

“Today’s class: No reading; no writing; I don’t write anything on the blackboard” Is it OK? Silent claps can be guessed.

New books have come. All of you have? Yes? OK. We will do what we do with a newspaper or a magazine. We will see pictures.

What shall we take first? Languages.

Somebody volunteers. OK page number x. All take your book and go to page number x. Read the title: \_\_\_\_\_ Then see whether there are pictures. Language books do not have many pictures. Perhaps one or two for each lesson. There may not be anything under the picture also. It is about a person, say Mahatma Gandhi, you can recognize it. The leader who reads the title has the right to asks questions. How many pages or paras in this lesson? Some other student will count and tell. Go to next lesson. If it is about a fox and grapes, there will



surely be a picture. Reader asks about the picture Some other takes over and this way the whole book can be glanced over within one period.

Aavaru Ajji encouraged every teacher to do this for at least one period before seriously starting lessons. If the picture happens to be a fox, a parrot, or a zoo, or Mysore palace or Delhi Parliament the teacher can get into the session and ask “anybody been to a zoo” “seen a parrot, fox, or Mysore palace” “been to Delhi” etc such an involvement is the whole purpose of the book scanning.

Aavaru Ajji Kapana tells about one such textbook – picture seeing class which she remembered. It was a language book or social studies book She does not remember. Children ask aavaru ajji many questions this time,. This is so since aavaru ajji encouraged discussions.

Her standard line was “Even if it is silly, you can ask me” One asked, “Have you seen Shivaji Maharaj?” Aavaru ajji had to tell the audience that neither she nor her great great grandmother could have seen, since Shivaji lived very long ago.

The next question was tricky to answer. “How about Mahatma Gandhi?” The truth of the matter is that Kalpana was from a small town in down South. Even though Mahatma Gandhi travelled all over India, one has to be quite alert to find when and in which train he would be travelling. Secondly even though Kalpana was old, she was still a child when Mahatma Gandhi passed away [died] in 1948. So she truthfully quoted her grandfather:

“We were all in the railway station which is about 10 miles (15 km) from our house in the village. Many of us had gone in double bullock cart, meant for carrying paddy sacks, more than a dozen persons packed like paddy sacks. We had carried huge tiffin boxes and a big copper pot of drinking water. In those days, just after the war (World War II) no train was ever on time. Certainly not the ones in which Gandhi traveled because crowds wanted the train to stop to let them have a “darshan” of the great man. We too didn’t want to miss the event, so started early and reached the railway station and reached the no1 platform (or the only platform). But then about a thousand others had the same idea. Finally, almost after 10 hours from the expected time the train came.

My grandfather continued his story. Gandhi had been requested by his aides not to get down into the crowd to avoid delay. Secondly, he would be visible to the crowd if he remained in the train near the entrance gate. My grandfather was also not so young; so some relative had lifted me up to carry on his shoulder [Readers should visualize how Swapna will be telling the story-She tells the story of Aavuru Ajji who tells a story as told by her (AA’) grandfather. All this can be imagined if Swapna used lot of body language] saying Kalpana also did the same gestures as how the child was lifted etc..

Grandfather was happy to have shown a great man to children and it was worth the trouble. He had a joke at my cost: When someone asked me (at that time) did you see Mahatma Gandhi? Yes I saw a sea of bald heads one wearing a garland or being garlanded certainly was he”.

Swapna continued: See I am telling the story of Kalpana, it has become too long. But children do not mind as long as it is a story. One can say the bullock cart was moving slow over a non-tarred mud or gravel village road. The same can be told with appropriate sounds of the cart-drivers, the bullocks, wheels grinding on stone. The story gets longer but for children it is interesting.

Then Swapna gets back to the story Text books are scanned, pictures are seen, questions asked by the students. This went on. No lessons – no writing down questions – and- answer – no homework -not even a small part of syllabus covered. But Aavuru Ajji was keen on this, namely picture seeing , also called browsing, even for books on mathematics.

As we said it was July or August and it was raining. Swapna said today's Aavuru Ajji's story is over.

Student child 1 who was always ahead in asking questions, said "Are we not going to do picture seeing here?". Swapna said, "Sure we will if you all bring new books. But next time".

Some voice: Will you teach us tic-tac-toe? Swapna said: Many will know the game already, but we will do here later sometime.



## AA 17 PICTURE SEEING (2)

*[SCANNING, BROWSING]*

In the short sessions before the start of the school, in a common place away from the class rooms, with mixed group of mostly primary students, Swapna told stories or just played or chit-chatted.

This time, it was seeing one's own textbooks – children have brought their books – Swapna took 1<sup>st</sup> standard (grade 1 elsewhere). It was ABC book in English and alphabet books in local language. One child started with A for Apple and was halfway through' the alphabet in a few minutes. Swapna said" Stop, Stop". This is not a class and we are not reading. We are just seeing pictures. Then she showed one colourful pictures. "What is this?" This time it was not so fast, but answer came. Then next child. Soon one elder child shows the pictures and one by one others should identify. Children happily found that they could reach almost half the book identifying pictures., even those not taught by their teacher. Then there were some action pictures.

What is he/she doing? "Swimming"

Some knew the word. Some did not know but they can tell in their language. Swapna said, very good.

Soon one book was over. Swapna said. OK for today. Shall we see tomorrow. But the fever of challenging or accepting has caught on "yet there is time. We will play more." Then Swapna made 2 teams. All youngsters A team. All seniors B team.

A team correct 2 marks wrong 0 marks

B team correct (+1) mark wrong ( -1) mark

This game played with many books It was a surprise that after one round A and B teams had almost the same score. In this game local language books were used in the second round. Very few wrong answers, from either side. So Junior A team won.

Swapna had to pacify both sides, but neither one minded winning or losing.

The session ended with each one telling I'll tell my mom – I'll test my sister at home etc.



## AA 18 FANTASY? WHY NOT?

[DRAWING]

Swapna told Elizabeth “I am going to do an experiment without anyone knowing about it. Not even you”

So when the children came as usual, Swapna asked them, if they would like to draw. Every one naturally said “yes”. Each was given a choice of slate, paper, blackboard . Three subjects were given. Everyone was asked to make all the three.(This writer does not exactly remember. Just a guess. *A tree, a river, a house, the sun.*

But all were selected such that none is from a book they were supposed to read)

Swapna and Elizabeth are from the present time. So when the children asked “who gets the prize”. Elizabeth said “All are good. All get first place but no prize” Swapna said we will take photo in madam’s mobile and send to your mother’s phones. That satisfied the children.

Elizabeth then asked, “What was the experiment?”

Swapna: “Just look at the pictures. They are all from the same mould. The sun is either a circle with outward lines or a part seen between two mountains. See this house. Where is such a house anywhere here?

A house is a big triangle with a circle in the centre.. Under this a standing rectangle with its horizontal side almost equal to the base of the triangle. A fairly good sized rectangle, (supposed to be the entrance to the house). Two more small rectangles on either side of this entrance (seemed to be windows). A path leading to the door is optional.

What is a sunrise? Two mounds supposed to be hills (overlapping at the lower levels). The sun will appear exactly at the meeting point of the two hills and there will be only a few rays of light (3 or 4). A river or road below is optional.

How does the sun look like?

