

178. School Pets- Leo, Tortoise, Aquarium

Eklavya tries to sensitize children towards animals and their upkeep in many ways. One of these ways is to keep pets in the school.

PS and JS have aquariums. Students love to see colourful fishes. They identify and give names to them and observe their movements and eating habits.

Tortoises are kept in the JS in a lawn which is an extension of the library. The students hold them and feed them during the breaks. They observe the kinds of food they eat and also sometimes bring salad for them from home.

Leo is the school dog (golden male Labrador). He came to school when he was two months old and students have seen him grow. Leo moves around the School campus and enjoys being with the students.

Pets are considered to be therapeutic and children identify with them, talk to them and play with them in a non-threatening situation.

179. Science Labs - JS, MS and SS

The JS, MS and SS buildings each have Science Labs. The JS Lab is a General Science Lab. The MS Lab is one Lab but has equipment and apparatus for individual experiments in Physics, Chemistry and Biology. The SS has three labs – one each for Physics, Chemistry and Biology. Each Lab is equipped for conducting Practicals and Projects in the respective subjects.

179.1 JS Science Lab

Children in the JS are introduced to practical science related activities in the Science lab. It is here that children learn to make the related link between theory and practical. The thematic activities done here later take the concrete form of practical classes in MS. Children either conduct the experiments alone, in pairs or in groups of three to consolidate and internalize the learning. The educator gives a demonstration and then supervises the student's working.

The equipments are not kept under lock and key and even children of class 1 are encouraged to handle glass beakers and petri-dishes. They learn to handle the apparatus, take proper care of it, demonstrate practical skills and develop a scientific attitude.

Each section is allocated a weekly science lab period. The educators prepare a list of science lab activities to be done in the entire year while mapping the curriculum. However the activities are not restricted to text books only but the net and other books are also referred to find out more related activities. Children are also encouraged to bring their own experiments.

The lab is well equipped with necessary apparatus as per the levels of the class. Soft boards on the wall have posters and charts prepared by the children which are displayed. Shelves are there on which children keep the models prepared by them. Throughout the week this room is a hub of activities.

The science lab also has a collection of animals and plants preserved in glass bottles, like the Hermit Crab, Bat, Turtle, Pitcher Plant etc. Children find it fascinating to look at these specimens and are often heard remarking, "Is this real?"

After the experiments are performed a write up with the illustration is recorded in their Theme note book. The format is as follows:

Activity no
What I need
What I did
What I saw
What I learnt
Drawing
Was it fun? Why?

179.2 MS Science Lab

The MS Science Lab is structured to help students perform experiments in all the three sciences besides General Science. It also has a LCD Projector and Screen on which students are shown curriculum related films.

Each class has a Lab period once in 15 days. This is quite a timetabling exercise and planning has to be done in the beginning of the year to assign weeks for each of these classes.

A typical timetable for the use of the lab will show occupancy of 20 to 25 periods per week out of 40. (See Lab Timetable below). In the remaining empty period slots the lab is used to show students films related to their curriculum in the subjects of Science as well as History, Geography, Hindi and English Literature.

179.3 SS Science Labs

The SS has three labs. The Physics Lab on the Ground Floor, the Biology Lab on the 1st floor and the Chemistry Lab on the 2nd floor. The Labs are one above the other and are looked after by one Lab Assistant.

Each Lab has equipment and apparatus required for the practical and Project work from classes 9 to 12.

Students take up many other projects during the year like the Green House project, Desalination Plant, Solar cooker – difference in heating using a box solar cooker and a parabolic screen one and Collection of Insect specimens in and around Eklavya.

The aim of is to make students environmentally sensitive and capable of translating theory from the EVS text to real life projects.

Some projects taken up are –

Solar Cooking

Eklavya has purchased a Flat-Plate-Solar-Cooker (Rs 1200) and a Parabolic-Dish-Solar-Cooker (Rs 3700). The objective is to fill the students with enthusiasm for solar cooking - in harmony with nature. Many people say that solar cooking is not to be taken seriously. But countries like Israel have shown the way by harnessing a substantial percentage of their national energy requirements through solar energy. The demonstration in the garden is enough to show the incredible potential which exists.

Solar lights on the School Campus – There are four solar lights on the campus that are used for lighting at night. These lights have a solar charger at the top that gets charged during the day and then the lights are switched on at night. It is a good example of renewable source of energy on the campus.

Green House

The students of class 11 take up a green house project every year in the months from November to January. The greenhouse works by trapping heat from the sun using glass panels or plastic sheets so as to allow the light to enter and prevent the heat to escape. The class works in groups. One group studies the growth of potted plants like Lady Finger, Cabbage, Croton and Chrysanthemum in a normal external environment. Another group studies the same plants as a controlled group inside the Green House. They regulate the amount of water measure growth, flowering and time of fruit development. The two groups then do a comparative study involving growth, flowering, and fruiting in the external and green house environments respectively. The average minimum and maximum temperatures in the green house are 18°C and 43°C respectively.

Solar Desalination

The project aims at understanding the process of obtaining pure water from sea water under the effects of heat, evaporation and condensation. The saline water is placed in a tray covered by a triangular frame fit with a plastic sheet. Salt is obtained as residue. Students of class 5 to 12 and all educators were able to differentiate between the salt water and the pure water.

180. Science Park

There is Science Park of 29 items spread all over the Eklavya Campus (we had an option to put all the items together, make a boundary, put a gate with a lock, and a board saying “ Science Park “ but we decided against it. So now all the items are spread out, they are not locked; children play with them often not knowing the principle of science behind it!)

The park consists of total 29 gadgets based on various scientific principles *disguised as games*. Students from class 1 onwards - daily play with these and later when they are in higher classes they discover the principle of science behind it! Yes, science is in everyday life.

Each game has a board besides it that explains in short the scientific principle behind the game and how it demonstrates that. Educators take their students to these games during their regular teaching period to make concept learning quick, interesting and easy.

Some of the items are made in Eklavya itself while some are ordered from: M/s Ankidyne No.36, I Main Road, New Colony, Chromepet, Chennai – 600 044. Website: www.ankidyne.com

The various games are:

1. **3D Pendulum** - The varying intensity of light allowed to enter the eyes creates an illusion that is impossible to believe.
2. **Centrifugal Force** - When the rotor in the device is revolved, a person is thrown out of the seat. This gives an idea about the force acting over any particle that revolves about an axis i.e. centrifugal force.
3. **Cycloid Path** - The model demonstrates the fact that there is gaining of acceleration due to gravity in two different paths.
4. **Double ended Cone** – Explains that the equilibrium of any object is governed by its centre of gravity
5. **Friction of Speed** - The fact that friction has a hold on the speed of a moving object is explained here by varying frictional force due to different textures of the surface exerted on a rolling ball.
6. **Loop the Loop** - This game describes the phenomenon of a particle moving in a circular path acted upon by a centrifugal force. This is explained here with a ball moving in a circular path against gravitational force.

7. **Newton's Third Law of Motion** - This model can be used effectively to demonstrate that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.
8. **Periodic Table** - This innovative design of the periodic table is made of wood. Students can turn the wooden cube and observe many aspects of the element like molecular weight, atomic number, structure, symbol, physical and chemical properties, radioactivity, etc.
9. **Wave Motion** - A wave motion is created with this device. The energy transfer from one point to another and from nodes to antinodes is demonstrated clearly.
10. **World Time** - The device gives the change in local time of every country in the world with reference to the latitude of that country.
11. **How friction helps** - Equal weights can be lifted and the difference felt due to varying frictional force.
12. **Angular Momentum** - This fun filled device explains the fact that when the mass concentrated at the center is more, the angular momentum and velocity is more. A simple single merry-go-round explains this.
13. **Archimedes screw** - This device discovered by Archimedes is modeled here to demonstrate how water from a lower end can be fetched to the upper end.
14. **Sine Wave** - This device demonstrates an idea about the potential and kinetic energy acting on a ball released at the beginning of a sine wave path.
15. **Pulley and Pulley Blocks** - The leverage (mechanical advantage) obtained by coupling number of pulleys is explained.
16. **Parabolic Dishes** - An effective method to teach the property of reflection of sound waves.
17. **Gear Train** - The multiplication of speed or an increase in torque within any mechanism is achieved by a gear wheel. The phenomenon is explained by the gear train.
18. **Gear, belt and chain drive** – Power transmitted from one axis to another is explained using gears, belts and chains.
19. **Lissajou's Figure** - The resultant of two simple harmonic motions is explained here. Oscillating the funnel provided can make a pattern of your choice.
20. **Principle of Lever** - The mechanical advantage gained through a first order lever is illustrated by varying fulcrum distance from weight.
21. **The Coupled Swing** - Working of this swing is based on the principle of Resonance. Resonance, energy transfer and perpetual motion are explained here.

22. **Circus of Energy** – With a combination of paths explains potential energy, centrifugal force, transformation of energy from one form to another and work done by spending energy.
23. **Projectile** – this gadget explains the path taken by a trajectory.
24. **Height vs. Head** – The relationship between the height and pressure of a liquid filled in a vessel or container is explained here.
25. **Musical Tubes** – The pitch of any vibrating material is inversely proportional to the length of the vibrating string. This is how sounds of varying pitch are produced in musical instruments.
26. **Lift yourself** - An interactive play model where you can sit on a chair and lift yourself easily against gravity using the mechanical advantage gained through a pulley system.
27. **Bernoulli's Principle** – Is demonstrated using an ordinary vacuum cleaner turned to blower. When switched on a ball dances on the stream of air that comes out.
28. **Friction and Shape** - Sliding frictions depends on the shape of the object. A wooden box when inclined provides the same friction to differently shaped objects of the same material and weight (like a sphere, solid square, triangle, cylinder, cone, etc.) shows that sliding friction depends on the shape of the object.
29. **Shake Hands with yourself** – Two mirrors 5' in height and 4' in width are placed at right angles to each other. Laterally inverted images give an impression that you are shaking hands with yourself when you stand in the centre and extend your right hand towards the mirror!

181. Scope File

The SCOPE file is a file having the Student's Continuous Overall Performance Evaluation details from the year the student joins the school until she leaves.

The Scope file is a gateway through which a Class Teacher knows a student better. It gives complete information regarding her overall performance through various years of her school.

It contains the:

- Home visit form of every year. (refer # 94)
- Photo-card and Family-photo-card having her photographs of each year. These are very helpful when we make the Yearbook (refer # 217) in class 12.
- Report cards and Mark-sheets showing her academic performance through the years.
- Anecdotes written by the class teacher (refer # 16).
- Parents' special behaviour sheet

The Scope file is handed over from class teacher to class teacher every year, along with a personal briefing.

- Some pages of the SCOPE File are destroyed every academic year and replaced with freshly filled in ones. E.g. Medical Form.

182. Scope File – Children and Family Photo Record Sheet

Passport size Photographs of all the students are collected every year by the class teachers. These photos are pasted on the record sheet kept in the Scope File (refer # 181). These photographs are also scanned and placed in the Year book (refer # 217).

This is an interesting record as it gives a record of how the child looked when she entered school and how she has grown during the years.

Similarly the family photo is also collected every year and placed in the record Sheet. The latest family photo is also scanned and kept in the database for further reference.

183. Scouts and Guides

Bharat Scouts and Guides is a very important activity that teaches students discipline and numerous life skills. It is part of the curriculum from class 3 onwards.

For class 3 and 4, student scouts group are called Cubs (boys) and Bulbuls (girls). From class 5 onwards, students are divided into groups and are named after different patrols like cat, fox, horse, cuckoo and lion.

We give a lot of importance to Scouts and Guides and this activity is of special significance in Eklavya. On Independence Day and Republic Day we hoist the Scout Flag, National Flag and the School Flag. In MS scouts is according to the following schedule –

Class 5 – Monday

Class 6 – Wednesday

Class 7 – Thursday

Class 8 - Friday

The School uniform is so designed that too many uniform changes through the day are avoided. Students wear the Scout shirt as part of their uniform for the whole day when they have a scout's period. The shirt is the scout's shirt and they wear it over the School pant to avoid too many uniform changes. All other accessories are worn before the scouts period.

Students are trained to face different situations in life through scouts camps, parades, activities, games and hikes. Learning of Knots and Morse code is given special attention.

Students are also taught about service to community through *Kar Seva*, which is done inside the school campus and also in public places.

Scouts and Guides Activity encourage children to develop themselves as individuals, not only mentally and physically but also to develop the sense of service.

Students do all the badges as follows –

Pravesh – Class 5

Pratham Sopan – Class 6

Dwitiya Sopan – Class 7

Tritiya Sopan – Class 8

Rajya Puraskar – class 9

Rashtrapati Puraskar (President's Scout) – class 11

Given below is a table showing number of students appeared for and awarded the Rajya and Rashtrapati Scouts and Guides Badge.

Sr.No.	Year	Rajya Puraskar	Rashtrapati Puraskar
1.	2003 – 2004	15	--
2.	2004 – 2005	17	--
3.	2005 – 2006	39	4
4.	2006 – 2007	20	12
5.	2007 - 2008	44	8
6.	2008 - 2009	29	10

184. Seminars for students

On every Tuesday the SS organises a seminar period of about 45 minutes where students meet and interact with persons from various fields and professions like Journalism, Scientists, Priests, Army Officers, Doctors, Radio Jockey, Disc Jockey, Astronauts etc. The resource person makes a presentation or discusses about his life for about 20 minutes. Then the forum is thrown open for a Question-Answer session. The interaction with the faculty is an essential part of this seminar. In this way students get information and awareness regarding various fields.

The main impact of these seminars is that when students ask the professionals how they are successful in their chosen careers, each one of them has more or less the same answer – ‘By persistent hard work and effort.’ Students are at this point of time looking for guidance and when they hear successful people say that ‘Hard Work’ is the only road to success they are reassured that they are on the right path.

Students are also encouraged to conduct the seminar on topics of their own interest. Some of the in-house seminars conducted by the students were Evolution of Cars, Pyramids of Egypt, Aliens, and Fighter Planes.

185. Separate rack for shoes

In Eklavya, the students wear black leather shoes as uniform from home and change over to the sport shoes in school during their respective sports period 7.25 am for MS and 3.40 pm for SS.

So each classroom has separate racks for shoes for the students. The sticker with the name of the child is stuck on each rack. Students leave their sports shoes in the school itself.

They write their names on the shoes with a permanent marker so that they can be identified if they are lost.

186. Shankh Blowing

In Indian mythology, blowing the *shankh* (conch shell) is regarded as a sacred and very auspicious way of initiating anything. It is a major article of prayer.

In Eklavya, all the school assemblies and functions start with blowing of *shankh*. About ten students across JS, MS and SS are now trained to blow the *shankh* altogether in unison. This *shankh naad* gives a harmonious and sonorous start to all functions.

The blowing of a conch shell is said to enhance the positive psychological vibrations such as courage, determination, hope, optimism, and willpower in the blower as well as those around him. It brings in the serenity in the environment and protects from evil effects. It also strengthens the muscles due to *pranayic* exercise while blowing.

To encourage the students to pursue this activity, competitions are also held.

Two or three *shankhs* are kept in an open place in the library so that students can practice during the breaks. There is no restriction for students. They can just pick it up and practice in any of the breaks. Some children are very good and are able to blow the conch consistently and well for a long period. These students also then get a chance to blow the *shankh* during school functions which parents and outsiders attend.

187. Shloka Chanting

In Eklavya, everyday the morning assembly begins with the blowing of *shankh* thrice which is followed by the chanting of *sholkas*. The *sholkas* are related to God or based on values like hard work, responsibility, love, caring, discipline etc.

Some *sholkas* are taken from the *Bhagwad Gita*. The *sholkas* are decided by the Assembly Committee and change every year. *Sholkas* help students to improve their pronunciation. By chanting the *sholkas* students gain meditating power and can concentrate on studies. During chanting everyone is expected to sit in a straight posture with palm open towards the sky. This helps them to absorb energy from nature and surroundings. Another well-known purpose of chanting is that it creates an auspicious surrounding against the negatives or noises that may disturb or upset our mind. *Sholkas* are considered to create an auspicious beginning for any task that we undertake. They are followed by chanting of “ॐ” thrice.

Some of the famous *sholkas* are:

ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः; शं नो मित्रः; सरस्वती वंदना ; या कुन्देन्दू

In MS students choose and attend the *Shloka* Chanting Club. Students learn *shlokas* from the scriptures and chant them together for 40 minutes.

The *shlokas* selected are रुद्राष्टकम् (a part of *Ramacharitmanas*), गोपीजन वल्लभाष्टका (a part of *Shri Vallabhacharya*).

Some of the *shlokas* are written by the Sanskrit Educators highlighting the relationship between a ‘Guru’ and a ‘Shishya’.

These students are then given opportunities to chant on various occasions like Annual Prize-Giving and Investiture Ceremony, Eklavya Excellent Educator Awards (refer # 57). Most of the celebrations in Eklavya begin with *shloka* chanting where these students play a leading role. An audio cassette titled *Shravaneeyam* I and II (refer # 158), composed and sung by students and educators of Eklavya has been released, a copy of which is given to each student.