A circle (as perfect as a child could draw) right at the high part of the page (or slate) radial lines from this circle (either touching emanating from near the circumference, never inside the circle). Nicely spaced short lines. (4,6,8). Down below road or anything else is optional.

What is a typical dog?

A side view with the tail in the shape of one of the parentheses and four sticky legs whose length is almost equal to the body of the figure-no hair. (were are all our street dogs of the same sub- species (pedigree!)) *(Sorry for asking the readers to wade through this verbiage of words. Just goes to show 'one picture is equal to 100 words')*. (The author apologies for writing too long or too hard in a primary school children's stories).

The whole exercise is fantasy. No. If it is fantasy each one will have her/his own imagined figure. It is some unknown common source **implanting images into children's mind. It is the same here or in Maharashtra or Gujarat or Madhya Pradesh or Goa.**

I will add. It is the same **Now IN 2020 or back in 1970**

Elizabeth: Is it something bad? Like A for apple in English book why not art?

Swapna: I just proved a point that we are sowing seeds of copying other's images. Why draw a tree which they



have never seen? Why not some tree in front of their house?

Elizebeth: Do you have answers?

Swapna: No, Kalpana had. I'll tell you.

### Story

Swapna began the story with a briefing. There is no villain and hero: or evil and good, in this story. As Kalpana herself told me it was just another aspect of her experiments with innocence (in this case, children) years ago she noticed stereo types. There was no one in her field (viz. teaching and learning) who thought this as a serious subject.

Kalpana did some work on her own. Those were the days when mimeographing. (or xerox) was unknown to the common man. (Here Swapna said, I belong to that period). India or world map was traced on a tracing paper from books or atlases. (Yes, each middle class household had an atlas and a dictionary or the school provided for just use)

Tracing was usually done when the child grows out of 'primary' classes i.e., when their fine-motor skills and mental discipline (not to damage the book from which the copy is being made) had improved.

Kalpana just brought this down to 3 or 4 years younger children. She had 'standard' pictures of animals ('cat', 'dog'....) from children's books. Usually they are sketches (called line drawings). Kalpana got photographs (mostly from newspapers, magazines) and made line drawings (sketches) from them. This is done either by the adults or

by the elder children. These news pictures of the same subject matter were also given to the children to copy.

Kalpana went through so much work and preparation to achieve one more 'picture' for the children and never thought she achieved anything. For her it was another experiment in teaching and learning. I stop here. You decide.

Elizabeth: It was a great experiment. What we did today with children was only half of an experiment. We discovered that we implant images (subconsciously) in the child's mind. Kalpana had completed the experiment filling up a void in the image.

Swapna: I wish I could convey your positive comment to the (unknown) Kalpana. Even in her time, a dog was always a side view of a standing animal facing left or right. Kalpana used a popular advertisement of a sitting dog enjoying music. It gave 'Realism' to fantasy. The same with a house.

*Elizabeth: Now, I get it. These children will be independent thinkers. Like a thief will wear a horizontally striped T-shirt and a cap, is only an image. The truth will have many faces, images.*

*Swapna: What you say is too abstract for these children and also some talented parents. Perhaps this the reason Kalpana did not think she was doing anything great.*



## **AA 19 PICTURE SPEAKS? Or you do?**

### *[INTERPRETATION]*

When new books arrive, picture seeing, title reading etc. were done along with the help of the teacher of that subject. One such project was given to the librarian- fortunately for management she was a graduate.

Take a text book for primary standards with a number of pictures & describe them- Now let children tell the story with the help of sequential pictures.

First book of English can be seen without any 'reading' i.e. no spelling. If the children know already [seeing the pictures] like apple, ball let them say. Try one by one. Then get the help of higher std student[s].

Next will be a cartoon or comic book- Let the conversations written there be in English or a language which the child at this stage could not read- Elizabeth tells the events of the story- children should give the dialogues- make the pictures speak.

If shadow artists- puppetry or mimicry group comes – this can be enjoyable.

Some pictures in science books also can be made to speak without 'reading' them. If new facts or theories come out let them . children will learn the correct ideas later,

Some famous or award winning photographs or paintings can also be used for seeing and appreciating . “ see it looks like it will jump on me” such comments also are part of this activity.

mimicry group comes – this can be enjoyable.

## AA 20 - HOLY DAYS

### [FESTIVALS]

Swapna knew that ASHA in her Ashram had special programs for holidays (religious or otherwise). But Aavaru Aiji and AKA (Kalpana, and Mangala) almost totally isolated themselves from any ritual.

But Swapna had her own small program for Holy days. The next opportunity (probably the next day), she asked her STANDARD QUESTION. What did you do yesterday in your family?

The responses varied as per the religion or status of the family.

After Rama Navami, some will say, we went to a temple. Another will say we had special pooja. Priests came and shlokas read. All will say we had special food.

Next day of a Muslim or Christian festival also will be similar. Going to a mosques/church or mass prayer, Again special food.

Swapna: You all enjoyed, right?

All voices said: Yes.

Once she said: I am the only person at my house. I do not observe ANY religious holiday. Otherwise I would have brought sweets/ snacks.

This last sentence had the desired effect next time. Child 1 (Sabeena) brought something to eat, immediately next occasion. All other children hesitated. Swapna asked Sabeena Do you know how this is made?

Sabeena said: We had Biriyani etc.. for our food. This one is pure sweet made of milk, ghee and gram flour.

Swapna said, so even a vegetarian like myself can take. She took a piece All the others followed and thanked Sabeena.

Children brought from their houses many items after many festivals including Krishna Jayanthi (Janmashtami). Swapna asked them in general, can we send some through Elizabeth to the other teachers? “Sure, sure”

Swapna was so glad to see SHARING ATTITUDE in children, just by a simple suggestion.

October 3<sup>rd</sup> of that year was special for Swapna and her group. Swapna had made the previous day some and brought some sweets, ladoos etc and shared with children. She said religious leaders/gods are honoured by sweets etc.. Why not for someone for whom national holiday is announced?

The effect of this simple gesture by Swapna... was seen almost after 3 months. As all of you know Independent India announces three secular, national holidays. August 15, October 2<sup>nd</sup> and January 26<sup>th</sup>. On January 26<sup>th</sup> usual children were there and one carried a huge box and gave to Elizabeth. She opened and saw a cake and a note.

“We made a tricolour [after the Indian flag] small cake at home yesterday. This big one is for all of you. Thank Swapnaji, and all of you for this idea of celebration”

Thus Holy days and Holidays were enjoyed.

Swapna made a mental note of the parent who sent the cake and message; I should share with her how AKA used to observe national holidays.



## AA 21 FLAG TO THE HOUSE

*[OUR NATION]*

It was January, For schools, it is a moth of quickly 'covering' the syllabus. [Many teachers did not know the pun in the saying 'True teacher 'uncover' the syllabus]. For sports science and such activities to be done in the next month, this was preparation and rehearsal time. Naturally every teacher was busy.

Elizabeth was worried. She was a sincere teacher. After associating with Swapna she had become a 'committed' teacher', 'committed to contributing a little more than 'covering' the syllabus and coaching for and conducting examination.

Elizabeth: came and asked what can she do. Headmistress had no time to organize mega Republic Day function. See the turmoil in the town in the last few months and so many holidays.

Swapna said, "In that case, do AA Kalpana did with middle school children"

Elizabeth "What and how?"

Swapna: Be with me, let us do and learn.

Soon a few flags, a few poles were kept ready. A brief note on 'constitutions of India" was written.

Present day even as told by Swapna "We (myself/and Elizabeth) have already told the children to be with us and follow us. After the school function 2 long rows of children in white were ready. Leading was Sabeena and ahead of her was Elizabeth, I was there as they say, to bring up the rear.



I have already made a rough map of the neighbourhood, indicating the houses of the children. Next to Sabeena were the children whose houses were the nearest on the road. 2 flags on long poles in front two at the back of the row.”

Swapna continued:

“I was very happy when many teachers voluntarily joined us- at various places controlling and helping our own lines and vehicles’ movements.”

Of course ‘Vande Mataram” etc slogans were ‘shouted’. Elizabeth has already told the first child (c1) what to do. She went in, in a few minutes, came with her grandmother, holding her hands. Some more from the same house joined. Child 1 went into some neighbouring houses and added some more elders to the group.

This process continued in other houses also. Procession was slowly down”

Many were watching us from their doors, windows, from some distance. Elizabeth and her teacher friends invited them to join us. A few came. Most of them stood rooted to the spot. Some quickly disappeared into their houses. Later I was told that they went to change dress and came running and joined us. This last information was extremely gratifying to an old soul like me.

After quite a distance of criss-crossing the streets, the procession had to be concluded. This was already well thought out by Elizabeth and friends. We reached the shade of a huge banyan tree. To our surprise a well-wisher of our school was there, having cleaned up the shady, area. A few benches for very elderly people who can’t squat. Plastic or tarpaulin sheets were already

spread out for all of us to sit cross legged or whichever way they chose.

I suggested that all of us would sit, drink water and relax and be ready. This was done for the benefit of elders and newcomers, Then saluting the flag and short march past was done. Rashtra geeth was started.

For a dreamer like me what followed was satisfying. All without exception stood up to the song.

Kalpana in her place in Maharashtra had standardized in her area, snack distribution as vada paav and water. It was called good and heavy snack, even though it was no substitute for lunch - For smaller level it was chikki (slabs of groundnut with jaggery).

I Swapna in this area have standardized into rice puff with gram, peppermint or chocolate and water. Those were there. Someone brought a basketful of ripe bananas, which was welcome. We called this program

### **“FLAG COMES TO YOUR HOUSE”**

After the function children scattered away since their houses were nearby. Some had to be escorted by elders to their or neighbouring houses.

Elizabeth and teachers saw me home. I offered express(o) coffee which was relished.

This one episode Swapna is happy to relate to any one any number of times. This was for young children. For Mangala of high school and Asha of Ashram, reading of the preamble of the constitution of India was added Elizabeth asked why? Swapna said think about it and tell us in AKA meeting.



## AA 22. PRASAD!

[SHARING]

Swapna: is preschool sessions with children had become well known. Some elders too came to see some new - comers were always there. But Elizabeth and Sabeena and the core group were always present. They surely became absent.

Once Sabeena suggested: "Shall we give eatables first itself? (Literal transition of the sentence) " Yes "Yes" – others

Swapna : "Why not? We can"

Elizabeth: Let us ask Sabeena why?

Swapna: "Nowadays many people come and Swapnaji 's bag gets empty"

*(Readers could add words to understand in the context; 'Bag' here is the one containing eatables)*

C10 : Sometimes we get less.

Swapna: I bring things to give If empty it is fine

Elizabeth: Each one gets less is also correct because we share what we have. But we give, we share to be happy right?

Swapna: Let us be happy that our visitors accept what we give and feel happy also.

Elizabeth: Do you all agree we should share? Even if we all get less each?

"Yes Yes" except one child who kept quiet all the time.

Elizabeth... Hello, Vaidehi!(name of the child); you are very quiet Not well?

Vaidehi: No eating outside items; my mother told (Literal transaction,)

Elizabeth: Some eatable may not agree with you. She is right. Some eatable may carry bugs they will make you sick.

Swapna: That is why we distribute only packed or hygienic items. Yet, if parents prohibit, we cannot help

Sabeena ,i have an idea for Vaidehi. You bring from home what you can eat. Then you can also eat when we are eating.

Swapna: Well said Sabeena,

Children! Ours is not like midday meal given in some Government schools. That is for hunger and nutrition. Enough quantity should be made and given, there.

Ours is for sharing and be happy. It is a token. Like **distribution (Prasad) after a pooja**

Elizabeth: Prasad or prasaada or prasaadam or parsaad. (Smiling).

Elizabeth asked if a situation like ours was faced by aa Kalpana.

Swapna; There must have been. Perhaps in her place in Maharashtra there was no extreme suspicion or prejudice about food choices, All over India veg and non-veg divide exists . That is why it is always the generally acceptable veg items were distributed.

Elizabeth : Here also in weddings, receptions etc.



## AA 23 - GO. GO GEOGRAPHY

*[FIELD GAME]*

Swapna, made a huge Rangoli of the outline map of India-selected students of 4<sup>th</sup> grade and above (other children sit outside watching). First: four directions, standing near Nagpur. [rangoli – decorative pattern drawn on the ground ]

Played the game of land/water.

Younger children say we can also play.

Then Kalpana and Swapna said E, W etc. [for directions east, west etc] and all children should pile up on the land mass of the correct direction.

On different occasions the map on the playground was used by Aavaru ajji as Swapna described.

1. Aavaru ajji had a large roller of plastic sheet when opened out had the outline map of India -Another for outline map of the world. -AA used to involve PT sir and geography teacher in the game – Aavaru ajji used to find out what were the details of geography done in the class so far and corresponding game was played - starting with the two stated above namely water and land.[ *PT-physical training*]

2. **Physical geography** was Kalpana's forte – She never cared for smaller artificial manmade differences : countries like Tibet, Bhutan Pakistan etc. First game was to fill in mountains, hills etc with bricks, small rocks respectively. One group of students made model Himalayas. Many bricks were used Groups of bricks set close together represented a range. After another group

verified, geography teacher checks. Second group was Peninsular India. Here also continuous ranges and intermittent hills.

Third group of students for middle and rest of India. Meanwhile geography teacher hung up on the walls of the verandah, relevant charts. One of them will be RIVERS OF INDIA - An Atlas book was available for consultation -Consulting these resources, a fourth group will trace major rivers Blue/white ribbons, threads and ropes were used.

Depending on the time available Kalpana used to encourage one group to ask questions like- River starting from Western Ghats joining the Bay of Bengal – Second group say there are many – Gr 1 Name one Gr2 .... ok. Gr 1 Name another the game continues. This was demonstration enough for all simple middle school geography.





## AA 24 - AKASHVANI

*[READING, ACTING]*

Swapna was not only a narrator, Sometimes she was an experimenter too. Once she conspired with the enthusiastic English teacher for a small experiment.

That day all the customary group of children were present. Swapna was missing. Instead in her usual place Teacher (English) was there greeting children.

“Good morning madam. Where is Swapnaji?”

“Is she not well, madam?”

“Yesterday she had a bad cold”

So many young concerned voices.

Teacher (English) said, she is OK, but today you cannot see her, but she can see you. You can certainly talk to her. Then she said, “What does Swapna do?”

One said: She teaches new games.

Another: She plays with us

Third: Certainly she tells stories. Aavaru Ajji stories.