188. Sick Room

In JS when children fall ill in school, we have a facility of two beds in the library where they can lie down. The librarian is always there and able to take care and give attention to such children. The library is centrally located and so it is possible for the class teacher to supervise the child. Children keep coming and going out of the library the whole day for their classes and this keeps the atmosphere lively.

In MS girls start menstruating and at times need to lie down and rest. So we have a separate room called the 'Refresh and Recharge Room'. It has two beds, pillows and blankets for the use of students who are not well. Some magazines and books are also kept. A first-aid box with facility like crepe bandage is available. General medicines for fever, vomiting, diarrhea and stomach ache are with the librarian, who is also in-charge of this room.

In SS two beds are kept in the *Taleem* Room (A Puzzle-cum-Activity Room). The room is centrally located on the Ground Floor so that it is possible to monitor the student who is sick.

In case the child feels sick, she is sent to the sick room for a period or two. The class teacher is informed and she monitors the child's health.

The room chosen for this purpose is well ventilated, sunny and comfortable. It is always centrally located so that children do not feel isolated.

However, use of sick room is not encouraged for longer periods. In case of prolonged ill health, the child is sent home by an earlier bus or school van after informing the parents on telephone.

The room is always kept clean. The bed sheets, pillow covers and blankets are washed regularly.

189. Small Blackboards for children

There are two blackboards in every classroom in the PS and JS. The big blackboard is a teaching aid for the educator while the smaller one which is hung at a lower height is for the children.

Children are free to write and draw whatever they want on the board. The mere scribbling of the Nursery children slowly transforms to patterns and letters of the alphabet and simple stick figures in JKg and SKg. This then comes out as reflection of what has been taught in the JS.

Children play teacher-teacher, write messages and even their complaints on these boards. It is a delight to read what is written. A lot of doodling is done which is often transformed into interesting patterns.

Peer learning and incidental learning takes place when children write on these boards. If the educator notices something on the board that she needs to address she simply writes the answer with another coloured chalk. If she sees any mistake then the same approach is taken and she brings it to the notice of the children and makes it a learning experience for them.

This blackboard is a space which belongs to the children to express themselves. It makes the day for the class teacher to enter the class and read, "We are waiting for you Ma'am."

This is an aid which works very effectively in the junior classes to help children to give vent to their creativity, thoughts and expressions.

190. Softboards decorated as per season, festivals

Softboard is a media in Eklavya for giving information, exchanging views and sharing ideas with other educators and students. Soft boards therefore form an important part of the school - in the classroom as well as outside.

Each class in the school has softboards that are decorated by the class teacher during the summer break and *Diwali* break. There is one softboard that permanently displays the photo chart of the students of that class, timetable, student-wise list of activities and sports the students will do during the year and the Self Assessment Charts that students fill in everyday indicating whether homework is complete, read and come or not, uniform, etc.

During the year, students maintain the softboard and display their project work, art work etc.

The things to keep in mind during softboard management is –

- Material on the boards must change with regular frequency (fortnightly or weekly)
- If devoted to a particular subject say careers, then admission notices should be put up. Brochures about various colleges like AFMC or IIT can be displayed.
- Notices to students and educators, about festivals, filler weeks, and activity and sports competitions in the week must be displayed.
- The softboard must be maintained well. In monsoon, it absorbs moisture and bends. Also material must be pinned properly so that the charts and papers do not come off and fly about here and there.

A softboard in the corridor is divided into various parts.

Typically in MS this is how it is done. It has a “Hello” board, which is used to display the ongoing and forthcoming events. The information of Exam date-sheet, sports and activity competitions and daily assembly is put up.

Next board has a display - something interesting from literature of famous sayings of writers, philosophers, and thinkers.

A “Festival” board has colourful paintings depicting the cultural aspect of the festival. Short stories, articles, and poems are also exhibited.

Students work is displayed in the students' corner. It contains paintings and poems by them.

"Sports" area displays current sports events, information on sports personalities and forthcoming event charts like "Football World Cup Schedule."

"Luminous Life" board celebrates the birthdays of scientists, educationists, and leaders.

In JS there is a big Theme board. This is displayed as per festivals – e.g. Christmas, New Year, Holi, etc. or as per theme – e.g. Monsoon, animals, etc.

Each class also has a softboard outside their class and it is their responsibility to do it up.

There is another softboard in the lobby titled 'Forthcoming attractions of the month'. This board has class-wise display of movies, field visits, presentation topics etc. for the month. So each student not only knows what is happening in his class but in the entire JS.

Softboard management is thus an important aspect of school and brings together the school as a community while providing day-to-day information.

191. Sports

'Everyday sports for one hour' is an important feature of Eklavya. We believe that it is essential for each child to be involved in some physical activity every day. Thus the time-table has been designed keeping this philosophy in mind. We never compromise on the sports period if the syllabus has to be rushed just before exams. Thus the sports period is very sacrosanct in Eklavya. JS, MS and SS have their own slots for sports as per their time-table.

In JS the students are exposed to various games like Kho-Kho, Kabbadi, Dodge Ball and Dog-and-the-Bone. They are also taught the skills of skating, walking on stilts and the hoopla. At this stage children learn basic rules regarding each game. Each class has five sports period in a week.

In MS students play sports for 45 minutes in the morning as soon as they reach school. Options given for Games are Volleyball, Basketball, Throw ball, Football and Yoga. A coach comes to school part time everyday for each game.

The basic idea behind having sports in the morning is that children of this age group are full of energy and hence playing an hour of sports right in the morning helps them to settle down well in the classroom for studying. They come in their house T-shirts and change into the school shirt / scout shirt at the end of sports. 15 minutes at the end of the sports period are allotted for this. There are special rooms for the girls to change and the boys are allotted rooms class-wise where they change.

SS students play an hour of sports everyday at the end of the day after completing their studies. The idea is that these adolescents are fresh in the morning to receive information packed classes. Through the day they get tired and exhausted and playing an hour at the end of the day helps give vent to frustrations and also leaves them refreshed when they reach home to once again get back to studies. In SS there is a gymnasium where students can exercise on various machines and maintain their fitness.

A student in MS or SS chooses one game out of above mentioned and pursues it throughout the year. The school organizes Inter House Sports competitions amongst the four houses of the school. School also awards certificates to the Winners and Runners Up team. Students also represent the school in various competitions at the Interschool, District and State levels. Eklavya also has some friendly matches with local schools.

192. Stage Backdrops and Props

Many cultural events like drama and talent evenings are held annually at Eklavya. As the school is divided into PS, JS, MS and SS there are 2 Talent Evenings and 3 Annual Plays (Refer Sari # 65 and 69)

An important part of these events are props and backdrops. They are designed and made by the students and educators. In MS and SS everyone does not wish to take part in the event itself but they like to work backstage, work on lights and sound or handle logistics. A team of students volunteer to prepare the props and backdrops. No readymade props are used in any of our cultural events. This group along with the three art educators brainstorm and prepare a list of props to be prepared and create time slots to get them ready. The precision with which this work goes on has to be seen to be believed. The teachers mainly facilitate the process and the students work on their own with full responsibility.

This is so because they have themselves volunteered for it and it gives them a chance to display their creativity. For the backdrop, mainly for the annual plays, the designing team of the parent company pitches in at times.

After the events are over the question arises what is to be done with them? It just cannot be dumped as they are made with a lot of care and love. Our gymnasium has a high ceiling and there is a problem with acoustics. Soft furnishings absorb sound so the backdrops are hung aesthetically to serve the dual purpose of display and absorbing the sound. It makes our gym look very colourful and artistic.

As the events in Eklavya are held in quick succession, in December and January many props are reused. After Euphoria, we have the Talent Evening and then comes the JS and SS play within two weeks. So the props are displayed in the gym and whoever needs them are free to take them and use it with or without modification. Similarly the new props made during the plays are used by the four houses during the inter house play competition of MS. Some props after being used for two or more years are not in a condition to be used and thus they are destroyed.

After all the events are over in January, two places are identified which have enough space for storing them. One of the places is an easily accessible one from where students can take the props to be used during their assembly programmes or any other celebration.

Whenever something is created there is a learning in the process but there is a greater learning in sharing the creativity. The props are made by students of the four houses and in MS Phoenix there are marks allotted for props but there is no feeling of ours and yours when it comes to sharing the props. So one can hear, "Look that is last year's Shraavan House tree that is used by Prahlad in their jungle" but all that is said in good humour.

Along with the finesse of the props, shines the spirit of sharing what you have with others that makes this aspect of our school so unique.

193. Students' Council

Eklavya has a Students' Council in existence since 1998. There came a time in the last few years when we thought that this important and already existing system should be brought into greater prominence. It comprises of Head-boy, Head-girl, and prefects. Later as the strength of the school increased a Deputy Head-boy and Deputy Head-girl were added.

The structure of the council is as follows –

1. Head-boy & Head-girl (nominated from Class 12)
2. Deputy Head-boy & Deputy Head-girl (nominated from class11)
3. Prefects – eight in number (two each - one boy & one girl – nominated from class 8, 9, 10 & 11.

The Council reports to the Vice-Principal on all issues before implementing decisions.

In the academic year 2008 2009 we had a few meetings but could not really define the role of this body. In 2009-10 the Council was constituted and given the responsibility of defining its role. They met and brainstormed on various duties and responsibilities the council would take up and made a half-hour presentation to the principals and a group of educators from various schools.

The presentation brought out their leadership initiative and demonstrated their ability to think through the entire working of the school before assigning themselves the duty. They discussed negative and positive points of all aspects and made out a charter for themselves. They also set a hierarchy which they assured will be strictly followed.

After this they set about discharging their duties and responsibility. They broadly defined their duties in three categories – Discipline, Events and Students issues.

Discipline included overall school discipline, school discipline during events, assembly checking of uniform, punishments, major punishment's discussion with Principal, Vice – principal and educators as and when required.

During events the council took the onus of the formation of student-teacher committees, planning of all details- venues, stage managing, and seating arrangements to be organized and involving students in the arrangements, making the success of the event their responsibility.

Student issues such as class discipline problems (if any!), complaints, suggestions, link between student- teacher bodies, bullying and cheating were taken up by the council.

Any student is free to approach any member of the Council at any time about any issue/ instructions/ comments/complaints/ suggestions

The Council meets once a month at a mutually convenient time, but can also meet as and when there is an event or issue that requires discussion before implementation. The Head-boy and Head-girl preside over all meetings and have an agenda. Prefects and deputies are free to add on or bring points of common interest to the meetings.

The Head-boy and Head-girl are in-charge of the school discipline, events such as inter-house activities and sports competitions, common day-to-day problems of students, house coordination during events, allotting specific duties to prefects daily and during school functions. They also assist and are part of discipline related punishments that are given to students from time to time.

The Council is assisted by class monitors (one in each section) who are appointed by the class teacher usually for a period of atleast one month or at the most for two months. They do not report to the council but will bring to notice an issue that requires intervention. Class monitors are responsible for the following aspects of classroom management – cleanliness, submissions, call teachers if class is unattended and class decorations (soft board, blackboard, etc.), Class issues will be solved by the class monitor along with respective class teachers. Council will not be involved unless asked.

Along with the Council the school also has a system of House-captains and Vice-captains. They are as follows –

1. House captains – one for each house, nominated from class 11.
2. House vice-captains – one for each house, nominated from class 8
3. House vice-captains – one for each house, nominated from class 4.

The jurisdictions of the Council and House Captains are separate. The Captains' responsibility is to ensure house discipline and that their respective houses participate in all competitions enthusiastically and win.

194. Student volunteers – ‘Happy to help’

The Student council in consultation with a coordinating educator constitutes a team of volunteers for each event that is to take place. Events like Janmashtami, Independence Day, Dusshera havan and Republic Day are handed over entirely for logistics’ management to the student council and the student volunteers.

For larger events announcements are done in MS and SS assemblies inviting students to volunteer to help in various events. Various areas are announced. E.g. for Euphoria the areas are – parking, amphitheatre discipline, helping PS and JS class teachers with make-up and looking after students, guiding parents, stage management, lights and sound management. Students give names to a council member appointed for this purpose who maybe a Prefect or Deputy Head-boy or girl. Then the Vice-Principal and the Head- boy and girl sit together and assign duties.

The student volunteers wear a ‘Happy to help’ badge which is a smiley with the caption. This helps the class teachers, students of PS and JS, educators, students of MS and SS and parents recognize them as people in charge of a certain aspect and respect their instructions and follow them.

We have realized that the student body is an extremely innovative and responsible team of workers who are able to coordinate well amongst themselves and execute events to near perfection. They have a system of keeping a tab over each other’s activities and ensuring smooth functioning along with maintaining discipline at all times. Students also respond well to their instructions as they tend to many times ‘switch-off’ when adults (educators or principal) give the same instruction.

‘Happy to help’ teams are a huge success in Eklavya. It fulfills to a great extent the education of students in learning to volunteer to fulfill responsibilities, take initiative, learn time management, deal with various discipline issues, handle unpleasant altercations and so much more. A whole new set of skills and attitudes are developed here which academics alone can never achieve.

195. Study skills class

Students in SS have one period per week called *Study Skills*.

It is mainly a class where students are taught how to study, manage time – especially before exams, make a reading schedule, concentrate and study, how to pay attention in the class among various exercises on how to take notes and how to read before a class so that maximum benefit of the teaching-learning process is gained. Through activities and worksheets they are encouraged honing the skills they already have and developing and learning new ones. Appropriate articles from magazines and newspapers are identified and given to the students to read.

The course also helps students to develop a positive approach towards study and learn good study habits. Often some counselling takes place.

Topics that are covered are –

1. Strategies for learning, Independent or Self Study
2. Note making styles
3. Group discussion
4. Decision making
5. Summarizing
6. Identifying resources
7. Why is school important
8. Use of language
9. Critical thinking
10. How to make oral presentations
11. Revision – What does it involve
12. Taking exams
13. Managing stress
14. Counselling

One example of worksheet and activities is given on the next page –

Example

This is a transparency used during the session on Why and How to make notes. It also highlights important points to keep in mind while making and organizing notes.

Transparency – Why Make Notes?

While Making Notes –

- Put your pen down so you won't be tempted to copy out of the book
- Read to answer your own questions.
- Identify and sum up main ideas
- Jot down one or two words to remind you
- Note real names and quotations exactly as they are written
- Leave space to add details later on .

Organize your notes –

- Use separate file for separate subjects
- Use file dividers for major topics
- Arrange ideas under headings or questions
- Label files and dividers correctly
- Number pages for easy re - filing
- Keep an updated contents page.

196. Table Test / Formula Test

In the beginning of the academic session every year, multiplication table tests are done from JS to SS for a period of about a month. Students learn the tables by rote and random sheets containing a fixed number of sums each are given to them – one per day. The aim of this exercise is to help students become quick at solving maths problems.

In JS students learn tables' upto15X10, in MS upto 16X16 and in SS upto20X20.

The sums are given thus –

CLASS	MARKS	NO. OF SUMS	TIME
1	20	20	10 mins
2	30	30	7 mins
3	50	50	5 mins
4	100	100	5 mins
5 & 6	100	100	5 mins
7 & 8	100	100	5 mins
9 to 12	100	100	5 mins

In MS and SS the table test consists of a format of 100 questions to be done in 5 minutes, thereby expecting the students to know them by heart and not to do it by multiplying.

It is continued till each child is able to secure 80% marks in these tests. To help the students become a master at these multiplication tables these are put in their diaries to help them memorise.

The entire purpose of this exercise is to 'exercise the mind'. If I want strong thigh muscles I have to do atleast 500 sit-ups everyday! If I want to exercise my mind I have to 1. memorise multiplication tables or poems and 2. Solve brain teasers.

In the process of doing this I also develop my will power. This is done by 'doing the things I do not like' and 'Not doing the things I like'. The spiritual mind is also developed by doing *Kar Seva*

Memorising these multiplication tables is important because when you memorise something it becomes your property and stays with you all your life. (refer Philosophical sari # 17)

197. Taleem Games (Teaching Learning Materials)

Taleem materials are Teaching Learning Materials disguised as games for children. They are made by Eklavya.

Taleem is a brand name registered by Eklavya. The T, L and M stand for Teaching, Learning and Materials respectively. We put an 'a' and an 'ee' to get *Taleem*!

They are not all original. Some are, while some are copied. For e.g. we saw an old book of Froebel (he experimented for 16 years and in 1837 made the first kindergarten, the word too was invented by him) which had his twenty 'gifts' (he designed 20 games for children to play and learn. Probably the first teaching learning materials systematically ever designed, these he called 'gifts'). We copied the gifts 3, 4, 5 and 6 which are now regularly used by JKg, SKg, class 1 and 2 children in Eklavya. They are very powerful tools to learn patterns, geometry, 3-D, and what not.