Teacher (English) asked: Since you can’t see her, today you cannot play with her. But I can tell her what you want. Ask her if she would tell an Aavaru Ajji story as usual.

Teacher (English) took out a book-like device (pretending to talk on telephone). “Swapanaji! Will you tell the children Aavaru Ajji stories.” Voice said “Sure”.

## STORY

That day's program started with a voice stating "It was the time of Akashvani, (All India Radio) being very active in news etc.. No TV in those days. Stories were told by great Radio talkers. Now listen. Next ten minutes was a narration in one person's voice about a great freedom fighter and ended with saying we should all respect the great man.

[Unknown to anyone else, this was the core of the experiment, Teacher(English) and Swapna designed.] Teacher (English) took over, See Swapna has told you what Aavaru ajji Kalpana did at that time. Did you all like it? There was almost silence. One bold child one said, blandly "OK"

Teacher (English) had her instructions. She asked "You listened to the story. What was the moral?" Too young to talk of morals. "What did Ajji say at the end?"

Many did not answer: Child (2) said: "We should respect big people." "Whom in this story?" Many try to remember 50% correctly could tell the name. The others were not sure.

Disappointment was obvious Bold child 1 asked, "Shall we come tomorrow, or not" Teacher (English) said, please come. I'll do something.

The next day again the same scene. No Swapnaji But Teacher (English) was there. Children, today I'll arrange to talk to Swapna. Teacher (English) conveyed the children's enthusiasm to Swapnaji. Then said, "Swapnaji wants to ask you if she can tell you a story?" All said "sure,sure.

A voice clearly from behind a screen the familiar voice of Swapnaji was heard. This is a story on the streets of town in another country. Aavoora Ajji told me that she had heard from a great uncle of hers in that foreign country Place: town's square: Scene: Great fire burning, around it hundreds of India's brown and that country's black people. Do you know why there was fire burning? Children "Don't know. Was it very cold?"

Swapna " It is for....

Child : Do you know why?

Swapna: Because .....

Thus went on, the same yesterday's Akashwani story read out , today was told by dialogue method by Swapnaji.. At the end all voices said: Thank you Swapnaji. We have questions. Where is this leader now?"

Teacher (English) said, "Children, wait" I want to ask you some questions. She knew that the same Akashwani story was told by Swapnaji. Some children also had a doubt. They wanted to know.

Teacher (English) then repeated the question she asked yesterday for which there were no answers from the children. Today they had.

Child (1) wanted to know who was this great leader (whose identity, Swapna had carefully concealed). Teacher (English) noticed that some elder (perhaps high school) students were ready with their hands up.

Teacher (English) stopped them. Let us hear from Swapna.

Then Swapna came out front behind a curtain. Some very young children ran and hugged her. Swapna encouraged the children with raised hands to share their knowledge with the young ones.

*Swapna and Teacher (English) were talking. Some stray phrases like “monotone, monologue” story “Dialogue, interaction “etc. telling” were heard.*

*Aavarau Ajji used talking books in the school library Compulsory radio programs also in the library. Since many, go to sleep during AIR Radio programs. Aavaru Ajji started ORML sessions*

*A.) (One reads-many listen) This progresses to*

*B) one after another reads – ALL listen – Then one reads all repeat.*

*C). Will not be irrelevant - It will be things worth memorizing - Therefore any group can be together - proverbs- Quotes - Some good poems – shlokas etc.*

*This idea was extended to teacher’s day for each one teach one.*

*Why did it stop?*

*Someone thought AIR itself is waste of time Prestigious (convents) ignore them.*

*Secondly teacher’s day became a ‘gift day’, students giving off gift or respect to teachers.*

## AA 25 OLD McDONALD

*[MIMICRY]*

It was another day of unplanned activity. For once, previous day Swapna had a headache, did not turn up. Now, she was there.

Elizabeth said let us sing nursery rhymes. So, she started “Old McDonald”... To her surprise (and also that of Swapna) no one has heard of this. She simply sang once. The catchy tune was liked by all the children, though they did not know the words.

Elizabeth wrote COW on the board. Sabeena and another child 2 were there. Elizabeth said a moo, moo here

Child 1 said moo moo there

Child 2 said moo moo

Thus various sounds were heard and the whole group participated. One child said this is like a class, Another said, but we all liked it. Then Swapna said, “OK, then we will have some fun.” She said something in the ear of Sabeena. A towel was used to make a screen. Sabeena got behind and made a noise – Guess who is behind the screen?

All guessed correctly “a cow” Elizabeth opened to see “yes this is Sabeena Cow” “Ganapati Goat” “Harini horse” etc were played “Harini” means ‘deer’ she should have made deer sound. It turned out that many sounds like dog etc were familiar. Many like deer, giraffe were not well known.

Only some bird calls were well known like the cock, crow, cuckoo – Many others were not well known like an eagle's sound or even a mynah or sparrow.

Sabeena said "today is boring like a class - no fun"

Swapna said "ok let us have some fun".

Swapna: All keep quiet. Close your eyes and listen" What is that.?

That is a scooter.. an auto rickshaw, a motorbike starting

Lot of foot steps; students coming in

That is Headmistress saying "Less noise"

Next was "that is the school bell"

Elizabeth said "Go" and all went away.

*[ note by the author: this rhyme is not boring nor sounds like a class; So, resourceful volunteers can make both the ideas given here interesting as an activity.*

*One stanza is given here for your convenience]*

*Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O!*

*And on his farm he had a cow, E-I-E-I-O!*

*With a moo-moo here and a moo-moo there,*

*Here a moo, there a moo,*

*Everywhere a moo-moo,*

*Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O!*

## AA 26 DRAMA FOR KIDS

[ACTING]

Swapna: Told Elizabeth “today’s program is not preplanned”. It is just a way of handling subject matter. Elizabeth was anxious. I call it dramatization. i.e

Swapna: Already written as a drama in textbooks we read with suitable action and emotion. It becomes a drama.

Elizabeth: I teach English can we do it in English also.

Swapna: You can if you forget you are a London-born English teacher our drama wants to include everyone to understand what is going on.

*I will give you an example: title (crying child)*

*Elder girl: Who are you?*

*Why are you crying?*

*Child: (still crying)*

*Elder girl: Are you hungry? (Here, elder girl uses sign and local language also)*

*Child: (nods)*

*Elder girl: “Wait.” Goes and brings food . says “Get up, let us eat”.*

Swapna said at this juncture, “Do not give from far or throw. Sit near the child and share a little even if you, the elder is not hungry). The whole dialogue can be in English with translations if and when needed. Or it can be any language mutually understood. Of course sign language is universal. One can select : Drama from language books. Drama from science and Math also.

All preschools have fancy dress days and also theme based costumes. Kalpana said that they didn’t need any

special costumes or scenes. Not even a stage. We can enact plays as and where we are.to demonstrate kalpana asked Swapna, “Swapna, do you know the story of Jackal crow &vada?” “Yes” “Then let us play it”

. A stone becomes *vada*- a high stool becomes tree. Two stretched hands of a child form the crow’s beaks.

For the story of ‘*cats, cake and jackal the judge.*’ a balance is brought. A real biscuit is brought. At the end of the play every one gets biscuits.

When children came Swapna asked, “Who had brought their books?”. Some higher classes (i.e., 4th or 5th grade) students had brought. Elizabeth found a true drama (play) written by a famous writer in the 1st language textbook. It was more than 2 pages. How to read?

Swapna said, “Forget the flowery language. It will go much above the heads of younger ones. Select a few sentences which are special to the story.” That settled it, Elizabeth said that she would help elder children to enact the simplified drama from the textbook.

Then Swapna asked the children, which stories they knew. Some elder children said Ramayana. Swapna said that it was too long. Let us ask the children whether they knew. *Thirsty crow, monkey and the cats with a cake ....etc.* Whichever story the majority knows say we will dramatize.. Meanwhile Elizabeth came with abridged version. She made an instant play with multi language and mime usage.

Swapna: Said, science is easy-other subjects also - except mathematics.



# Step-by-Step: Drama for Children



Playful Home Education

## AA 27 Gandhari game

[EMPATHY]

When all the young children had arrived and been seated, Elizabeth asked (to set the ball rolling, shall we say) if any one of them knew a blind person. Many have seen a blind man begging at the bus stand. He always had a walking stick.

Swapna added that she had travelled to many places and mostly blind persons who were seen in public were beggars. Chinnamma, the office assistant, wondered why it should be so. Elizabeth explained that no one will give them a job by which they can earn.

The situation is changing, said, Swapna: You could have seen a telephone near a blind person. It is always a coin-operated phone, so, it did not need any writing or seeing.

Sabeena said "Yes. There is a booth near our school itself. But this blind man asks the number you want to dial & he dials. How does he do 'it?' She wondered.

Elizabeth looked at Swapna and asked if she should explain. Swapna: "Why ask?" Elizabeth said, "Because it is a little tricky. We need a dial to demonstrate." Swapna said, you are a teacher, Can't you manage with a diagram?". Elizabeth said, "I am sorry. I can certainly do it." She drew a figure.

The old circular dial is a little difficult for a blind person. The new squarish press button type helps him. See the number 5 has a point which the blind person can touch and feel. He knows in his brain where the other numbers are. So he can dial the whole 6 or 7 digits.

Meanwhile Chinnamma had gone to the office and brought a phone. Elizabeth told Chinnamma and

Sabeena how a blind man can do. These two said now see we can also dial. They closed their eyes and said. Tell what number you want.

Everyone wanted to try & each was given a chance. Very young ones could not and they said, "It is not fair it is cheating. We cannot dial with open eyes because we don't know the numbers". Elizabeth said do not worry. When you come to UKG/ first std you can also play a lot of games. Swapna asked, Now do you want to know how AA kalpana played this game.

A teacher suggested that they can play "Gandhari game". A child asked "what is that". The teacher said, "It is like dumb charade game in which a man pretends he is 'dumb' cannot speak; Here the actor pretends he is 'blind'".

A student said, "What is so great? We always play the game. One person is blind folded and others make enough noise and go around him. He has to catch.

The teacher said, "Ok, that is a game with boundaries and only 'catching'. Here all the activities will be done. Do you know who was Gandhari"?

A student said, 'We all know. She I purposely tied her eyes closed all the time, because her husband was blind." So for the day, many were blind folded.

- *"Go bring a glass of water"- ok*

- *"Go and ask Gopi to come here " – ok*

- *"Write down what I dictate"- the student tries- If you see paper,*

*it -was like scribbling of a 3 year old.*

-*"Get your note book and pencil"-ok.*

*They realised sound command etc., can be really heard. But writing needs skill and sight.*



## AA 28 - ALPHABET SOUP

[ TEACHING AIDS]

The next few entries by Swapna is directly in the first person. i.e. I did etc.

When Aavaru Ajji Kalpana was abroad (perhaps U.S.A.) she found that children's breakfast etc. contained soup-various varieties. One of them was Alphabet **Soup**. Letters pop up floating on the surface. Children have fun selecting, talking about their favourite letter etc. In India such ideas did not exist. But Aavrau Ajji made it happen in her immediate vicinity.

Swapna writes; I adopted Aavaru Ajji's methods in my interactions with primary school children.

I wrote the first letter of the child's own name in her/his left hand (palm-big capital). All children close the fist. Sing: *Nanne Munne Bacchche bolo mere mutti mein Kyaa hai?* [dear child tell me what is in my fist?]

In Aaravu Ajji's younger days this song was a Hindi film hit). I explained the meaning - The tune is simple, singable, catchy.

Second child: "What is your name?"

First child: " ....." (eg Swapna)

Second child: *Tere mutti me hai, tere naam kaa pahla Akshar?* (So 'S')

[*You have in your fist your name's first letter*]

I (swapna) went around.

I had alphabet 'tiles'

1" x 1" squares –Mutti game [ tile in fist] was played using these – (fist) Of course, art and craft teacher

extended this to finger letters; “finger cap” with letters in place of their usual animals” etc.

With higher children i had “tiles” of animals, fruits, etc.. Same ‘mutti’ [fist] game was played with those and children enjoyed. Example:

Child (I): *Mere mutti me kaya hai? [ What is in my hand (fist)?]*

Child (II): Show me the picture. Child (I) shows (“dog’s picture, say))

Child (I):In your hand,, the letter ‘D’ Right

Alphabet “TILES” with strings worn like a garland around the neck. If there is already a school badge, this is added: They all know their names. one round of the game was played with real names.

A second round was with assumed names so that all the 26 letters of the alphabet are covered.

One child: ‘A’ for Ann ‘here”.

Second child: B for Bala ‘here”

All 26 are usually not filled: Gaps are filled by imaginary children. Z for Zohra etc.

‘Q’ was a problem: Queen will do.

I suggested many small ideas for alphabet learning. Take old newspapers, select one letter Circle that letter if it occurs on the headlines , ignore small prints..

Photos and pictures: Write the first letter eg CAR photo ‘C’. Similarly M for man W for woman.

I extended the alphabet tile idea to simple 3 letter words - Pictures are already kept Go and find the letters and make the word. This can be a group game also.

Elder children help younger ones cutting letters from old newspapers and making “Tiles”

I was happy the way the games went:

***Alphabet to Name’s first letters***

***Alphabet to object’s first letters.***

***Letters to make simple words.***

***Run and catch ‘B” for Bala or ‘B’ for Basava.***

When I related these Aavaru Ajji stories to teachers, they were happy to extend the idea from words to sentences. Elizabeth said that teachers of Indian (local) languages must be doing these and many more activities . Yet I will suggest to OUR colleagues..

*Elizabeth reported next week that science teacher used this fist method and children enjoyed it. As an example she said ; S1 [ student 1] holds in two fists and puts both in student 2’s fist. There others see a pinch of salt. Qn; what was in s1’s fists? Many guessed Na and Cl .*

*This and other demos were beyond the grasp of the primary children present. So Swapna said that they ewere happy fun ways an be used in higher classes also.*



A <sub>1</sub>	B <sub>3</sub>	C <sub>3</sub>	D <sub>2</sub>	E <sub>1</sub>	F <sub>4</sub>
G <sub>2</sub>	H <sub>4</sub>	I <sub>1</sub>	J <sub>8</sub>	K <sub>5</sub>	L <sub>1</sub>
M <sub>3</sub>	N <sub>1</sub>	O <sub>1</sub>	P <sub>3</sub>	Q <sub>10</sub>	R <sub>1</sub>
S <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>1</sub>	U <sub>1</sub>	V <sub>4</sub>	W <sub>4</sub>	X <sub>8</sub>
Y <sub>4</sub>					Z <sub>10</sub>



## AA 29 MAGGI = MUG UP?

[EASY MATHEMATICS]

Swapna and children were quite early on that day.