In the JS the TLMs are used as a part of the introductory lesson and later children play with them as the concept is being done which leads to reinforcement. Some of the very popular JS TLMs are Fraction Flip Chart and Circles, Place Value Card and Place Value Beads and Cubes.

In yet another book we saw a "binomial cube" and a "trinomial cube" which explains the formulae $(x+y)^2$ and $(x+y)^3$ and $(x+y+z)^3$ in a unique and dramatic fashion – the student will link the formula to an actual 3-D explanation, she will 'picturise' the formula, and of course, never then forget it !

One of our educators visited the London Science Museum and found a very nice gadget to demonstrate Bernoulli Principle, photos were taken, and later we made it in Eklavya!

The effort always is for the educators to think and create ways and means of how to convey a concept of physics, or maths, or geography to the student in an innovative and effective way. Some of these result in TLMs.

We have currently more than 300 TLMs in Eklavya.

198. Teakwood forest

Fifteen years ago when the land for setting up Eklavya was purchased it was decided to have a small forest.

We thought planting teak would be a nice option since it has lovely big leaves and offers good shade. Somebody then told us that teak does not grow in Ahmedabad. All other trees like the banyan, neem, peepul, gulmohar, garmalo, Borsali, etc. grow easily and are found in plentiful. We then decided to plant teakwood Today there are 560 teak trees that are about twelve years old.

The forest also has many medicinal plants – like amaranthus, tulsi, and adusi, fruit trees like chikoo, amla, guava, pomegranate and lemon and a vermiculture pit and the edge.

It has a road laid of rough kota stone, but otherwise it is very much like a forest.

Today it is home to nearly 1400 trees and a variety of birds and other fauna.

199. Third language

It is said the more languages a child learns at a younger age the greater is her mental development. In Eklavya, English is the medium of instruction and Hindi is the 2nd language taught that goes upto class 10. Apart from these two, children learn a 3rd language from classes 1 to class 8. They can choose from – Sanskrit, French and Japanese.

Research says that multilingual exposure in early life gives a more holistic development opportunity to children. Such children are all rounders, sober and well behaved. Take the case of a child born to a Tamilian father and a Marathi mother living in Gujarat. The child picks up Gujarati from friends at home and in school, studies English and Hindi and a third language in school. So she has an exposure to six languages.

The Sanskrit curriculum includes chanting of *shlokas*, songs, learning short stories and vocabulary development. The Japanese and French curriculum covers vocabulary development, conversation, songs.

Class 1 and 2 have two periods a week, while class 3 to 8 have three periods a week. In JS there is no written work in all the 3rd languages, the stress is on oral work and getting children familiar with the language. The evaluation is also oral, each term has 25 marks oral test and is taken 4 times. The written work starts from class 5.

An attempt is made to make the teaching of Third Language as interactive and as conversation based as possible.

Since Eklavya is a school in Gujarat many times the question arises as to why not offer Gujarati as a 3rd language? We were offering initially. Then we found that some Gujarati speaking students were opting for Gujarati as a 3rd language. What is taught is a lower level than what they know from exposure at home. Mother tongue is best picked up at home and not from a school that offers it as a 3rd language. We found out what other schools do and discovered that most schools do not offer mother tongue as a 3rd language for obvious reasons. So we removed Gujarati as 3rd language for Gujarati students and found that only one or two students were left. It was not then possible to offer the language.

We have many Gujarati parents who have returned to India from abroad. They want their children to learn Gujarati. But the level is so low that it is not a good course to teach and the expectation of exposure to culture is not met with.

200. Time Management in Functions

Eklavya strictly adheres to the timings of any function striving to remove any constraints wherever they exist.

There are different functions like Euphoria, Pheonix, Sports Day etc. which are celebrated on the school campus. The invitation to these functions along with the schedule is sent to parents much in advance.

All the programs start on the scheduled time. The function progresses as per the planning and ends on time.

Parents who are late by more than 10 minutes are not allowed to attend the function.

This ensures that parents who are on time do not end up waiting for the late parents. Also as these functions are of great importance to students who do not like to be disturbed. This also teaches students the value of time, an important learning for future citizens. What better way to teach it than practising what we preach.

All parents wait until the end of all programmes and functions held in Eklavya. If parents leave as soon as their child's programme is over there will be a small audience to cheer the students performing towards the end. Everybody has done a lot of *mehnat* for the function and this practice ensures equal encouragement and motivation for all participants.

201. Tradition of not giving flowers to guests

In Eklavya, we do not pluck and use flowers for decorations or presentations as life pervades in all living beings, be they plants or animals. Hence, they are regarded as sacred and their brief life is respected.

We instead gift a painting done by the students of Eklavya or a book.

'Give a book, not a bouquet' – This is our motto.

When we give flowers they last a day or two and are then mercilessly thrown away. A good example that demonstrates this is the day after a wedding reception. If one goes and sees the manner in which the flowers gifted to the couple and the wedding flower decorations are strewn about you will understand what we are talking about.

When you gift a book somebody is bound to read it – at home or a friend may borrow and read. Even if a book is stolen the only thing a thief can do with it is read it!

Unlike flowers, books do not have a shelf life or expiry date. They last a long time (a life time actually) and many people will end up reading it and benefitting from it. Inside the book one can write the date and to whom it was given to and by whom and for which function. So in a way a record is maintained forever. It is possible that after 20 years the great grandson reads the book and realises that his great grandfather was chief guest for a function in the same school where he is now studying!

Wonder why do people give flowers?

202. Training Programme for other schools

Eklavya School imparts training to teachers of other schools.

This training requires the visiting teachers to spend atleast a week to fifteen days in Eklavya.

Teachers could belong to any level – Nursery to class 12 and any subject.

Amongst the schools that have sent teachers to Eklavya are Nalanda International School - Baroda, Eklavya School - Jalandhar, Shishukunj International School - Indore, Central Tibetan School Administration and Satya Public School – Kakinada, to name a few.

The programme for the visiting teachers is chalked out in detail before they come to Eklavya. They are assigned the appropriate school – PS or JS for Primary School teachers and subjects in MS or SS for subject teachers. Each visiting teacher is given a mentor teacher in Eklavya. She essentially attends all classes of the mentor and a few more of other teachers.

They go through lesson plans, work sheets, books used for reference, question papers and all such academic material they may find useful. They also photocopy some material to help them when they get back. They go through the other resource material like Ankidyne (refer # 180), Science labs and Taleem (refer # 197) in great detail. They are given training by actually showing and getting them to use these materials.

They also attend any ongoing HRD programme, lectures, workshops or talks going on in Eklavya during the time of their visit.

A day or two before the training ends the visiting teachers are required to make a presentation on 10 new things they learnt in Eklavya that they will go back and implement in their respective schools.

Most teachers go back enriched and eager to come back again. The interaction benefits Eklavya greatly because our educators interact and learn many things from the visiting teachers.

203. Transition from One class to another, Skg to Class 1, Class 4 to 5, Class 8 to 9

A student becomes comfortable in one school e.g. Spends three years in PS. She is familiar with the building, educators, housekeeping helps and so on. In a nutshell, it is her comfort zone, the very smell of the place makes her feel secure. As she grows up she has to go to the next class e.g. Class 1 and hence to the next school i.e. JS. She has to leave behind her safe haven. She feels uncomfortable, maybe a bit scared too. This feeling is similar to a girl getting married and entering a new and important part of her life. She is eager but there are many questions in her heart and the pain of leaving behind all that is familiar and dear to her.

The bride's mother prepares her for this great emotional transition of her life. She indoctrinates her daughter about her new life and gives her the confidence to look forward to it. If we as educators do the same and help our students to take this transition with élan then not only do they enjoy that phase but blossom and spread their fragrance. We help them in this *ghul mil jaana* so that the next four years are more productive. The transition is not only for the students but also for the parents as they also need to adjust to the change in timings, food, teaching pattern etc. So how should it be done?

We decided on the following steps:

1. A few of Class 5 and Class 9 students go to the JS and MS assembly respectively a week before the academic year ends and speak to the Class 4 and Class 8 students. They have an informal talk sharing what they felt when they left "home" and how they coped. They talk about things to look forwards to and what to prepare for. Hearing it from peers has a very positive effect in the students.
2. A few SS and MS educators also go and speak to the Class 8 and five students welcoming them and assuring them that they will be cherished and appreciated as much as their last school.
3. To handle the apprehension of parents we call some Class 9 and Class 5 parents in Mothers' Workshop (refer Sari # 123) where they speak about their experiences and the role the parents have to play to help their children settle down in the new routine.

4. The last workshop of Skg, Class 4 and Class 8 are attended by the respective Principals of JS, MS and SS where they orient the parents about the working of the schools and also gives them tips which help them to be ready for the new school by making proper use of the two months summer vacation.
5. We also have a very experienced senior psychology faculty who addresses the parents and answers their queries.
6. The last Lavya (refer sari # 40) class of MS is devoted to the students visiting the SS and meeting the educators. They are free to ask any questions they want to and clear their doubts.

A question may arise that what is the need to do so much when the students are very much in the same campus. A unique aspect of Eklavya is that each section (PS, JS, MS, SS) has its unique flavour. Not only are the timings and set of teachers different but the entire approach towards helping students develop is also distinct in each school. As they spend 4 years in each school they get accustomed to a particular way and it is very important that they feel comfortable and ready to receive when something else is offered to them. Hence, there is a need to make the transition both pleasurable and challenging

204. Trophy - Cleanliness Trophy

This is a rotating trophy given in appreciation of maintaining cleanliness in and around the school campus voluntarily. This is a philosophy that Eklavya wholeheartedly believes in and follows.

Children are taught not to depend on housekeeping staff but on themselves to clean up any area in and outside the classroom. A committee of educators observe all the sections for a month.

The trophy is given to the class that keeps their display boards neat and updated, looks after the class furniture, maintains cleanliness during break time and keeps the corridor and the ground adjacent to the class tidy.

Each class has a broom, mop, dustpan and dustbin and the educator and children both use them as and when required.

The trophy is given in the assembly on the 1st of every month. The class teacher is called to receive the trophy and the respective class children stand up at their place and acknowledge the applause.

The trophy is displayed in the class for a month after which the educator returns it to the committee on the last day of the month. A class can win the trophy more than once.

The trophy is a small gesture to motivate children and instill in them the habit of being responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of their school without being monitored.

205. Trophy – English Speaking Trophy

The English Speaking Trophy in JS is a rotating trophy given every month. There are four such trophies which are to be won by the sixteen sections e.g. the four sections of Class 1 compete to win the trophy in a month and same with classes 2, 3 and 4. So in a month from Class 1 it can be 1 alpha, from Class 2 it can be 2 beta, from Class 3 again 3 alpha and from Class 4 it can be 4 delta. The same section can retain the trophy for two successive months also if they beat the other sections.

In Eklavya we do many things to motivate students. Often we find that mere instruction and monitoring lacks that motivational skill that makes a student spontaneously do something. We have students from various backgrounds and some of them are first generation English speakers. We found that students resort to talking in Hindi a lot. We give equal importance to Hindi but as the teaching learning programme is in English it was true that spoken English would ensure better comprehension and better writing skill.

We tried many things in JS. Some worked temporarily some did not. Then we started a rotating trophy just like the Healthy Trophy and the Cleanliness Trophy called the English Speaking Trophy. As there are 16 sections we designed 4 trophies, 1 per class.

A group of about 5 teachers were chosen who would keep an eye to judge at the end of the month which section made an effort to try and speak in English the most. The winner is announced on the 5th of every month in the assembly amidst much fanfare!(Children at times need a bit of drama) The names of the 4 sections are also written outside the library as that is the place everyone visits everyday. This stays for the whole month.

Although it is true that it has not given us 100% result but we can see students making a conscious effort and correcting each other. That was our target.

Maybe the initial euphoria will wear away after some months, as is very common with this age group. The best thing to do then is discontinue it and restart it after some time.

206. Trophy - Healthy trophy

The “ Healthy Trophy “ is a rotating trophy given each month to *that* section of the JS that has the maximum number of students present for that month, linking it with the thought if you eat healthy you do not fall sick and hence do not miss the fun-filled school days. This is another rotating trophy in the JS, along with the Cleanliness Trophy (refer # 204).

A healthy and robust body leads to a healthy and wholesome mind. At Eklavya eating any kind of junk food is strictly discouraged (for students and educators both). The tiffin should consist of nutritious diet like *roti, dal, rice and sabji*. Whole-wheat sandwiches, fruits, salads and home-made snacks like *idlis* and *dhoklas* are also allowed. Pickle, *papad* and such are not allowed.

Children are very eager to win this trophy for their class not only once but again and again! The trophy is given out in the assembly amidst a lot of excitement and the class winning it feels extremely proud. The educator displays the trophy in the class.

The trophy is made by the art/craft teacher of the school and is kept with the class for the whole month and returned to the Assembly Committee on the last day of the month.

207. Trophy - House of the Year Trophy

Eklavya School awards to the best house of the year a trophy. This trophy is awarded on the overall performance of the house in Activities, Sports, Theatre, *Kar Seva* and Assembly presentations.

A point system has been devised for the awarding of this trophy. A total of 5000 points is taken with 1000 coming from JS and 2000 each coming from MS and SS.

Effort determines the percentage contribution of marks.

For e.g. in sports a game like table tennis which is an individual game where everything depends upon one individual the points given are less (10,7,5 points for 1st, 2nd and 3rd positions respectively). In a game like football where there are 11 players and team effort and co ordination is important more points are given (40,20 for 1st and 2nd positions respectively). Team Sports are awarded more marks. Eklavya appreciates and recognizes individual talent. Team spirit and putting in your best as a team is what we want to inculcate.

In inter-house debating activity which is an individual activity less points are given (10,7,5 points for 1st, 2nd and 3rd positions respectively) and inter-house drama competition where 60 – 70 students from each house participate in direction, acting, props, costumes, music and singing the points awarded are considerably more (70,30).

A one-shot activity like *Rangoli* is given lesser marks though it is a group activity whereas assembly or *Kar Seva* that happens everyday all through out the academic session is awarded more points.

In short, the total effort is a function of the number of students involved or whether it is a one-shot or spread over many months – many students activity.

The allotment of points for activities and sports is as under:

Sports		Activities	
Type	Points	Type	Points
Individual	10,7,5	Individual	10,7,5
Group < 4	15,10,7	Group < 4	15,10,7
Group > 4	40,20	Group > 4	20,10

A Sports and Activities committee comprising of four to five educators in each of the schools – JS, MS and SS decides the competitions they would like to hold through the year. Each activity is given some points and then total points are reduced to 1000 in case of JS and 2000 each in case of MS and SS.

Care is taken to give about 35% to 40% to activities and sports and the remaining divided among Assembly, *Kar Seva* and Sports Day.

The trophy has been designed by us. It is in the form of a house with four sides representing the four houses – Shravan, Prahlad, Aruni and Dhruv. The art teachers of Eklavya made a design for each house that depicts a prominent story of the four characters. This design was then chemically etched on the sides and then they were welded together to form a house.

The base is designed so that each year has a 1" X 1" information plaque on which the year, name of the winning house, names of captain and vice captains are etched. There are 65 such squares. Assuming all houses would get equal representation in the years to come the trophy will last us 65 years!

208. Trophy - Sports Day

Sports Day is generally celebrated on December 25 of the given year from 9.00 am to 12 noon. The Sports Day is held all together for the entire school on two separate large grounds in the school. PS, JS, MS and SS are allotted tracks and separate areas on these grounds and the events are held simultaneously on all the tracks. Through a draw of lots four parents – one from each school – are invited as chief guests to give away the certificates and trophies.

There is nearly 100 % participation on this day. Races are going on simultaneously. Small bands of educators officiate on the starting and finishing lines. The results are quickly written on pre-printed strips of paper on which the names of the participants and their houses are already mentioned. The finishing judge puts in a 1st, 2nd and 3rd and the slip in 2 sets goes to the announcer and the score board. The announcer announces the result and passes the slip to a educator besides her who is writing out the certificates. As soon as the certificate is written it is distributed by the respective chief guest to the winners.

The total number of trophies and certificates given away in all schools are about 600. If these were to be given away in a separate awards ceremony it would take about 2 hours. In this way the prize giving ceremony also goes on simultaneously on 4 victory stands with four chief guests.

The atmosphere is that of a *mela* and parents cheer and encourage the students all along. Normally for all functions Eklavya is a 'no mobile zone'. But on this day parents are allowed to use the mobile.

Sometimes parents whose children have finished their item want to leave the campus with their child. If this happens then there will be nobody left to cheer the remaining participants. In Eklavya we close the gates and ensure that everybody is present to cheer everybody.

A Sports trophy is also awarded on Investiture Ceremony to the house that has scored the maximum marks on Sports Day. Marks scored by JS, MS and SS are totalled and the trophy is awarded to the house with the highest total.

209. Umang

Umang is a day club for old people in the city of Ahmedabad

About 15 *Dadajis* and *Dadijis* from Umang visit Eklavya once a month on a fixed date. Eklavya arranges a bus to pick them up from one point and bring them to school. They are then guided to different classes.

Once they are with the children, it is a pleasure to see the happiness on their faces. They tell the children stories, ask them riddles and even teach them some lovely songs. This interaction between *Dadajis* and *Dadijis* and the little ones is a unique one – it is amazing to see the children listen to them with a lot of interest. Their curious questions related to the story narrated makes *Dadajis/Dadijis* very happy and they love answering them. After the story telling session the bus takes them back to their centre.

Today's parents are usually both working and due to TV and many other reasons spend little time with their children. They are impatient and have no time to answer the many questions the child may have during a conversation.

Say for example the father is telling the children a story. He begins – 'Long ago ---- the state of Punjab was ruled by a brave king called Ranjit Singh.' A child will interrupt and ask – 'Where is Punjab?' The other will say – 'I have a friend in school called Ranjit.' Father wants to finish the story. He gets upset at the interruptions and diversions and says angrily – '*Chup karo. Baad mein bataaongaa. Abhi kahani ko aage badhne do.*' Children have a tear in their eye.

Same story narrated by the grandparents has a different flavour. They are retired people with a lot of time. While the father's interest is to tell the story in as short a time and as efficiently as possible, the grandparent's objective is to elongate the story as far as possible so more of his time is occupied. So the grandparents welcome the diversion and branches out and talks about Punjab – Bhangra, the golden wheat fields, Bhagat Singh and *Sarson Ka Saag* and what not! Then when the child says that his friend is called Ranjit, the grandparent with a twinkle in his eye says – 'Very good. *Uske baare mein kya accha lagta hai tumhe?*' *Aur kaun friends hain tumhare?*'

Eklavya believes that in a family where there are 'growing up children' if the grandparents are living in the same house, those children are

'*bhagyashali*' and gain immense benefit and a particular kind of emotional maturity.

The children and the *Dadajis/Dadijis* eagerly wait for this day every month. The grandparents remind as that even in this tech savvy world the eternal magic of the words,"Once upon a time" is not lost.

During the Annual Prize-Giving and Investiture Ceremony, they are felicitated by the Eklavya family. We invite them to the ceremony and present them with a painting done by the students of Eklavya. One of them makes a small speech to the students.

210. Uniforms - Same dress code for boys and girls

Uniform for students' starts from class 1 onwards.

We have the same dress code, i.e., shirt and trousers/shorts for both boys and girls. It is very convenient for girls since they have to be extra cautious with their skirts or tunics. Secondly, the dress code being common, it gives uniformity to the school.

Sports is a daily and compulsory activity for all students. It is much easier for girls to play sports freely and fully wearing pants or shorts

211. Uniforms - Use of old uniforms

Students who have outgrown their school uniform and the uniform is *still* in good condition - they are requested to donate them to the school. This includes school shirt, pant, house T-shirt, sweaters, school shoes and sports shoes.

The school mends these items (if required). They are washed and ironed and kept at the school office. Parents who cannot afford to buy come and collect as per the need. No record is kept as to how many pairs are taken by whom.

Many parents avail this facility. Usually the collection of these items is done at the end of the academic year.

Through Mother's Workshops and Eklavya Samachar parents are made aware of this facility and they are requested to donate as well as avail the facility. Sometimes the Principal (since she knows every student and parents and family condition fairly well) phones the mother and puts a couple of shirts etc in the child's bag!

212. Use of feminine gender

Eklavya consistently and consciously uses the feminine pronouns ('she', 'her', etc.) to denote both genders. The first such use in any note may be marked with an asterisk, and explained through a footnote: "Throughout this note '*she*' denotes both genders and should be read as '*he or she*', unless the context specifically requires otherwise."

It is believed by many that language often plays a significant role in perpetuating different types of prejudices, many times inadvertently. Use of male pronouns to denote both genders is a common practice. Though the speaker or writer may not imply any kind of bias, and may use these terms simply because they seem natural, Eklavya recognises that these may serve to perpetuate prejudice in the minds of readers. We do not wish this to happen.

The use of neutral pronouns is awkward or tedious. ('*s/he*' and '*he or she*' are examples). Eklavya has consciously chosen to use the feminine gender to make a statement that we recognise that prejudice exists in many forms, and we are opposed to it in all forms.

213. Wall Painting

It is nice for children to see a wall-painting come up in front of their eyes. So, every now and then, in Eklavya we try to find a wall, make a team of some students and educators, and make a painting on the wall. The whole process may take about six months.

Other students, as they pass by every day, see the wall transform, little by little, from a simple plain white wall into a colourful painting! This whole process is very participative. Some draw, some decide the colour combinations, some paint and the students and educators passing by and watching it grow give suggestions.

Each one does a small portion of it and sees the whole thing come to life in a few months. They learn and understand the importance of doing things together in a group. They also understand that each one's contribution is as important in the final larger picture (as it is with life!)

Students take pride in their participation and work being on display in the school and gain a sense of ownership of the place where they study in. Similar exercise can be done to paint a window-pane – glass painting.

214. Web site

The official website of Eklavya is www.eklavya.org

Our e-mail id is eklavya@eklavya.org

The web site is designed and updated by the educators and staff of Eklavya.

The website contains exhaustive information about the various schools, their structure, activities and daily schedule.

The website is regularly updated with information on admissions, vacancies for educators, and the Eklavya Samachar – a monthly newsletter that reviews the past month and informs parents about forthcoming events. (<http://www.eklavya.org/mainsamachar.htm>)

215. Weekly Planning

In JS, during the summer break, class teachers do a detailed lesson-by-lesson planning of the curriculum to be followed by all the four class teachers. This is again discussed every week throughout the year.

Every Monday all the four class teachers sit with the lesson plan file of all the subjects and plan for the next six days, Tuesday to next Monday. They discuss what is to be taught on a particular day, the way to teach and the homework to be given. Field visits and projects are also decided, as and when required.

A danger of too much planning or too detailed planning is the likelihood of a rigid or boring implementation where each of the four educator's creativity and individual styles are stifled. We try to be aware of this and give space to each educator to flow as per her individual style.

Weekly planning helps all the co-teachers to be at par with each other in their syllabus coverage.

In MS and SS - while the educators do lesson planning at the beginning of the academic session, along with it they also do week wise planning for their classes.

The whole academic year is divided into number of weeks. The educator has to divide her whole syllabus to be taught 'week-wise'. For example, in class 9, 24 chapters have to be taught in the whole academic session. There are 3 periods of biology in a week. Thus on an average, approximately, 2-3 chapters must be done in a month.

During the academic year, periods unavailable due to vacation, exams etc. are eliminated before doing the weekly planning. Thus the educator has a fair idea during the session that she is progressing on time and syllabus completion is not rushed before exams.

The weekly plans are referred to every month to keep a check on the schedule. This has other advantages as well, such as; we are able to give the term exam schedule on the first day of the academic session to the students since the educator is aware in advance of the syllabus to be done. Same applies for the Unit test schedule.

216. Worksheets

Worksheets are the additional exercise sheets given to students for practice. Worksheets can be prepared for all subjects. They are an effective tool for the educator to reinforce important concepts as well as difficult topics.

In a worksheet, additional questions (not from the textbook) are typed (or handwritten) under a proper header. These sheets are photocopied and distributed to students. Worksheets are usually given at the end of a topic as homework or for revision.

Worksheets are excellent time saving tools for educators as well as students. No time is wasted in copying down the question from the black-board. The sheet can also be preserved for future reference. (a copy is filed by the concerned educator in the lesson plan file.)

A variety of questions and in different combinations can be included in a worksheet. Worksheets for JS are more creative and emphasis is on asking the same content in different interesting ways. In JS every class gets worksheets on all subjects every week. It can be CW/HW sheet. Weekend work sheets which are a combination of the 4 subjects are given before the 2nd and 4th Saturday which generally covers the work done the previous fortnight. We give some space in each worksheet called "This is what I found out" where children find out more about the topic of the worksheet.

For MS, the emphasis is more on the content.

Worksheets are an effective way to reinforce the areas where students mostly make errors. (refer # 33)

217. Year Book for passing out class 12 batch

'If only we could hold on to the golden moments that passed by.' The 'Year Book' of Eklavya strives to do just that by presenting to the students a kaleidoscope of their past fifteen years in school.

The year book is a compilation of feelings and thoughts put together by the outgoing batch of class 12 students.

Every year when class 12 comes to an end, it is an emotional moment for the students and the educators since they have had a long association with the school. The school and the students wish to carry with themselves some memoir, which keeps the memory of their school years alive.

So all the students of class 12 are asked to write down good points/ things they like about each student in the class. When all the students finish writing these points are compiled together for each child page wise. A passport size photograph is also put along with the comments. A thorough editing is then done and a final draft is shown to the students before sending it for a final print. Thus all these good feelings and what my classmates think of me is put together for all students of class 12 together and named as a year book. At the end of the book is a page where the photo of each child from the time she has taken admission in Eklavya to Class 12 is printed. The Principal and one or two senior teachers also write a foreword for the students.

A copy is given to each child of class 12 and a copy is put in the school library.

Philosophical सरी

1. How the motto came to be

If you read the Eklavya Slogan (refer # 60) it will give you the philosophy behind the name. Then we were searching for a motto.

We saw that every educational institution has something in Sanskrit or Latin. IIMA has *Vidya Viniyoga Vikasaha* (through knowledge progress). Somebody has *Apo Deepo Bhavaha* (Be your own light). Something taken from Buddha, something from the *Gita*, or the *Upanishads*, and so on.

We wanted to make our own motto, not 'lift' it from somewhere, something like a 'designer' motto! We were lucky to find a great Sanskrit Pandit in Ahmedabad itself. Pandit KK Shastri. (In 1947 Nehruji asked Pandit Raghunath and Pandit Shastri, two very eminent Sanskrit scholars to 'create' new words in Hindi, but based upon Sanskrit, for the hundreds of English words which were now in the normal vocabulary, like – railway station, superintendent, etc) Ke Kaa Shastri, as he was fondly called, was 94 years old (he passed away a couple of years ago at age 102!).

I did not know him, but I went straight to his house, he was sitting (squatting actually) on the high verandah outside his house. I touched his feet, he blessed me, I introduced myself in brief and said- *mujhe aap ki madad chahiye* (I want your help). He was encouraging, so I explained about the school, the concept of Eklavya, the statue of the boy carving himself out of stone (showed him a photo) and then with folded hands said that I have come to seek his help to make a motto in Sanskrit, a self-made one, not picked up from one of the ancient texts. He agreed.

I asked, when I can come to do it, he said - just now! and jumped up from his perch and led me to the inner room, where he sat on a chair and I on the ground near him, and a low table next to us.

I repeated the philosophy again, he took the pad from my hand and in his not-at-all-trembling hand wrote – *swayam darshanam, swayam jyotih, swayam marg darshanam*. Then he explained the meaning to me. I said very nice, but *swayam marg darshanam* says that I will find my own path, meaning the path is already there, all I have to do is search and find it. While what I want is some *khoon-pasina*, the path is not there, I have to cut the trees, fight with the animals, make the path, in the process do a lot of *karma*, hard work, adventure, danger, etc etc. I said – *mehnat ki khushboo nahin aa rahi*. So he took the paper from me, cut out *darshanam* and wrote *karanam*. That was it!

As I was writing the motto thus designed onto another paper, he scolded me for not knowing how Hindi is written (I was writing a word and then in one stroke putting the line on top, he said no, each letter to be written and the line to be made, then the next letter...!)

Later Walter, a well known artist from Ahmedabad, and a very good friend of Bimalbhai (who is the architect of Eklavya) made the drawing which became the symbol.

2. Importance of struggling

Once I was invited to visit a school and 'guide' them. During the round I was happy to see that they were using a lot of Montessori materials like – buttoning, shoe-lacing, pink tower, etc.

During discussions the Principal of the Pre-school said that they were planning to switch over to shoes with velcro straps because that is easier for the small students, who find difficulty in managing shoes with laces.

I was reminded of a friend who was a 'couch potato'. He would slouch on the sofa and watch TV. Even for a glass of water he will shout or ring the bell for the servant. He rarely ventured out for morning-walks and was lazy in his personal habits. But (maybe due to Doctors orders) he had enrolled in a gym, paying Rs 500 pm and travelling few minutes everyday in his air conditioned car to do 'work-out'! Diya tale andhera!

What is the use? If this man were to become active, in the morning he should make his bed, whenever he wants water he should get up go and take it himself, small small things in the house and office he should do himself, then most probably he will not need to go to the gym and do 'work-out', he will save Rs 500 pm, he will save travelling time, and he will be a role model at home!

So I shared this thought with the Principal, and said let them wear lace shoes, and then they'll learn faster. If we give them velcro shoes, and they learn 'lacing' in school to improve fine-motor-coordination, then we are giving a message that what we learn in school is not what we have to follow in real life, it is only *naam-ke-vaaste!*

She was very happy with the thought, the logic; and decided not to introduce velcro shoes. We also decided that bus conductors will not help small children to get-up and get-down from the bus, they will only stand nearby and be available, but the struggle the child will do; they will be there and encourage, patiently.

Another story – 'The Importance of Struggling' explains this concept well. A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared in the cocoon through which the butterfly was trying to come out. He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through the little hole.

Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had pushed itself out of the cocoon as much as it could and could not go further. Observing this, the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped the remaining bit of the cocoon.

The butterfly could then emerge easily, but it had a swollen body and shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly with the expectation that at any moment its wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. But to his dismay it did not happen. In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and deformed wings. It was never able to fly.

The man in his kindness and haste did not understand that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the small opening, help to force fluid from its body into its wings. The passage of fluid from body to wings results in making its wings stronger and also in containing its swelled body. The process makes the butterfly ready to fly after coming out of the cocoon.

Struggles are exactly what we need in our lives.

If we incorporate this concept of struggle consciously in the school activities like Night Outs, Camps, Excursions – in fact everywhere, then the students will grow up to be able to 'handle' struggles nicely.

3. Are you giving your best?

In the same school, we were discussing in the library, sitting on durries, in a circle – all educators, principal, and me. We got to talking about showing films to students. Something with which I am in wholehearted agreement – they love watching films, their language skills improve, they get an ‘exposure’ to so many other things of the world, and if a discussion is held later on then there is much more fun and learning (e.g. before seeing *Chak De* ask them later on to describe the most memorable and touching scene, each student separately; such assignments can be apriori given, of different levels to different class students).

We discussed how the old Indian tales like *Vikram aur Vetaal* were very good, they taught situational aspects to children, there is no one ‘clear’ *dharma* or duty, it depends upon the situation. That is why *dharma* or righteousness is so difficult to teach. *Vetaal* tells a story to King *Vikram* - there was a King, he had four daughters, and so on...and at the end he asks the King- *Bol Vikram, is situation main Raja ko kya karna chaheeye*. In this situation.....

So we decided and told the librarian to get a full set of these video tapes (someone said the full set is six cassettes). Next week when I went on my weekly visit, I asked, and the librarian said, “I went to Crossword, they do not have it.” That’s it!

So I asked him suppose your mother was in hospital and the doctor asked you to bring a particular medicine without which it would be difficult to treat her what would you do?

He said, ‘I would go to a medical shop and ask for it and buy it’.

I said, ‘Suppose it was not available in that shop. What would you do?’

He said, ‘I would go to the next medical shop’. Then I said, ‘What if you did not get at the next shop and then at the next shop and then at the next shop?’ He said, ‘I would keep going to another shop.’

I asked, ‘What after the twenty ninth shop?’

He said, ‘I will go to the thirtieth shop. I will then get desperate and wake-up people and make sure that I get the medicine from anywhere.’

I asked him, 'May be I am expecting too much or exaggerating. Did you not think it is important to try the same for the video? Would you have gone back and told your mom that the medicines are not available, sorry? The children who come to your Library would have enjoyed and benefited so much from watching those movies and learning from them. Why did you give up so easily? Have you not heard of – try, try, try till you succeed and so many other statements like this?

If one searches *until* one finds, if one struggles *until* one achieves, if one pursues *until* one gains, the struggles of the process prepare us for life. Never give up easily. You will get what you want.

4. Brahma-Astra of Eklavya

Eklavya has many many unique aspects, or we can say 'special' aspects. We have an entire presentation on Unique Points of Eklavya. It is not fair to say that some points are more important than others, but actually it is true. It does not mean that small small points are not important, collectively they become the most important thing!

Here are the *brahma-astras* of Eklavya:

- Euphoria
- Phoenix of MS
- Play of JS/SS
- Home Visits
- Class 11 free-elective project
- Mother's Workshops
- IPEMs
- Campus- beautiful and infrastructurally high quality and well-equipped
- Four schools, each resourceful
- No tuitions
- No coaching classes. Do Class 10 and 12 well in school.
- PS visits every Saturday
- Visits in JS, MS and SS – atleast 6 per academic year for each class
- Nature camps – build up from 1 day in class 1 to 4 to 5 days in class 7 and 8 to Aadhyatmic (Spiritual) Camp in class 11
- Educator's HRD with Sunil Sir.
- Sports and Activities – daily 1 hr

5. Learning from each other

In Eklavya we expect that everyone will improve every year.