Swapna: "We have some time. Whoever wants to play, let us get out."

All were out except two: child 3, child 4 (names not important)

After some cajoling by child 1 (=Sabeena), it was found out that they had not done their homework. Teacher 1 will be angry if it is not submitted today."

It is called writing down multiplication tables. Child 3, child 4 have not memorized and they had nothing to copy from. No one else had too.

Swapna: "How can we help them?"

Child 1: Anyone knows this day's homework?

Child5: Yes, I know.

Child 1(Sabeena) But you can't write for them.

Swapna: Only Child 3, child 4 will write. Child 5 will help

So Swapna called them. You want 5's table, say.

Write like this

$5 \times 1 =$	$5 \times 2 =$	$5 \times 3 =$	$5 \times 4 =$	$5 \times 5 =$
$5 \times 6 =$	$5 \times 7 =$	$5 \times 8 =$	$5 \times 9 =$	$5 \times 10 =$

Now child 5 will recite; you just write down the answers (i.e. final number) only. This will be fast.

Slow smiles emerged from C3 and C4 and yet there was time. Child 5 would have raised the collar, if she had one.

Child 5 said, "Everyday we will bring our homework will you help?"

Swapna: “No”, I will not” Child 5 almost cried. One can see disappointment in all other faces. Not knowing the context, some toddlers were really shedding tears.

Swapna: “Children! Do not be greedy or crazy. No one should DO your homework. Not me; not even your parents. We can only help. Only you have to DO your homework.

Elizabeth: we can show HOW to do, NO?

Swapna: Yes; we can show- like what was done here today. I gave example of one table. The other homework they the children themselves have done.

Child 5 (the smart kid) asked, if this is so easy, why in our classroom they want us to memorize?

Elizabeth: It is easy to memorize when you are young. When you need tables (as in division) you can do quickly.

Swapna: “Your madam is right. Remembering helps. If you forget also it does not matter. I will show you how.”

Then Swapna asked : Tell Table of 5. One started  $5 \times 1 = 5$  (like five ones are five or its equivalent in the local language) She called child 3 and child 4 near her. Child 5 the smart was going on. Swapna said “Stop”.. Now continue. No one was surprised when the child 5 started  $5 \times 1 = 5$ . Swapna had written the last one  $5 \times 8 = 40$ . and asked the smart child 5 to say  $5 \times 9 = \dots$  Before the memory express train could reach 8, the answer was there. Also the next one writte by c3 and c4 . this was because swapna had told them the table goes in steps of 5. So add 5 to the last number.

Swapna: (To Elizabeth) “See madam, memory is fine, If not also, one should know how to do. It helps.

## **AA 30. CHORUS for US**

*[SINGING]*

When Elizabeth realised how a blind teacher should help T & L [teaching and learning] simply through music she suggested to Swapna.

Elizabeth: “ Why can’t we try the idea of music with our AA group i.e., primary children?

Swapna: “Sure you can – But that is already being done by sincere primary school teachers Hear their nursery rhymes,

Elizabeth: I agree, shall we try today on some of the students?

Swapna: For testing or for finding out the status, simple survey is enough. But true learning is that which reaches 100% of the learners.

This story writer need not describe in detail what took place. Suffice to say: that in English, nursery rhymes were there and taught.

In the local language they were there but not as popular as the English ones.

Of course in the third language Hindi only a few. Poor teacher of the language. She had also learnt it as third language.

Swapna said, yes we will try. So a collection of poems from the text books of I to IV standards was made some tunes (as much as Elizabeth & Swapna knew) were made for each. Some Kind of singing was planned for each piece.

One poem was written on the board.

Elizabeth: Read it once. Swapna second time now all children repeat. No tune no singing, just reading slowly, clearly. Then the simple tune and the words the same way. All children repeat.

When children's turn came, it was always all together Because "Chorus for us". This is because, except for an exceptional outgoing child others were shy. To boost one's own self –confidence it was always all together.

By the time children reach the text reading stage, they already knew (by heart) the poem and the general meaning.

Did AA kalpana do it decades ago? Sure she must have done, because Swapna without any problem could conduct this program.



## AA 31. LEARNING – MUGGING

[CHANTING]

*Before the meeting*

*Swapna and Elizabeth were together before children came. Swapna reminded Elizabeth that Mangala, the HM made many lessons to be read out and repeated by students. That was for high school level. AA Kalpana felt the age group of her students (4 to 10 years) that method will not work. She had already put in practice finger following method of reading for all the subjects. That was a necessity and that took quite some time. Reading out, repeating needed much more investment of time. That once over Kalpana thought was not enough for this age group. Some chanting essential items was needed to commit data to memory. In arithmetic it was already there 1 to 100 for primary classes also multiplication tables.*

*For other subjects one can make chantable slogans, eg for a fraction, decimals etc. For Kalpana and her teachers it was difficult to make chantable slogans, relevant to each subject matter.*

*In maths tradition was there like “ M Monkeys jumping” etc., In local language equivalent of “one two buckle my shoe” were available. They were very basic and poets and writers for children managed it.*

*Elizabeth said, ‘Children are coming; Swapnaji whatever you can tell us; we will try to chant. Later we can try out own compositions right here.*

*With the children*

*Take some ice; heat it up I get water Heat the water; it boils; I get steam. **solid to liquid.-to-- vapour/gas***

**Ice to Water-to- steam.**

Elizabeth said; “Let me try.” Question words are seven.

***What wants things***

***When for time***

***Who for person***

***Which for choice***

***Why for reason***

***How for method***

Perhaps this will work.

I remember a singable rhyme was used by Kalpana for six interrogative words.

There is a poem, children, by Rudyard Kipling. It is called six servants. Let us read:

Swapna said :lif you remember you say we will repeat.

This was done successfully.

Swapnaji said, Kalpana found English with equivalent local language was also equally effective

***What means: Kya***

***Where :Kahan***

***Who :Koun***

***When :Kab***

***Which :Kounsa***

***Why :Kyon***

***How :Kaise***

***(6W + 1) in English 7 K's in Hindi***

Elizabeth: Certainly It CAN BE DONE IN Kannada, the local language here, can be roughly called 7 A's ( really yeh,)

Here Elizabeth gives a riddle given to her by her Kannada teacher. This riddle in Kannada is,

*It adhu BUT aadhare What enu? It means if IT means adhu in kannada, BUT means aadhare in kannada, WHAT means what ?Ans: WHAT [ enu] So that is almost a joke / saying.*

Elizabeth added that she extended the riddle (same first line) **WHERE elli** ?Ans: **elli**. Similarly other interrogative words.

Elizabeth told Sabeena to write down:

World –Asia --India –Maharshra—Karanataka--Mysore

Chantable version :

***World is the whole earth***

***Asia is a continent***

***India is a country***

***Karnataka is a state***

***Mysore is a district also a town;***

Someone said we can go to taluk and village also

Another girl said, I can also make

***Thatha is grandpa***

***Ajji is Grandma***

***Appa is Father***

***Amma is Mother***

***Akka is Sister***

***Anna is Brother***

**Good girl is Geetha** Tell me, what is my name?

Elizabeth said: Sure, your name is Geetha

(The words here are Kannada spoken in Mysore)

Sabeena asked: "Shall I try?"