It will not happen all of a sudden on its own in a year. Everybody needs to be pushed, so a teacher would think that she will work hard on her own to improve herself but does not improve largely. In the beginning of the year, a teacher would consciously and systematically analyze and identify her weaknesses and works on it. For example, a teacher may tend to loose her temper in the class and would shout frequently to gain the discipline of the class thereby she finds her class in a total mess and students tend to become unruly.

Having found her flaws, a teacher would try to improve her classroom management skills by going through various aids like reading books and articles of school magazines, watching films, attending workshops and learning from peers. Learning from each other is one of the best methods to improve the quality of a teacher.

Every teacher is somewhere or the other found to be *adhura* and a *sampoorna* teacher, who is good in every aspect, is rarely found and it is very difficult too. It is a challenge in running a school as the challenge is not to find extraordinary teachers which are rare, but the challenge lies in finding ordinary teachers who put in extraordinary efforts and reap extraordinary results. A group of teachers is found to be *sampoorna* as compared to an individual teacher being perfect and *sampoorna*. When a teacher tries to improve herself by adopting various methods like viewing cds or reading books, it is mostly found to be a passive way of improving oneself. Human being is not a perfect entity and on reading *Bhagavad Gita* if one would have become perfect then all would have become perfect.

It has been found that the proper way to improve one self is to learn from other teachers by attending their classes. There are two methods for learning.

In the first method, a teacher should identify any five teachers and attend their classes, atleast one period preferably three in a week teaching various classes. The more periods she attends the deeper she goes into, and can analyze her style of conducting and managing the classes. If one attends three periods in the same section having same students and the same subject then one would benefit to develop the method of building rapport and approaches to classes.

Ideally, a teacher should attend all the classes and this activity will take around one full term starting from June up to *Diwali*. When a teacher begins her project of self-improvement, she should have a high improving drive and should choose the teachers who she thinks are good at various skills and attend their classes over next two months. She should give an assurance to the teacher about her self-improvement project and all information genuinely would remain confidential and will not be sharing with any one, as she is not spying for the Principal! She should sit in a corner without any hindrance, take notes and observe the classes in minute detail. Then over a period, she may analyze, reflect on her notes, try to improve and implement them in her classes by chewing and digesting what she learnt.

In the second method, a teacher should identify five teachers and ask them to attend her (either same or different) classes. At the end of the activity, ask them to give a detailed and critical feedback. One should listen to it without uttering a word (put a scotch tape on the lips!) One should not be in a defensive mode or reasoning out their action by giving their explanation or any justification. One should respond only with a comment "That is very interesting." At the end of the feedback, a teacher should show gratitude by the statement "Thank you very much, I deeply appreciate your feedback and assure you to work on the suggestions made by you." It is important to make a speech at the end because the other person has spent a number of hours without expectations so the only *Guru Dakshina* is one's sincere thanks.

Sincere assurance and implementing them would definitely improve one's skill. If every teacher does this then there is a rapid improvement and reach a rare pedestal of a great teacher.

Video recording a class, then the teacher sees it – alone, with colleagues helpfully critiquing – has been found to be really effective. Nobody thinks they do something, unless they actually see themselves in the video doing it!

6. It is important to exercise self-restraint

Good educators instinctively know how to 'handle' a class.

If the educator asks a question and many students blurt out the answer, *nahin chalega*. At that moment itself the educator should stop the class, discuss and clarify 'rules' once again (if a question is asked they have to raise their hand and ma'am will select, they can't even shake their hand vigorously and shout ma'am ma'am ! if they want to ask a doubt raise the hand, ma'am will notice and then come to you. But it's not necessary that that doubt will be clarified 'instantaneously', she may just note in her mind, ask the student to lower her hand, and later on come to that point). We have to avoid this new modern disease – instant gratification!

In the beginning of an academic year, in the first couple of periods, this rule (and others) should be repeated again and again. After that, a gentle 'punishment' to anyone not observing the rule, maybe a not-so-gentle one too! After that things always fall in line and life is smooth. (high hopes, teacher's life is never smooth, *kuch na kuch to hota hi rehata hai*)

Standing in line, not pushing the guy in front of you, dispersing from the assembly in reasonable silence....all these things are important, and we in India are very poor in training our children on these aspects (witness the way a person pushes and piles on the person in front in a queue on an airport or anywhere). Being law-abiding is a fundamental sensitivity to other fellow human beings. You are ahead of me, you finish *aaram se*, and my turn will come. In orderliness all of us will finish earlier and nicely too.

Noise level in the school has to be controlled.

7. Concept of Job vs Responsibility

Job sounds very technical and lifeless, without any warmth or attachment. E.g. it is my job to do it. As if somebody is forcing me to do it but my heart is not in it, I am doing it as I am paid for it.

When we say it is my responsibility to teach English to Class 11 students, I make it sound more voluntary and accountable. It gives it a different perspective. The coldness of the job melts away by the warmth of the concern I feel towards my students. The limitation is not my working hours and the premises of my office/school.

When I do a job it ends when I leave the area or the classroom but when I look at it as a responsibility I carry it with me not as a burden but as opportunities to facilitate the teaching / learning process. e.g. I might be watching a film and a scene comes across where I feel I must share this or I pick up something from it to instill in me...that to me is the broader horizon of responsibility .

Job makes it limited, restricted and cold.

When I say responsibility I mean doing things which may not be a part of my job. When I am responsible I am proactive, I collaborate and am always ready to do things in more effective ways. I take up responsibilities on my own and carry them out with fondness. A job sounds like being thrust upon. E.g. a teacher may condition herself that it is my job to keep that grass patch clean. She will never enjoy doing it. She will feel that nobody should see her doing it because she herself does not believe in dignity of labour. As she does not respect the given job, she is ashamed of it and waits for the burden to be given to another teacher.

Teacher B treats it as her responsibility. She is happy that she has been given a chance to keep part of the campus clean. She thinks that this would motivate her children to keep their neighbourhood and surroundings clean....a topic which we teach in civics as our Fundamental Duty. She will feel excited that she can make the dead lines come alive. She will do it in her innovative way and not restrict herself to once or twice. The happiness will actually be evident and when her turn is over she will take up another area on her own and continue to do it.

Just doing what is assigned is a Job. That must be done. Doing what is required by the situation is Responsibility. That is an opportunity to

add value. Doing what will help others to complete their work in a better way goes beyond Responsibility – it is an offering.

This, according to me is the difference between Job and Responsibility. It is in our hands what we want in our lives.

I feel responsibilities make you productive, proactive and a happy person. One should not confuse it with power...if at all then yes, being responsible gives you the power to make a positive difference. In fact the Sri Sri Ravishankar Art of Living theme says that 'taking more responsibility gives one more power'.

Sad is the person who does a job but blessed is she who turns every job into a responsibility and humbly accepts being the chosen one.

8. Develop people from within

(dated 1992 !)

At Core, we believe in promoting people from within the Company. Why?

Many years ago when we started, we were very small and good people were not willing to join our organisation. It was necessary to have good people to grow. Therefore, we said that if good people do not join us then we are left with no alternative but to give birth to good people. Thus started the system of identifying young, hard working and ambitious people (generally coming from middle class or lower middle class families, at times possessing nominal educational qualifications) in whom we saw an urge and desire to come up in life.

So we picked up these people and trained them gradually over a period of time to take on higher and higher responsibilities in our organisation as we grew.

We have examples in Core of people having started at the lowest possible position and enjoying highly respectable positions today. There is a different sense of belonging and pride in such people. It is the difference between our feelings towards a rented house and a house we have slowly built over a period of time. People who grew with the organisation have also made the organisation grow. They have seen the troubles. They have experienced the pangs of growth. They understand.

Thus started the strong emphasis on training and development of Human Resources in Core which is a legacy which still continues. (Although now Core commands a high premium in the market and is able to easily attract its own share of talent from the market, we still and would continue to prefer to groom internal talent for promotions).

This system works extremely well for us. It is interesting to note the definite pattern when you make the round and talk to so many of our people at different managerial levels, A typical job history reads:

"Joined the company in 1981 as Office Clerk; in 1983 became Admn. Asstt; in 1985 became Asstt. Admn. Officer, in 1986 Admn. Officer; in 1987 Distribution Officer". Or

"Joined the company in 1985 as Finance Executive; in 1986 became Finance Manager; in 1987 became Financial Controller and in 1988

was promoted as Finance Controller-cum-Group Company Secretary" or

"Joined the Company in 1986 as Medical Representative; became Field Sales Officer in 1987, became Field Manager in 1988", or

"Joined Core in 1981 as a peon; became Trainee Data Entry Operator in 1983; Data Entry Operator in 1984; Trainee Computer Operator in 1986; Computer Operator in 1987; Machine Operator in 1988".

It is exciting and fulfilling to observe how an individual's salary has gradually increased from Rs. 400/- per month when he or she joined Core to Rs. 3,000/- or more today.

During all this time we also emphasised (and pressurized!) for continuing higher studies and obtained additional skills and additional qualifications. So it is not surprising to find many people at Core undergoing different types of courses designed to improve their career prospects in the long run. These work out normally either in the form of postal courses or evening/morning colleges, in addition to in-house programmes.

While a person is undergoing such a course, normally there is a pressure on him to do justice both to the job as well as studies and there is a sense of frustration also. It is not easy to manage. The struggle is there and at the end a sense of fulfillment. It is satisfying to observe over a period of time, the results of such individual struggles combining and contributing to total organisational growth.

Such opportunities for individual growth create a healthy climate that encourages employees to think in terms of a long career with the company. Thus it is clear to those beginning that they do not have to stay at the bottom forever. So someone working as a PSR or a clerk will not be there five years from now unless he wants to be. A packer in the warehouse, clerk in accounts or a PSR in the field can find responsibilities and promotions within the company if he is willing to sharpen his skills and increase his knowledge.

It is just a matter of looking around to see what jobs he can handle. This system reduces the turnover of personnel to a minimum. After spending months training an employee to be productive on the job, we feel that losing him is too costly.

This system also has a chain effect. For instance, when a managerial position opens up, 8 people may be eligible for it and if somebody is

chosen that person's job is sought after by 11 people and when that position is filled perhaps someone in the lower position fills the second job and so on. Therefore, movement of one person automatically creates movement for several other people. As one job is filled other vacancies get created.

At Core we rotate and cross train our people so that they are capable of doing several jobs instead of one. Thus it is easier for somebody to be already qualified to do the work of another job. In manufacturing for example, all Chemists are rotated regularly from job to job so that eventually everyone can perform any job in the department. The boredom of doing the same job day after day, year after year is also eliminated. Absenteeism is reduced and when somebody is ill or on leave, we have the flexibility of rotating other people.

Within a year of joining, a new employee can work his way through several jobs and develop a reasonable level of competency for each job. If a person assigned to a certain machine or job is absent for a period of time, we can assign someone else to the job. Also if a person suddenly leaves, there is always a backup available.

In the Marketing area, we have a Human Resources Development Programme. The assumption of this programme is: Good/successful people are not born but they are made. The objective of HRD programme is to train and motivate our people to become successful; and to pull out hidden potential of our people and to make them shine.

Basically the programme operates as follows:

Every 6-10 months about 10 PSRs are selected on the basis of certain criteria. Then for a year they are given special training programmes both at Head Office in Ahmedabad as well as in the field. They are given special targets and special tasks and through an extensive programme of training and motivation they are developed into future Field Managers. The entire process takes about one year.

A good Manager trains his replacement. For a Manager to be promoted there should be a backup person to replace him. Every Manager must realize that his advancement depends to a large extent upon how well he trains people under him.

In a well run company that offers good advancement opportunities to its people, the cream always rises to the top. In fact we must have a system and structure which guarantees that the good performers are always rewarded and promoted to higher levels. Everyone in Core

must know that the measure of advancement is only individual performance. They must be secure in the knowledge that if they excel they deserve to be promoted and they will be. Using the same logic they must also realize that as their value to the company increases, company itself grows - because without growth, opportunities for advancement are limited, and business cannot remain stagnant. When growth ceases, the company cannot offer new job opportunities unless people leave, or retire, or die. In such an environment the people most likely to stay back with the company are the least productive ones.

Good people need opportunities and challenges. That is what causes excitement and keeps a company going at a fast rate. Every Manager should have a feeling that he is at the right place at the right time, you can evaluate your own feelings by asking yourself the simple question; "After a full day's work do you feel happy and satisfied; and after a full night's sleep, do you rise afresh again to tackle an interesting problem with brand new ideas next day?"

9. Just now only I will do it

This is actually a line from a famous poem “Goodbye to Miss Pushpa” by Nissim Ezekiel. But it reflects a very fundamental attitude I have in life, probably that is also one reason why I like this line so much.

Last week my wife Divya asked me to accompany her to the ENT doctor Jawahar Talsania (she has a sinus problem and it seems the infection and the inflammation have increased and gone into the Eustachian tube). She is suffering since about 3 weeks and the normal medicines have not brought much relief. So we went (she had asked a person from our office to sit at the doctor’s waiting room and phone her just a few minutes before, when her turn will come ! this is a trick she has picked up from me !)

The good doctor saw everything, then said that he would like to do a small procedure, it’ll take about 15 to 20 minutes, he will insert a probe (endoscope) into her nose and see, when would we like to schedule that? Divya looked at me, and with her eyes asked – when? Just now, I said, if possible! So that’s what we did. I waited outside. He gave her some nasal drops. A few minutes later he did the procedure and put the video on a CD, then called me in and showed me a thriller- journey through Divya’s nose! Fifteen minutes! Thereafter he prescribed some medicines. Happy to report Divya is now 50% better and improving.

But the point of this story is – *just now only you please do it !*

Now is the time. *Na bhooto na bhavishyato*. There is no past, it was, but is not now. There is no future, there is only the present. Now. And Here.

10. Originality – creative thinking

Once some Nirma students came to me seeking sponsorship for their play. I am a great believer in the theatre as a pedagogical tool. What the students learn by putting up a play, it cannot be 'taught' ever in any classroom.

So I believe that theatre should be an integral and important part of any education – nursery, primary school, high school, college, post-grad, whatever! Even for corporate executives when a one-week programme is there, theatre should be a part of it, somehow.

I told them in principle I will be happy to sponsor. I do it for plays put up by students of IIMA, NID and MICA. So Nirma too. I asked them about the play, what is the name, who is the playwright, etc. To my shock and horror, the students told me that they have 'hired' an expert director from Mumbai, who will direct the play, he will also 'manage' everything, the actors will be all professionals, so too the musicians etc etc. Nirma students will only 'co-ordinate' and also be the audience! *To phir 'learning' kaise hogee?*

Obviously, I said sorry about the sponsorship. They went away.

In Eklavya we try that as much as possible the students, with some help from educators, do everything. Quite often they write the play themselves (in such a case, the script and dialogues 'evolve' with each rehearsal, and it is great fun to watch this happening! An example is the play *Kal Aaj aur Kal*).

Sometimes they will take an already existing play, but give themselves the license to twist the story, to change the scene, to redo the script. Most plays have songs (maybe in the background) written, put-to-music and sung by the students). All sets, light, sound and costumes are designed and executed by the students.

The same concept extends to Edison – the annual science exhibition. Instead of taking standard experiments and just doing it (which in itself is really not a bad thing) why not ask students to 'solve' some contemporary problem. For e.g. the small boy Prince who fell into a well – how will you rescue him, come up with innovative methods. For e.g. – simulate a stomach - we purchased a Disintegration Unit machine to do this, with motility, pepsin, HCl etc, then put chewed food like roti and sabji, put chewed chewing gum, and see which is 'digested' earlier ! For e.g. give six soaps, ask students to figure out how they will test which one is best for a certain type of *daag*?

For the projects also students are encouraged not to take help of their parents and do their own research from different sources and make presentations (sometimes power-point) in the class. For e.g., in Class 8, one project in English is – choose any one painting of an artist of your choice, write the biography of the artist and interpret the painting.

11. Every 'problem is an 'opportunity' to educate

A school is a unique place, because every problem is an opportunity to 'educate' which is the basic objective of the organisation!

In a company, lets say Hindustan Lever; they conduct 'training programmes' for salespeople. Someone can say that HLL is doing 'education'. But that is not its primary purpose. If conducting training would (just imagine, somehow) reduce sales, then they will never do it! They are conducting a training programme because they believe it will help in increasing sales. If, for e.g., standing in the hot sun on one leg and chewing neem leaves would help in increasing sales, then that is what they would be doing !

But in a school, *education is the primary and possibly only objective*. By education, obviously we do not mean only academics, but also (and more importantly) issues like – ability to work in a team, sense of fairness and justice, sense of responsibility and so on.

If a child would lose her sweater, and then 'find' it in the place in the library kept for 'lost-and-found-property' then we have lost an opportunity to educate the child about the importance of having a sense of responsibility. This is a common trait of successful people. When they go on a foreign tour, they take many precautions, and have a heightened sense of awareness, that they keep safe their passport/money/tickets, their luggage, and so on.

Successful people are generally methodical and systematic. They generally find a paper they are looking for, they file their papers systematically, they always write down a list of things to do, they generally do not 'forget' (they do things which help them remember), they take something, use it, and put the thing back in its proper place, and so on..

Where do these 'traits' come from? In the 1980s a US priest Robert Fulgham delivered a sermon, "All I really needed to know I learned in Kindergarten" listing nineteen nuggets of advice that every school-going child hears, such as: Share everything, Play fair, Don't hit people. Fulgham summed up saying, "Take one of these items and extrapolate into sophisticated adult terms and apply it to your family life or work or your government or your world and it holds true and clear and firm." Fulgham's insight - that we acquire all the wisdom that we need early in life – was so compelling that this sermon became very popular, then an article in Reader's Digest, a best-seller book which sold more than 11 million copies, plays and a movie.

Therefore, any incident which takes place in a school is a fantastic opportunity to help the child develop some of these traits, and insightful and visionary educators will not let such a chance go by.

In management schools, they realise that teaching of management is a lot of common sense, and very very situational. There can be no 'formula' for handling a situation. Depending upon the situation the approach will vary. How to 'teach' this? Very difficult. So they have invented a pedagogy called 'case studies', where actual real-life situations from companies are converted in the form of a 'story' and written up as a case. While reading and discussing the case, the students are expected to transport themselves mentally into that time and space.

A similar pedagogy is used in schools – stories and examples. We use stories from the *Panchtantra*, *Akbar-Birbal* stories and so on. But we also use a very powerful traditional Indian set of stories called *Vikram-Vetal*, where the *Vetal* tells a story to *Vikram*, there was a King, he had four daughters, etc etc and at end asks – “ Tell, *Vikram*, in this particular situation what should the King do ?“. Situational dharma is being conveyed, in this particular situation, with the background and so on, what should the King do?

But you know, real-life situation is real-life, and a case study can never come near it.

So, if the under-14 football team loses a match and comes back, and complains that the other team had class 12 students (whose ages were wrongly put as under-14) playing, then this is a fantastic real-life opportunity to discuss and educate them on what is meant by fairness, on the unfairness in this world, will we also start succeeding by becoming 'like them' or will we draw a line but still take the challenge and succeed?

12. Educators get too much emotionally attached to their students – good and bad

Sometimes an educator comes to me and says – sir, I taught class 2 this year, next year also I want to teach the same group, please give me class 3.

I understand where they are coming from. If they have done a good job, then all the more probability that they are attached to their students and vice versa. And to parents of these children and vice versa. Even parents sometimes say – please let my child have Xyz ma'am next year also, *sirf woh hee ise sambhaal pateee hai !*

While I appreciate this, and understand the feelings behind it, the question is – is this the right thing to do from the student's point of view?

In Eklavya we 'mix-up' the sections every year. This is done purely randomly. Care is kept that in each section almost equal representation is there of – houses, girls/boys. We never see who is a very good friend of someone, or 'bright' students, or 'difficult' students.

This helps students make new friends and develops socialisation skills. It also teaches them from a young age, that one will have change continuously in life. Students learn to accommodate and adjust to a new class teacher, new friends, and a new method of the teaching-learning process. Their growth is *actually more* in this method.

In fact, students in Eklavya look forward to and relish this change each new academic year!

13. Lost property

Lost-and-found property is a recurring theme in schools. Things like T-shirts, jackets, sweaters, bottles, TT/Badminton racquets and shoes. These are collected and kept in one fixed place (often the library) and every now and then an announcement is made in the morning assembly. Almost 80-90% find their way back to the rightful owner, rest is never reclaimed. When it becomes a lot, the school 'gives it away'.

During winter, students wear woollens and while on the playground feel quite warm, remove the sweater and keep it somewhere, then forget to pick it up. This is missed by them next morning, when they are getting dressed to catch the bus!

When a child 'loses' something like this, and then 'finds' it in the library – the issue is over, the 'problem' seems to have been solved, but we as educators have *lost* an important *real-life* opportunity to take this incident as an educational vehicle to help the child inculcate a sense of responsibility.

In the first place, students should not lose anything, so that becomes a focal point – helping them learn how not to lose. Further, in case of a loss, how to identify – so maybe write the students name, by a marker pen, in a nice manner, in an unobtrusive place.

If we ask a small group of educators to sit for an hour, take this concept of lost-and-found thing, they will surely come up with dozens of ideas on things to do with the students – in the assembly, in the home period, some fun things to do, some sort of a competition, what not.

14. August 15 and January 26

It is important for a school to celebrate August 15 and January 26, irrespective of the dates falling on a Sunday. The teachers and the students should attend the school and be a part of the unfurling of the flag, sing *jana-gana-mana*, do a small *karyakrama* on *desh bhakti*, sing together patriotic songs as proud Indian citizens. No sacrifice is enough for *Bharat-mata*.

Someone may ask, am I unpatriotic if I do not attend the August 15 function. Of course not, but some things have to be *expressed and shown*.

Someone may ask, if I do not touch the feet of my parents or teachers or elders does it mean that I am disrespecting them. Of course not. But in our culture it is done, as an expression. There are some things which are 'done'. We can of course question them, we can even change them, but always there will be some things which are done and not questioned.

We should have some things in life with which no one can argue, they are beyond, they are 'non-negotiables'. It is possible some people may disagree, whatever one does there will always be people who disagree (!), we are not saying we should not listen to them or be closed minded, but you know, some basic things cannot be questioned and reviewed every week, just because some new person is questioning it. In the Jesuit organisation, they have a 'congregation' once in 25 years, where they sit and question and review everything, after that for the next 25 years, some fundamentals are not questioned, just followed!

15. Involve students in the organisational and logistics aspects of school programmes

Students develop many latent abilities by being involved in the organisational and logistics of school programmes.

A team of students who are a part of the Parking Committee, they get parents to park their vehicles nicely, in an orderly manner. Some parents argue, the students use all their wit and charm to get such parents to re park their vehicles! Some parents come late and are refused permission to enter school; the students have to 'handle tempers' in such situations. There is a lot of learning which cannot come otherwise from any class or other activity in school (developing confidence, teamwork, communication, management, and impartiality).

Students come up with their own solutions, give many suggestions, and the entire thing becomes more efficient. When asked for suggestions for inter-house competitions they suggested 'face-painting' something educators would never have thought of !

Senior students can be involved in programmes of junior students as referee, judges, mentors,...

We can start by letting students sit beside educators while making decisions.

Students are good at organizing activities like the Sport's Day. Groups of 4 to 6 students are assigned one track say the PS one. Students distribute themselves to take duty on the starting line, finishing line, carrying the name chit of winners to the announcers and the scoreboard and helping the educators take the winners to the victory stand for the prize distribution as soon as the event is completed.

December 'farewell party' is always completely managed by students.

Such involvement trains students in logistics and people management skills. It helps them to anticipate and solve small working problems they face while executing the event. Later in college and life these are valuable learnings to fall back on.

16. Spending quality time with your children

Ma'am, *aajkal aap story nahin sunaate to yeh burden mere upar aa gaya hai!* Once a father said this to an educator, in an IPEM.

Burden? Why, this is a blessing in disguise! Now the father has an 'oppurtunity' to spend quality-time with his son/daughter telling stories, and *isee bahane*, doing soooooo many other things!

Once I was talking to a girl of Class 7. I asked her, what is the best time of a normal day for you? Without hesitation she said – sir, in the morning my father comes to drop me at the bus-stop. It is a walk of about 5 or 6 minutes from our house. It is a time I enjoy. Sometimes we talk, sometimes just I hold his hand and we walk. *Papa poore 100% mere hote hain!* Sometimes if he gets up late, then he drops me on his scooter, then I don't like it.

Later on I phoned the father, told him that there is something interesting I wanted to share with him, would he please drop by my office in Core House in the evening. Initially he was anxious, why does Sunil sir want to meet me, has something happened? I assured him that its something nice but I want to personally share with him.

He came; I told him what his daughter had shared with me in the morning. He started crying. He promised me that he will remember and value this, and always go and drop her and never never get up late. Barbie dolls, toys, frocks, ipods – all these are of no importance, those precious invaluable 5 minutes every morning – *bas wo hee keematee hai!*

Once a class 9 girl told me about her dad – “playing tennis in the evening is more important to him than talking to me”.....sad.

17. Multiplication Tables

At Eklavya, all students appear for multiplication-table-tests during the beginning of each academic year. In JS, these tests are also conducted at regular intervals during the year and are incorporated as a part of curriculum. All students learn multiplication tables till a particular predecided series:

- Class 1 learn multiplication tables till 2, 5 and 10x10
- Class 2 learn multiplication tables till 10 X 10
- Class 3, 4 learn multiplication tables till 15 X 10
- Class 5 learn multiplication tables till 18 X 18
- Class 6-10 learn multiplication tables till 20 X 20

Why memorize multiplication tables? In this age of advanced technology, with computers and calculators, forcing children to memorize multiplication tables seems to be a bad idea.

How does one develop whatever one wants to develop?

A basic law of nature is that if you want to improve and strengthen some muscles or part of your body you need to exercise that part. You have to give pain to that muscle or that part. Suppose if someone wants to play football, he should have strong thighs and legs. He has to do push-ups, several times. If the coach says, do push-ups 30 times, and after 10 the student says, sir I have done 10 times can I now stop? By the *student* doing push-ups the *coach's muscles* do not develop! If the student does 30 times, he only will benefit. If he does 31 times he will benefit more. If he does 29 times he will benefit less. *No pain, no gain.* It is so obvious.

There is a trend to regard 'rote learning' as being primitive and schools following it are looked down upon. But we need to know what form of rote learning is being propagated by the school. Going further, if you want to develop your brain, you need to give pain and exercise to your brain cells. Memorizing is one of the best ways to do this. And what can be better than multiplication tables? Or poems. Another method is to do brain-teasers, solving puzzles, etc.

Just to take the logic a little bit more, first physical (exercise the muscles) then mental (memorise multiplication tables and poems and do brain-teaser puzzles to exercise the brain) then spiritual - how does one really develop 'will-power'? The answer is actually very simple - by doing it, by exercising! India has a simple way of doing this - self-denial. Something you like- don't do for a day. Something you don't like- do for a day. Then increase to a week. Then to a month. Fasting is a powerful way to do this.

Here is something we wrote in the 'preface' to our first poetry book 'Voices from Within' (a collection of 250 selected poems of students and educators of Eklavya):

Why should we memorize poems?

Often people ask this question, not only for poems but also for multiplication tables. Whenever the memory is mentioned in most education circles, the adjective "mere" precedes it, as though "mere memorization" was somehow something to be ashamed of. Classical educators, however, treat the memory as a fundamental faculty of the human mind and therefore train it.

So the question is not whether children should be made to use their memories. They do so naturally. The question is what they should exercise their memories on. The reasons for memorizing the multiplication tables, the states of the nation, etc should be obvious enough. We are daily called upon to make use of such facts on the spot, without having time to look them up.

Why should children memorize poetry? The simple answer is that poetry speaks directly to the soul. By memorizing certain great poems, we keep them as possessions for all time. It is true that a twelve-year-old might not understand perfectly all the themes canvassed in Kipling's "If." Yet she will be able to call upon this poem for solace and for inspiration whenever she does confront the challenges of the world. We can think of no better preparation for the long, arduous march into adulthood.

Listen to this real story – Sunil sir once invited an old IIMA student who was doing very well in USA to come and share his life experiences with the current students. This is what he shared - he is the son of a labourer in a village in Tamil Nadu. In class 4 he asked his school teacher what will become of him in life, will he also be like his dad, a poor labourer. The teacher said most probably yes. He asked how do I get out of this, the teacher replied- only by studying hard. Next day the boy went to the teacher and said what do you mean study hard, how do I study hard, the teacher asked him to memorize multiplication tables upto 20x20. The boy went a few steps further, he memorized multiplication tables upto 99x99 ! He became good in studies, he was one of the top students in Tamil Nadu in class 10, he was one of the toppers in class 12, he got admission to IIT, Chennai where he topped, then IIMA where again he topped, then he joined McKinsey, then joined WHO, and now he is in World Bank, Washington in a very senior position. It all started by memorising multiplication tables.

18. Concepts are like a cloud – need to 'pin' them down

Whenever a concept is taught, it is nebulous – like a cloud; and unless it is 'nailed' to an anchor, it will float away.

This 'nailing' is done by 'linking' - like we do cross-linking of long polymeric chains, to give strength to the material. Link the concept to an example from everyday life - in the classroom, in the kitchen, driving a car, doing shopping, in a factory. Link the concept to concepts/examples of other subjects being taught. (In Julius Caesar he says "I am as constant as the Northern Star" then link it to the position of *Dhruv tara* as the centre of a celestial dial, where the whole dial moves except the centre, the north star. Talk for a moment about Ursa Major and Ursa Minor).

The educator can further integrate this concept of being firm, standing determined, one man with courage is a majority, ask students if there is someone in their family or friends who can be compared to the North Star.

While teaching Levers, F-L-E (Fulcrum in the middle, Load in the middle, Effort in the middle) one can take things to a class which we use day-to-day like - scissors, nailcutter, betelnutcracker, chimta-used on a tava to flip rotis, etc and this gives the students a clear idea and the 'cloud' of the lever principle is replaced by a very solid understanding linked to actual things.

This is applicable from pre-schoolers to high school students. Everyone learns faster and better when the topic is co-related nailed) to an existing piece of knowledge, or to something they can visualise/see/touch/relate to.

19. Friendship band

Once an educator asked me – sir, why can't we allow students to wear 'friendship band'?

Sure, it's a good thing, and a school should not come in the way, and make too many rules. But consider for a moment what one of my favourite Profs used to say again and again – please consider the 'unintended consequences' of your decisions/actions.

Imagine a student, she gives friendship bands to her three best friends, there is another girl, who *expects* to receive a friendship band from this girl, but does not receive, what will be happening to her?

Students in Eklavya come from different economic strata. One may be so privileged to afford many such friendship bands and the other may not be able to bring even one.

For the same reason there are no Birthday celebrations in school. The child wears her uniform to school on her birthday. She is wished by the entire school in the daily assembly and a hand-made card is given to her. There is no sweets distribution and no cakes or any such fancy celebration in school. (refer # 21)

Sometimes, some of these things may not be a very good idea, even though it may be the 'fashionable' thing to do!

20. Main pahooncha ya nahih I don't know lekin koshish to puree kee ! Bhagwan zaroor mere se khush honge

Why are people in this world so limited, so seemit? Why don't they go beyond, whatever....

One way they are saying – *main saadhaaran hoon, main saadhaaran school main kaam kartee hoon, main saadhaaran padhaatee hoon, main great teacher nahin hoon, aur na hee banana chahatee hoon, main saadhaaran neend sotee hoon.....*

I am not in favour of this. I want to say – *main saadhaaran hoon, lekin a-saadhaaran banana chahata hoon, unique kaam karna chahata hoon, special banana chahata hoon, main great teacher banoonga, main mehnat karoonga, main apne aap ko improve karta rahoonga karta rahoonga.....*

Going beyond the call of duty, doing more than expected, going the extra mile....it will come from striving. This will not happen on its own, or just by wishing. An action plan should be made, in small small portions, small small achievable daily or weekly targets...then move ahead. Detailing will be required.

21. Here and Now

Raghu has made a nice *sher* on this which I have adopted as the LEM slogan (Laboratory in Entrepreneurial Motivation, a second-year-optional-course I have been teaching in IIMA, since about 17 years):

Not to *Kab*, Not to *Tab*, but to *Ab*
Not to *Kahaan*, Not to *Wahaan*, but to *Yahaan*

This slogan has gone on T-shirts, posters, what not, and has in a way become a LEM slogan.

What it says is – don't say *then* I will do it, don't say *when* I will do? Say *just now I will do it*. Don't say *there* I will do, *where* I will do, say *here only, just now only, I will do!*

Take the Nike slogan – Just Do It, and add 'Just now only, here only' to it!

22. Na rahe baans na baje bansuri

This is a very popular and old Indian folklore. What it says is that if the cause is not there, then how can there be any effect?

In day-to-day management we are often faced with problems. Subordinates and colleagues tell us this is the problem or that is the problem. In our management studies, we are taught that almost half the time spent in a problem solving situation is actually to identify the cause, identify what is the problem. Quite often we confuse the cause and the effect, the problem and the symptom. Quite often we call the symptom the problem. This happens because the symptoms tend to manifest themselves at various levels and so even if we are able to "peel away" the first and the second layers of the symptoms, what we may get may be yet another layer of symptom and the problem may still remain unidentified.