**Himalayas in the North?**

**Sahayadri in the West**

**Eastern Ghats in the east**

**Vindhya in the middle**      Clever one, what are we?

Girl 1 said easy: Mountains in India

Girl 2 said I can make one about rivers.

Girl 3 I can make a big one on states, capitals and languages

Swapna said "See if this works. Let's try"

Geetha is a genius.

Sabeena is super.

Elizabeth is excellent.

Basava is bright.

Somebody tell me, who are these ?

This is we, us, our group.



## **AA 32. ALL TOGETHER, the more the merrier.**

*[SINGING]*

As our readers by this time will know that Swapna is the narrator or story teller she told the story of Avuru Aiji. Also called Kalpana. Avuru Aiji was in charge of a primary and middle school. She was known to be children friendly; never carried a cane; peaceful face or one with a smile. People have not seen anger in her face even when she wanted to tell a child what not to do. Avuraajji was years ago.

In the present time Swapna is the narrator had almost the same qualities as Avurajji alias Kalpana. This view is according to Elizabeth, English teacher at high school level. Elizabeth also called as Eli or Liz or Beth was a great admirer of Swapna's activities with children. This made them friends. So Liz was there wherever Swapna was found.

On this day as usual Swapna arrived much earlier than the school starting bell. But Liz was already there. Elizabeth asked Swapna, AKA Mangala had a great time putting 3 classes together and teaching the same subject. As you have told us, Kalpana and Mangala were like sisters borrowing each other's dress, I mean copying each other's programs and ideas.

This is a very short story since the program was only short lived. Kalpana knew about 3 in 1 ( 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> standards together ) and its merits. She tried to do the same with 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> standards together. Soon she found that it did not work.

*Elizabeth said that it is because in the early years of child development, each year matters. Not so in teens or adults.*

*A combined class requires a student who knows the subject matter already and should keep quiet when others are taught. By age 12 or 15 this behaviour can be expected or demanded. Not so with 7 to 10 year olds. So Kalpana abandoned the idea. Kalpana, Mangala, Asha wondered how in olden days a single teacher could manage all the primary classes in village schools. Then Asha told them how a whole village of ages 5 to 50, men, women and children were handled by her ashram students. Of course that was part of 'adult literacy' program.*

*Kalpana agreed. Literacy is fine. Also some chant and learn items like multiplication tables, alphabet, words and equivalents ( like Ravi and Surya ), shlokas and bhakthi songs, nursery rhymes. But true analytical learning was not possible.*

*Elizabeth asked : "Kalpana never had this age problem, do you want to say ? How about a large family at home? I heard in the last century three generations used to live as undivided family."*

*Swapna : "Kalpana did the same. With a few teachers around each group can be given individual tasks and overseen." When this discussion was going on children arrived. Exactly like what Kalpana had, ages 4 to 10, but only a small number unlike a whole school.*

*Swapna said : "Elizabeth we cannot tell these children what we discussed as a story. But we can do what Kalpana did.*

*Thus, they had many games where all the younger children can participate. Children themselves knew these games – hide and seek, ringa-ring-a-roses, hopscotch, blindfold and catch.*

Elizabeth introduced some more well-known ones – statue, mountain on fire, bomb a city, chairless musical chairs, tiger and cow, land and water, etc. The enjoyment was from dragging into their games certainly Elizabeth and Swapna AND any other elder who happens to be around.

Sabeena liked to go to office imagining the need of a piece of chalk or a dusting cloth or a broom. The real purpose was to draw the nice office assistant lady into their games.

Passing time, fun time can be done in endless ways.

Swapna said : “Kalpana always invented her own games which her teachers used to appreciate. Let’s play with these children, one of Kalpana’s invented games. Let us bring half a dozen ropes of the same length. Sabeena at one end, Elizabeth at another. “

Swapna would speak the command. Within 5 minutes you should act as per command. All got out to the ground and stood ready holding the rope. Naturally it was approximately at equal distance points.

Swapna : :Make a ‘TRIANGLE.’ Immediately Elizabeth and Sabeena got together holding the two ends of the rope tightly together. With a little shifting and pushing a good triangle was formed. Naturally it was an equilateral triangle.

Next command was ‘RECTANGLE,’ Some bending the rope was needed to make it a right angle. Next ‘SQUARE’ because Swapna had already told Elizabeth and Sabeena they folded the rope two times to make a side of the square. Open out, it became a square. Next

‘CIRCLE.’ This required quite a lot of moving the rope and approximate circle was formed.

All agreed it was fun doing all these.

Sabeena said : “I can make it on paper using sewing thread of equal lengths.’

Elizabeth : “Fun alright. Any purpose ?”

Swapna : “Nothing much. Did you notice the children sat down and the shape made by the rope is traced on the ground here. See three figures. You have taken photographs of the children holding the rope. Take photos of these geometrical shapes also. Send to smart phones of their parents, See what happens.”

Next week something happened. Elizabeth got messages from unknown persons on her mobile. Many said : “Thanks. Children run, play, enjoy and make geometrical shapes. After showing these to the children, Elizabeth came to know that the messages were from some of the parents. One was more detailed.

*The message: I wondered why the same length of ropes to make different shapes. Then I realized it shows the circle has the maximum area for the same circumference or perimeter. Thanks. Sabeena will recollect this game when she studies formulas for areas of different geometrical shapes” Obviously it was from Sabeena’s mother. “My congrats to Maths sir.”*

Elizabeth : “Maths sir, my foot. Bhaskar sir will make even UNO game a headache. It was Swapna”

Swapna said “It was AA Kalpana.”

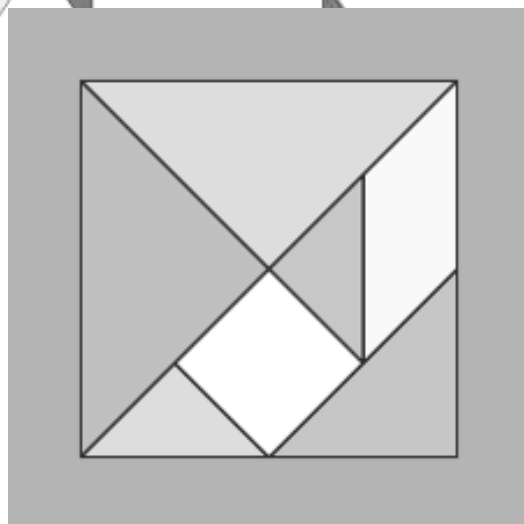
A tangram rocket



A tangram dancing girl



A tangram horse



## AA 33 - I ASK, YOU ANSWER

*[CHILD TEACHER]*

The next day Elizabeth took over from Swapna and asked the children: “Will you play a new game? It is called I ask, you answer.”

She selected half of the group as today’s teachers. The others were students, since Elizabeth was Teacher (English) it turned out to be simple A-level English.

She had already spread out question strips, facedown. She told the teacher group to pick one each.

Elizabeth told the others, your friend is the teacher today. You should be respectful. Say Sir or Madam.. OK?”..

To teachers she said: If you know the answer to your question, you proceed, if doubt, ask me or Swapnaji.”