Therefore it is extremely important to go deep into the heart of the matter (the 'core' of the matter so to speak) and identify the true problem (the cause). In any problem solving situation we can look upon it in two ways :

- There is a problem. Once we have identified it, how to solve it,
- Having solved it, can we brainstorm and come up with an action plan which will ensure that such a problem will never come up again for the rest of our life?

It is the second aspect which is the crucial one. As we solve the problem can we also simultaneously identify ways and means which eliminate the chances of the problem developing again? Thus, one by one, very systematically we are making life simple. Soon a situation will come when most problems of a recurring nature have been permanently eliminated and we, as managers, in our department of areas of work are relaxed and can spend our energies towards new ideas and developmental efforts.

So, the question is how to eliminate the problem (the cause) permanently? How to ensure that it never ever crops up again?

There is a legendary story of the well known Chanakya, who was pricked by a thorn of a plant in the evening while going home from the palace. He goes back to the palace and picks up a spade and begins the homeward journey again. On the way he digs each and every thorny plant from its roots and puts *dahi* (curd) into the hole. This ensured that the root is eliminated and if still anything is left behind,

the *dahi* will destroy it. Therefore never again will there be a thorn on that route to prick Chanakya ! *Na rahe baans na baje bansuri*

The learning from this story is as follows :

- Identify the problem (root of the plant, not the plant, nor the thorn).
- Eliminate the cause forever (dig plant from its roots)
- Ensure the cause cannot be born again (curd)
- Be very thorough, meticulous and ruthless in this whole operation

Therefore *Na rahe baans na baje bansuri*

How can we apply the theorem learnt in the above paragraphs to our day-to-day managerial life? Let us see some examples from our Company which will illustrate this:

The Problem of lumps :

In early 1988, we encountered the problem of lumps of Lupolen which come out from Rommelag machine whenever we start it or shift to a new batch. We tried many ways, to cut it into smaller pieces so that we can put it in the grinding machine. We tried to cut with a saw, we tried to slice it with a butcher's knife, we tried so many things. All our ideas failed and we started selling the lumps as they were at a low price.

After a few months, we picked up the subject again. We thought of purchasing a bigger grinder and went to see one grinder in a company called Co-Ex. Even that big knife never accepted the lumps and when we explained the problems to the production manager of that company he made a very simple statement 'there should not be any lumps'. This was a very philosophical statement he made and it is important to understand it.

If we say there is a problem, the solution is that there should be no problem. This seems to be a bit foolish at the first instance but if we go deeper and analyse, what is being stated is to identify the cause (the problem) and eliminate it forever.

When we apply this principle to the problem of lumps we realised that when the parison comes out hot from the Rommelag machine, if we cut it into small pieces while it is hot, it will be very easy (like a hot knife cutting through butter).

So the butcher's knife was brought back and a small chopping plate made. Now as soon as the hot lump comes out from the Rommelag

machine, one person chops it up with the butcher's knife into small pieces which are later-on put in the grinding machine.

Therefore there are no lumps! *Na rahe baans na baje bansuri*

The problem of Potassium Permanganate:

We were using PP (a black coloured powder) to heat IPA for fumigation purposes. Once the PP got mixed up with Activated Carbon (it is difficult to identify as both materials look similar) and we had to drain a whole batch. So we said that the problem should not be there and therefore decided to eliminate the use of PP. Now to heat the IPA into vapours instead of using PP we use a heating mantle.

If there is no PP it can never get mixed up with charcoal. If there is no cause how there can be an effect? *Na rahe baans na baje bansuri*

The problem of mixing up envelopes:

Quite often envelopes in our post department got mixed up and confused. Papers pertaining to Pharma Traders in Jabalpur got posted to Pharma Agencies, Nagpur. The party obviously will not tell us. The mistake could only be realised when many days pass, and we telephone the party for payment and he says that he has not received any documents.

Now it would not be desirable to have one clerk put the papers in the envelope and another clerk rechecking whether it is correctly put or not. Similarly, it would not be a good idea to ask an officer level person to do this, because that would be underutilising his capabilities. When we applied the theorem of *Na rahe baans na baje bansuri* we realised that the answer is very simple. We used a window envelope whereby the name and address typed by the computer on the invoice was folded in such a way that the address appears in front of the window for the postman to see.

Whatever is the address inside the envelope, is seen outside. There is no separate address on the envelope. The envelope outside and inside is one. Remove the problem by its roots. *Na rahe baans na baje bansuri*

We can go on and on and on and on with many such examples, but I think the basic idea is clear. Do you have any examples to share: I would love to put them on record.

Na rahe baans na baje bansuri.

23. Books I have read this year

Everyone should read books, more so an educator. A person who can read but does not read is to be pitied because she is worse than a person who cannot read.

Reading may be broad-spectrum and not limited to one's subject. Read everything - film, fiction, poetry, science, literature, philosophy, technology - whatever; including but not limited to magazines. When an educator reads books, she becomes a role-model for her students and brings in her class a whole new and exciting universe.

Reading will not happen by wishful thinking. One needs to push oneself to read. An educator may make a rule to visit the library frequently – say, spare at least one period in a week for browsing. She may make a list of books which she wants to read in the year. She should also keep a record of list of books read along with their author's name and date read; and give stars out of five.

Educators should read books which their students read, and see films which the students see – this will keep them 'in touch with the pulse' of their students, and they will not become 'out-dated'. This is an advice Narayanmurthy of Infosys gave in an interview.

24. Enriching your lesson plans

When I am coming back after taking a class (or giving a speech somewhere) I get many thoughts – *arre*, I could have said this; *aah*, I forgot to give this example; *oh oh* this point I completely forgot ! This often happens to educators when they take a class and come back to their seat and take a pause. Especially due to certain questions some student asked.

That is the time to write down these things, in small bullet-points, on the lesson plan page itself (maybe at the bottom, in small handwriting, in a different colour pen) while it is fresh in the mind.

Usually during summer, educators prepare (or update) the lesson plans. They do a good job by working in detail, lesson by lesson, period by period, for the entire next academic year. By adding to them, on a daily basis, these lesson plans get enriched, and next year when educators sit with the lesson plans, they will be greatly able to improve upon them. Do this for three years, and you have very high quality lesson plans – a great treasure!

In JS the educators have been practicing it since a year and it has greatly helped them. All the 4 co-teachers and 3 Hindi teachers sit for 8-10 minutes at 1:20 pm and reflect over the plan that was done. Feedback/Suggestions written are on the page with different coloured ink. In April / May when we plan for the next year the suggestions really helped in enriching the plan.

In MS and SS, on Saturdays, all teachers of a certain subject meet, discuss how the syllabus is going on, share some ideas, materials, resources and experiments. This greatly helps enhance lesson plans and build team spirit.

25. Add more qualifications to yourself

It is important for an educator to keep studying. It's also important to be well-qualified. As far as possible, all educators should try to be "Postgrad-BEd." Eklavya encourages its educators to do courses through IGNOU or other universities along with their jobs. In certain cases Eklavya also provides financial help. Some people say that once the educators become BEd they will leave Eklavya, so we should not encourage. While this may be partly true, it is Eklavya's basic philosophy and it just can't help encouraging people to learn more and more!

One more point. The desire to get 'qualifications' should not become an obsession. If there is an educator who is BSc, and she works for a few years and gets MSc and BEd then that is enough. There is no need then to keep obtaining qualifications, just for fun. If she is a SS educator and wants to do MPhil or PhD that's understandable. But we should not become a prisoner of 'just getting qualifications'.

Once such an educator came to me and asked, sir now I am post-grad BEd, now what should I do? I said – now practice and become a good teacher!

That is the main thing! *Usko bhool na jaana !*

One teacher did not have much faith in the IGNOU BEd. She thought what would it teach her that she is already not aware of. It will only be bookish and full of old theories. But she joined the course and after the first workshop confided in Sir, - "I was mistaken. Though the faculty was not excellent, they did teach us some aspects of teaching e.g. micro teaching skill, which is very much needed in a classroom. I was not aware of many small things."

Bottom line - Teachers should be open to learn even from the most unlikely situation or person.

Professional training helps – it sharpens the saw.

26. *Tu to doosare house ki hai, phir yahaan kyon madad kar rahee hai ?*

Once I overheard one educators saying to another – *tu to Prahlad House ki hai, to Aruni House ki madad kyon kar rahee hai ?* I felt very bad.

In Eklavya educators are expected to be as much part of small parts and events of the school as of the school in-toto.

This can be illustrated thus. Every two years a teacher is assigned a new house. She is expected to be loyal to the House, identify new talent and see how the house can do better. But she can go beyond this defined role and suggest or help other houses where her talent is of much help. For e.g. Prahlad House may not have a teacher good in singing and so a teacher from Aruni House can help the House prepare for a singing competition or presentation in the assembly.

During Phoenix (our inter-house play competition held in MS) we invite parents as Jury members. Their own children may be acting and taking part in the play of their house. Yet we believe they will judge in a fair manner – rising above any petty mindedness due to the same and rise to the occasion and give a fair judgment.

We see fragmentation in our country. There is state-wise fragmentation – one is a Gujarati or Marathi or Punjabi or Tamilian. Then within a state there is further fragmentation – for e.g. in Maharashtra – one is a Maratha or a Kokanastha or a Brahmin and so on ...

The question is can we have multiple identities and roles simultaneously and do justice to each of them. In Eklavya we try to do this in our way by encouraging teachers and students to look and go beyond their defined roles.

27. Sensitivity of 'coordinators'

Once an educator, who was a coordinator for something told me that educators do not listen to her and in such a situation how can she do a good job of coordinating. I asked her to give me some names of educators who do not listen, at first she hesitated saying she does not want to tell, I told her that I will keep it confidential and no harm will be done, finally she told. I called some of those whose names she had given, almost all invariably said – sir, after taking 5 continuous periods she asks us to attend something, it is not possible, we need a break, why can't I do it some other time, I will still do the work, etc etc

So I called that coordinator educator and explained – if you will be sensitive to the time-tables of the people who you want to contribute, adjust so that they are also ok and *tumhara objective bhee poorā ho jata hai.....*

Only by doing does one learn how to do.

28. Some incidents and reflections...

I am busy – I have no time

Once Smita ma'am told Reema ma'am come let us make the list for Investiture her reply was "I am busy"; next day Smita said let us make invigilation schedule for the UT – reply again was "ma'am – today I have not time at all". Sometime later she said would you help me in typing exam syllabus reply by Reema ma'am (as usual) was "I have still not taken my lunch - I will definitely do it tomorrow." Q - *How long a teacher should wait for work to be done with some other teacher ?*

I was absent so no one informed my class students.....

Parents were supposed to come for a meeting on Saturday. But we cancelled the meetings due to rain. Reema was absent on Friday when it was announced that the meetings are cancelled. Next day when she came to school she realized that the parents have not got the message - she had to call up from school to inform the parents. Q - *what is an educator expected to do on the day she is absent ? What will she tell a student who does such a thing - could you not have telephoned a friend and tried to find out aaj kya kya hua, kya homework mila, etc?*

I will learn on my own and do a good job

This year Smita had volunteered to teach Geography. It is not her subject. She had a hope that she will get help from other educators teaching the same subject. She went with queries to those subject teachers - but they (due to some reasons) could not help her. Smita decided to learn on her own. A true Eklavya. She spent much time searching and clearing her doubts. Finally she got satisfaction of doing a good job by learning on her own.

On the spot problems

Before every exam the Examination Committee puts up the schedule for the invigilation duty. Educators are asked to check and inform if there is any problem. Reema was invigilating in the class. Smita passed by - she called her and said next period I have class and my invigilation duty is also there what shall I do?

Some teachers go to class for invigilating without taking necessary things like red pen, stapler, pins etc and then ask what to do? Thus they create on the spot problems for other teachers.

Student come early.....

Reema ma'am wanted to have an extra class for Biology so she called students early - but she only forgot to come!

Class 10 first term exams were approaching and economics syllabus was lagging - so Smita ma'am called her students early on Friday and she missed her bus !

In Class 12 a difficult chapter was going on in Chemistry. Reema told students to come for CDS and students were waiting...

29. Do you know the names of driver/conductor/housekeeping lady?

When asked this question, and the educator does not know the answer, I feel sad. Eklavya *main aisa nahin hona chaheeye*. But the good news is – this rarely happens!

The educator is ultimately the key person in Eklavya, ultimately all we are providing to the child is essentially through her. But her effectiveness is greatly enhanced by a huge machinery which works behind the stage - and it includes drivers, conductors, housekeeping ladies, gardeners, *chowkidars*, *majoor*, and many many others, including her own colleagues and Principal.

One simple expectation is to know these people by name, to call them respectfully by name, and to cheerfully wish good-morning every day!

30. People leaving, head held high

Riya (name changed) was a very good educator; we had known her for two years. She came and told me that she will not be able to continue in the next academic year.

We have a system in Eklavya that by end-Dec educators let us know whether or not they will be continuing in the next academic year. The rule requires all educators to undertake that they will not leave the School during an academic year (i.e. during the period June 1 – April 30, March 1 – Feb 28 for Senior School). Rather they must plan by December end every year (September end for SS) and inform if they would be discontinuing from the subsequent academic year. This allows Eklavya to identify a replacement who can take over after a period of working parallel and handing over.

Riya came and told me that her father is shifting to Surat for some health reasons and that there is no option for her but to shift to Surat; and that she was very happy here but...and so on. I tried to ask her to wait for a few weeks and see if the transfer to Surat actually takes place, she came back again after a week or so and said no, this is final, she will not be continuing next year.

She was a good teacher, I did not want her to go, I felt sorry to see her go, but there was no option. So I wished her all the best, gave my blessings, and also told her that I'll pray that soon she will get married to a very good boy who is settled in Ahmedabad and who lives conveniently on one of our bus routes ! This is my standard prayer on such occasions ! She laughed and appreciated my prayer.

A couple of weeks later I got a phone call from a company (I knew the company, also knew well the person who phoned me) asking me if I had any objections if they recruited Riya for a certain position. I know that if I had objected, they would have selected another candidate and left Riya alone. But of course I did not do this, I said she is a good girl, and I am sure she will be an asset to the new organisation, I feel sorry to lose her, but that I wish her all the best. I did not think it appropriate to confront Riya with this detail, so I kept quiet.

On 14 April, after the end of the academic year, after the last HRD, she came to me and told me that shifting to Baroda is cancelled (Baroda ? I thought it was Surat ! But you know, when people lie, they do not remember what they said, so they are quite easily 'caught') and that she has taken up a job in such-and-such company. I told her that I knew this; they had asked me several months ago. I wished her all

the best, blessed her, and suggested that this is a small world, things get known, lies do not work, why not leave holding your head held high, instead of like a thief. Why not leave in goodwill. After a good innings, leave nicely, with friendship, people should think well of you, and not talk bad things behind your back. I think she understood. I hope she did!

Another case. Chitra gave her Principal some story about shifting to Chennai. We tried our best to retain her. But she was very clear. Then a teacher from another school in Ahmedabad (who had worked with Eklavya earlier and had some loyalty feelings) sent us a message that Chitra is joining that school. So going to Chennai with her husband was really not true! It was just a story! I called her and confronted her with this information, she flatly denied this and said sir, this is not true. A month later she left us, and a week thereafter we heard that she has joined that other school! What did she achieve? Now about a hundred teachers in Eklavya know her story, think of her as an untruthful person, etc etc. Could she not have told us straight that she wants to join that school, that she will complete the academic year and then leave? She need not even have disclosed the name of that school, could have just told us, sir I don't want to name the school, but I will leave after the academic year.

Why do people do this? Do they not realise that it actually hurts them and their reputation? On the other hand, some teachers have left us very nicely. They have told the truth, they have completed their commitments, and then nicely left. We even gave a farewell to such teachers. Sometimes they telephone, or send an email, or even come and meet. And it feels good. Old colleagues meeting, remembering shared times. It's nice.

Being transparent is a good thing, it is in their favour, and it adds character.

It is important that people in your workplace look up to you and hold you in high regard. But it is even more important that people think highly of you and remember you with fondness when you are no more a part of the school 'physically'. The second part is difficult to strive for. In today's selfish world we are all into some 'transaction' – give and take. When I praise a colleague it is but obvious that she will feel good and may do the same for me (this is in general, there are always exceptions- internal locus of control types). But to be remembered and loved when you are not going to return the gesture needs a lot of hard work.

31. Buying books

In Eklavya we love books, so we love buying books!

Any educator is allowed to buy any book she wants to read (later on make a voucher and claim the money and put the book in the library). It is enough that one person wants to read a book!

Educators and Principals go on a 'shopping-spree' a couple of times in a year, and buy books! Whatever they like, whatever they want to read, whatever they think students will like to read.

During functions, we never give flowers as a gift while 'welcoming' someone. What is the use? In a few hours the bouquet will be dead, and the flowers will be thrown in to the gutter. A book will be read, and re-read. It may be loaned or given away. It will still be read and re-read. It does not have an 'expiry date'.

Reading is very important. Students must read as many and as varied books as they can lay hands on. Something read in a book that strikes you or forces you to think becomes a part of your memory and at the appropriate occasion can be quoted in a speech, presentation, or essay.