The class of “I ask you Answer” began.

Teacher (1) “How many letters in English?”....

Teacher (2) “How many CAPITAL letters in English?.....

Teacher (3) How many small letters in English?.....

Teacher(4) What is your name?....

Teacher (5) What is my name?....

Teacher (6) (7)... Run/and touch an object. What is this?  
Answers door, pencil, window, wall.....

Elizabeth said, “Very good, you can ALL be good teachers.” From the student group, each one said, I can also do it. Swapnaji said yes, let us do it. Thus **EACH ONE TEACH ONE** was a success.

Then Elizabeth said, English is Easy. It has only letters. No combined letter or half letter. That is why typewriters in English was easy. And the shape of each letter is also quite simple. Too many zeros in one letter is not there. So shall we have a game?.

I say "O" You should show only with one/or two hands, this letter O was very easy.

Then the children took over S for Swapna looks easy but was not.

E for Elizabeth needed some twist and turn.

Swapna was happy that some fun will be there on teacher's day.

## AA 34 - EXPRESS (O) EDUCATION

[ADULT EDUCATION]

Swapna by this time got used to her group and knew their names well. But for the sake of our readers C1, C2, for children . S1, S2 for students, T1, T2 for teachers will do. Ours is a set of anecdotes and when some need characteristics attached to them, they get a name or designation like PT sir, or maths teacher T(M) etc.

Thus Sabeena is the young helper; Elizabeth (liz, Beth) is the English teacher and a fan of Swapna. This day Sabeena came and said some aunties have come and wanted to meet Swapna.

Swapna who told about me? You, Sabeena?

Sabeena: Smiled (means yes)

Then you only bring them here.

It turned out that their house language is neither Kannada nor any of the Dravidian languages. They plan to start business here and they want their children to learn the local language and mingle with local people?

Swapna: Looking at the children, have they gone to school? Parent1 (P1): Yes up to 3<sup>rd</sup> standard – But only our state language. The other has learnt KG class (English).

Swapna asked Elizabeth to take them to head mistress and see if they can be given admission. This being a government aided school, there may be some provision. Two days later, they came back.

Their wards were admitted to class one and that too tentatively.

Swapna: Do the fathers know the local language?



Parent 1: No madam, they do not have even good education – they do business - we the mothers, know a little English.

Swapna: Are there any elder sister?

Parent 2: Yes, one; she will go to English medium school where local language will be the third language.

Swapna: You can join us: I will try to help.

Parent 1: How much fees?

Swapna: Looked at Elizabeth and Sabeena..

Sabeena said Auntie does not charge any fees. Instead we get chocolates and groundnuts and rice puffs.

Elizabeth: Your children should be regular and without any shyness join us. We will help. Swapna needs people who are interested.

Fortunately that day's game was to speak numbers in local language and Hindi by play-way method. The new children were good in their Hindi side with good pronunciation (like che for 6 instead of chaha) like sola.a rather than solahaa..Never maim for I [me]. [*author's note: to get the idea consult a local person who speaks a fairly good Hindi* ]

Swapna once asked the mothers,if they would like to have coffee with her. They can't make coffee yet, but tea is good, It was arranged, after school bell rings, they will all go to Swapna's house. The one elder sister (let us call her 'didi' can join on her school holidays.

*Elizabeth was wondering about what Swapna was upto.*

*The answer had to wait for a few months.*

*Now these chronicles have to jump forward in time.*

*It was around June-school new admissions time.*

Mothers1, 2, Didi and children all of them were there with Swapna. Everyone was treated to a special treat of sweets and eatables. Petha (made of white pumpkin), halwa (made of gourd), bhujia, ghatia (snacks made of gram flour) were given to everyone.

Elizabeth: Thank you, aunties: What is special?

Parent1: See this fellow's identity card around his neck.

Sabeen: Show, show. Hey 5<sup>th</sup> standard. Another was 3<sup>rd</sup> standard.

Parent 2: Last year they were in 1<sup>st</sup> standard. Now thanks to Swapna and all of you they will study as per proper age.

Elizabeth joined in the celebration. Later she asked Swapna. "Did you recommend to Headmistress?"

"No.. I never mentioned that I ever knew them". "Then" "Ask the mothers"

Elizabeth went later and must have asked. Yes headmistress gave a test of 4<sup>th</sup> standard to one and 2<sup>nd</sup> standard to another, just like any local children. They could score.

Elizabeth: How did you manage a miracle Swapnaji"

Swapna: It is called Express(o) Education. We all have express (o) coffee. No, not the children, the mothers. While supplying hot coffee the mothers learnt many things which they were supposed to transfer to their children.

Elizabeth: It sure sounds like "Adult Education" and we were taught in our BED course, But not this grand result.

Swapna: I will be glad to explain the details to all the staff. Include assistants and the mothers in that AKA story meeting.

## AA 35 KITCHEN AJJI

*[TEACHING AIDS]*

Focus, concentrate, meditate we hear this everywhere where a venerable figure (guru) is present. A mother of a six-year old who was in the audience of bunch a group of the disciples furrow could take care of the child while she was away. They looked at one another. Some said, "Sorry". Some others said we are here because we do not know how to engage our children, When they cry, it is impossible even when they are fine and affectionate to us, we do not know what to do. This mother was disappointed. Then I have to take her wherever I go, all this was being seen and heard by an old woman who was assisting in the kitchen[ Annamma]

She said "If you do not mind the hot & humid kitchen, leave her with me." The mother was extremely grateful.

That night Prema the child and Annamma the cook did what Kalpana ajji and myself did. There were very good patterns with a basic unit being the cross section of a cut 'Bhendi'".(okra, ladies finger)

Another was a beautiful flower made out of a carrot set in to a coconut shell.

The shocked mother (let us call her Svatcha) asked. Did you touch all that filth? Did you handle knife and scissors? Did you sit on the rough floor of the kitchen while doing all this? Prema said yes mom. We all enjoyed doing all these. See there were safety caps for fingers. Will you leave me with Annamma ajji again?

[ note for non-Indians ; svatch =clean anna= food in almost all languages of India]

After this story Swapna the narrator asked why I told you this story.

Elizabeth said, I certainly get it. It is not necessary for all of us to be like the gurujis and throwing pieces of wisdom and advice.

Sabeena the bright student said all children will be bored-many will not understand.

Swapna, Not only you children. Even your parents get bored since they hear the same ideas perhaps in different words and from different great books.

C1: This Kitchen ajji is called Annamma. Is she the same as our AA “ajji”?

Swapna: I gave her this name because I do not remember names. But she did what AA Kalpana does. Doesn’t she?

Many voices: Yes, she is nice Elizabeth asked what do you do when you are at home with your parents or grandparents?

C2: I have my game on my mobile.

C3: I sit in the balcony and see vehicles going- scooters in black, red or green, school vans in bright yellow and another in black and white.

Elizabeth: Do you all like to be with us, Swapna& me?.

All: Sure. Kitchen ajji also is great you are all nice because we children can have fun with you and learn new things also.

Swapna: Elizabeth! Do you realize what kitchen Annamma taught (by doing together) need focusing concentrating. Elizabeth: Yes in a way applicable to all persons & also resulting in some tangible results.



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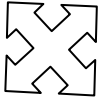
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## ANSWERS

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