The more one reads – different kinds of books and literature – historical, informative, biographies, novels, essays, fiction, science, poetry and classics – it goes a long way in improving and honing language skills.

Also when one is a voracious reader it develops in oneself the ability to understand and grasp various viewpoints since one can fall back upon occasion that they have read earlier. The ability is also enhanced because they have read, chewed and mulled over various similar and contradictory thoughts and views, opinions and actions in a non-threatening manner – i.e. by reading books!

Just before summer vacations, educators should encourage students to borrow many many books for the holidays – library *khaali ho janee chaheeye* !

32. I have finished my work, can 'I' go home?

Once all the educators were asked to stay back (it was a Saturday, they were scheduled to go at 1, some work was not done as per requirements, and we thought it was important that we all *finish this work and then* go home). Around 12.50 one educator telephoned me – Sir, I have finished my work, can 'I' go home?

I felt sad upon hearing this. There is something called – *maine apana kaam khatam kar diya, ab main doosaron ki madad kartee hoon.....*

One individual in the organization completing her work is not work done! The school community is an institution and until all work is complete – hers or theirs – work is incomplete.

During and after the first term or final term exam the educators sit and fill in report cards and make the computerized mark sheets. Some class teachers finish their job quickly and then help the others by calling out marks to be fed into the computer, rechecking the computer mark sheet with the manually filled register to see all entries are correct and coordinating with various subject teachers who fill in the remarks in the report card.

Thus everybody pitches in and actually the process becomes systematic and organized – each one helping the other and also teaching one another. They also discover loop holes and difficulties and take care of them the next time such work has to be done.

Once an educator in JS told me that when they have to stay back, they make a positive thing out of it and say to each other – *aaj stay-back stay-back khelainge?* Nice!

33. Old extra books in the library-giving away-never knew it will be so much appreciated

Every year, various book publishers send to Eklavya the latest edition of many of their text-books, from class 1 through 12, in the hope that our educators will go through them, like them, and convince the school to prescribe that one as the text book.

This is a healthy practice. Even though we can prescribe only one text-book, it is interesting for educators to go through other text-books, gives them many ideas. And every 2 or 3 or 4 years, we do change a text-book, and switch over to something else and try it out.

These copies then pile-up in the library (there is a separate shelf for 'publisher's copies') and then, about once every three years, we pull it out and throw the old ones away. Nowadays we do this exercise every year.

Instead of 'throwing away', we display them in one large hall for a day, and invite everyone in Eklavya (educator or staff) to go there and pick up as many books as they want, to be used for children in their homes or relatives or friend's children. Whatever are still left, are displayed in Core House and everyone invited to take away whatever they want.

This is very much appreciated. Many people come and tell me- sir, thank you very much, etc etc

34. Principal ke paas le jaaongi.....

Once a student told me about her class teacher - “Sir, woh baar baar dhamaki detee hai, Rajal ma’am ke paas le jaaongi....”

Educators sometimes threaten a student (to take them to the principal or some such thing). Threats do not work. They reduce the educator’s authority and signal her weakness and helplessness. They may increase the student’s misbehaviour.

All of us know the story of the boy who shouted – *sher! sher!* The whole village came to save him, but he said he was only joking. The second time the same thing happened. But the third time the *sher* (tiger) actually came but no villager came to help the boy who was eaten alive.

Nuclear weapons are called ‘deterrent’. *They are to be used by not using them!*

If a teacher consistently threatens the students, she is actually giving away her autonomous power of the classroom and exhibits helplessness. They are saying- I am helpless, *yeh mere se nahin sambhalte*, I am not capable of handling this...and so on. Over time, the students get used to these threats, and develop ‘coping strategies’.

Once I asked a class 9 student about interactions with his dad, he said – Dad *to office se late aate hain, aate hee chillate hain, kyon TV dekh raha hai, and homework kiya? Nahin kiya? To TV kyon dekh raha hai, chalo pehale homework karo...*When I asked, then what do you do, he coolly replied, “nothing, *thodee der ke baad chup ho jaate hain !*”

When a teacher assertively defines her classroom rules, and takes immediate action when they are not followed she sends a message that rules are to be followed. A quiet and sure method where she established that she is in control, without resorting to shouting or threats works wonders and is a better, long term solution.

35. Staff-room *main bada shor hai*, I can't work there!

Once an educator told me this, I was sad. Why do people talk loudly in the staff-room? Why should a staff-room become a 'common-room'? This happens more so to the one on the ground floor. Is there a way out?

36. Special children – take to camp?

Once Gayatri ma'am went to Jambughoda camp and was wondering whether to take Priya (name changed- a Down syndrome special child in Eklavya) or not, and whether to take a 'special educator' or not.

If we take a special educator then we are saying – this girl is not my responsibility, let one person specifically take care of her, I am too busy with all kinds of other things.

If we don't take Priya with us we are saying – you are a special child, it will be very bothersome to take you with us, we will have you only in school, sorry!

We should take Priya to Jambughoda, all students and educators should be addressed together before going – this is what we are going to do, everyone is expected to chip-in and help, and we will try our best that she takes part in every activity, including rock climbing!

37. Three anecdotes from Leena Sarabhai

Leena Sarabhai is the sister of Vikram Sarabhai and no less an illustrious person herself, co-founder (along with Madame Maria Montessori herself) of the finest school for children of the age group 2.5 to 5.5 years – Shreyas. Madame Maria Montessori stayed here for a year.

Leenaben was born in 1914 and is now old. Very few people go to meet her today. She likes me a lot and I like her a lot. She loves to talk - many things - her experiences - her life - many things. When I go to her she makes up her quota of talking! Many of the things she says I have heard often - repeated maybe as many times as I have met her- yet these stories and the experience of meeting her have touched me deeply.

J Krishnamurthy once spent a month in the home of the Sarabhais when Leenaben was 14 years old. Later she wrote a booklet recollecting that month. She gave me a copy to read. I read it and went back to her wanting to ask her a question. I had folded the top-of-the-page which was related to my question. As I asked her my question she took the book and lovingly unfolded that fold and with a lot of pain in her voice asked me - 'you do this to books do you?'
"Yes", I replied. (It did not hit me then)
'It must be hurting the paper, isn't it?' she said.
I just gaped at her!

Hundreds of times she has asked me - 'Sunilbhai, how can a teacher *shout* at her students asking them to *keep quiet*?' And I have seen this happening in hundreds of schools and hundreds of classrooms! And every time I remember Leenaben !

Once I was visiting Shreyas with her and saw a wooden-board about 2 ft X 3 ft in a corner. On the board were written numbers vertically from 1 to 10 and then 11 to 20 and so on upto 91 to 100. The board was dusty since out of use. I asked her - 'Why don't you use it?'

'Don't you see? It is not a square, it is a rectangle', said Leenaben.

I did not quite realise until lightening struck! When you are teaching 1 to 10 and 11 to 20 and so on the board needs to be a square matrix. Or else you are telling the students that 1 to 10 horizontally is different from that vertically or vice versa.

38. Taking photographs by parents in school functions – encouraged

When my daughter was in school and we would attend some functions, we were, as parents, not allowed to take photographs. I tried to 'explain' this to myself by saying that so many parents will get up and take photographs, make a nuisance of themselves, come in the way of other parents, block the view, etc etc. But I felt bad too, since it was quite cumbersome to go to the school, see the photos on the notice board, fill-up a form and order.

Once my daughter was a 'sunflower' in a play, and I remember I took a photo *chupke-chupke*, I was quite scared (imagine me, adult – scared!). It is one of the very few photos we have of her school programmes.

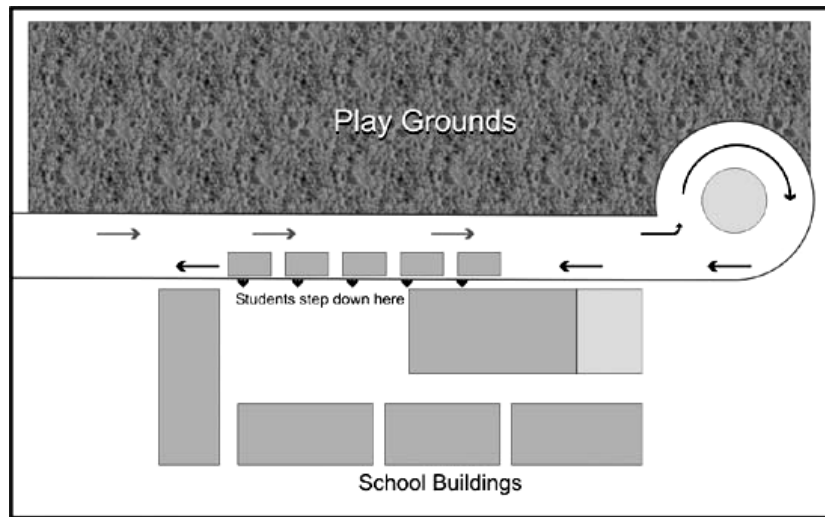
In Eklavya, for all school programmes (Sports Day, Euphoria, Phoenix, Prize-giving and Investiture ceremony, SS/JS Play etc) we make special arrangements for parents to go near the stage, take photos/videos and come back. All this, without much disturbing either the audience or the programme. A special team of educators oversees this and takes immediate corrective action (sometime being a bit strict with certain parents) on-the-spot.

We think it's not worth hiring an official professional photographer to photograph/video the entire function, and then 'sell' the photos/Cds. Each parent is interested in a couple of minutes footage, not the whole thing, so might as well let them do it themselves. The parents also feel a sense of being a 'part' of the programme rather than mere spectators.

39. Buses not reversing

When we designed the architectural and campus layout of Eklavya, one of the conditions to be satisfied was that buses will not reverse. So the whole campus is longitudinally cut into two. As the buses come in, they go straight, take a u-turn on a roundabout, and come back and stop. The students get down from the left of the bus and go to their respective buildings (all buildings are on one side of this internal road, and play-grounds on the other side)

Buses reverse after 10am, after all the three morning 'shifts' are over, and the students are inside the classrooms. Buses reverse in their parking positions. The drawing and photograph below clarify.



40. Educator's parents visit

Normally on 14th November (or a Saturday near that date) the parents of educators are invited to visit the Eklavya campus. They are often curious to see the place where their daughter works, its safety aspects, meet her colleagues, etc. Their need to know and ask questions is a valid need and should be addressed.

A bus leaves from Core House at 9.00 am, reaches school by 9.30, parents are greeted and welcomed, divided into smaller groups each accompanied by an educator who shows them around the school campus and answers all queries and doubts. This is followed by light snacks and departure at 1.00 pm.

One can see a sense of pride in their eyes when they leave. They now have a greater understanding towards the noble and challenging work their daughter or daughter-in-law is doing.

Of course, the school is open round the year and parents of educators can visit anytime.

41. Experience---Reflection---Action---Change---next Experience

How to find God?

Guru Nanak was never in favour of giving-up this world, leaving wife and children, becoming a *sadhu*, going to a *gufa* and meditating. He said we have to be in this world, in this *ghar-grihasthi*, we have to do *vyapaar*, and then we have to realise God.

Certain event occurs, we get angry, later on we regret, *aisa nahin karna chaheeye tha*, we promise to ourself that we'll improve, then the next event occurs....Only like this will we ever become 'wise' and slowly slowly realise the myth of this *sansaar* and while being in it we will yet be not of it.

So, all events and experiences are actually good – provided we 'reflect' and are able to be honest to ourselves. Of course *galatee uskee bhee thee*, but we have only to see what was 'my' role in it and how can I *sudharo* myself.

The more experiences we have, the more broad-spectrum (variety) the nature of these experiences, the more we reflectbetter it is!

42. Basic philosophy cannot be reviewed everyday!

We have some fundamental beliefs and philosophies in Eklavya. Some may not agree with them, that is ok. These are *our* set of beliefs. They include:

- No tuitions, they cause harm, dependence, etc etc
- Punctuality
- First day Last day of school
- Presence of both parents in IPEM/Home Visit

One new parent (or a new educator) disagrees with this, points out arguments. They are the *same arguments* again and again. We have gone through them, *after which* we have decided what we have decided.

We cannot discuss with every new parent all the arguments all over again. It is physically not possible. Then they say that you are closed minded, would you not like to review? Fair enough, but we cannot review basic things every day!

43. Open Debates on concerns and issues.

Many issues that are a part of the daily life in Eklavya or those reported in the media as 'current topics of public concern' are discussed and debated in an open forum during the Home period and the assembly. Sometimes a special open debate session is held in Eklavya Hall and educators and students across schools participate. . Such an 'open debate' leads to better understanding of the issue and a general awareness about its importance is created.

Some such issues in the last few years have been – Wood carving, Cutting a tree, Womb Renting and Use of a public Domain like Facebook.

Cutting a tree - A tree was cut in the Eklavya amphitheatre, to make way for a 100 more seats. In the morning it was there, happy. During the day it was cruelly cut and the dismembered pieces carted away in several trolleys and tractor trips. Next morning the area had already been concreted ! People were walking on the place totally unaware that just yesterday the tree was alive and happy ! Some students noticed and then this became an issue since some were disturbed and some took it in their stride as a part of necessity and modernization. Students debated in the assemblies, wrote poems and write-ups.

Wood Carving - The Ahmedabad Mirror (19 June, page 8) carried an article on three craftsmen from Ajmer (Puran brothers) who carve felled trees into sculptures. We thought it was a good idea, so we invited Pappu Puran to visit our school. He could not find any felled tree, so the idea generated was to do carving on a 'living' tree! We negotiated the prices etc and invited him to do one- if we like it we'll proceed further with the project; and if we do not like it, then we pay for that one, and story is over.

When the carving was being done on a tree outside MS, children visited the site to watch -but our environment friendly students were aghast! Though they appreciated the skill, they said that to carve out a figure from a living tree trunk is appalling.

"Stop the carving" they pleaded. The educators saw this as an opportunity to trigger off a debate. We asked the students that just because a stone is lifeless it is fine if it is carved and a tree being a living thing should be spared but *agar hum maante hain ki bhagwan kan ,kan mein base hain to patthar mein bhi to woh hain*. God is omnipresent so why this divide of living and non living- such points were raised to fuel their thinking.

They debated this for two days in the Home Period and then across the three schools i.e. JS, MS, and SS, students debated this issue in the assembly and took a vote. Some of the arguments given were:

Some said that as the bark is the dead part of the tree and since it really does not hurt the tree the carving is fine. Another counter argued that none of us have entered the soul of the tree so we really do not know the truth. One said that even dead cells, if someone will cut your hair without asking you and not the way you wanted it - will you like it? Is it the physical pain only or is there an emotional aspect also?

On and on it went - a very lively debate indeed! Children used their oratorical skills to the fullest thereby leaving us in a dilemma as what was to be done. It was a real *Dharma Sankat* and we searched for a Vikramaditya. According to the poll, about 80% wanted the carving to stop and 20% said that when there is a need for a certain action to be taken then at times we need to be cruel and as God is everywhere the argument does not hold good.

Both arguments are correct. They are strong. As is written on a poster in the SS garden - "In a well-trimmed garden, we see the 'restraint' of the Lord; and in the primeval forest we see His grandeur and freedom"

Finally Eklavya decided that carving on a living tree is not acceptable and should be stopped.

Womb Rental – In the recent past womb renting has become a much debated and conscientious issue.

A city called Anand, near Ahmedabad is supposed to be the 'womb renting centre' of the world. There is more debate and talk in Ahmedabad on this issue since it is so close.

We had a debating activity in Senior School that lasted two weeks. Almost all students from class 9, 10, 11 and 12 participated in this discussion. The debate was held during the morning assembly and the home periods and also during the day whenever possible.

Many students explored the internet and studied the moral, ethical, spiritual, social and economic aspects of the practice in great detail and did wonderful research and deductions.

Finally some students were selected and 16 of them debated in front of an audience of 150 students and educators.

It was a pleasure to listen to students deal with this issue with appropriate sensitivity. The atmosphere was emotionally charged due to the ethical and moral aspects and yet students were able to debate with dispassionate rationality. The comfort and ease was evident in their manner when they dealt with the subject that could many times be quite embarrassing to discuss in a public forum.

The entire process was an extremely stimulating and thought provoking experience. Some of the thoughts presented were -

One of the surrogate mothers in Anand said that the money she earned by renting her womb was used to cure her son's heart problem and the other used it for the dowry in her daughters marriage.

As far as legality is concerned it has been made legal by the law and the surrogate mother knows that she is carrying the child under a legal agreement so she won't get emotionally attached to the child.

If we take the example of a butterfly then its greatest difficulty is breaking open the cocoon. The same way a women's greatest difficulty is giving birth to a child after keeping it for 9 months. If a woman does not give birth to a child then she won't be able to bring up the child properly. Also I think that the woman giving her womb on rent can earn money in other ways than this.

My personal view is that adoption is better than surrogacy as it provides a ray of hope to orphan children.

Instead if controls, our laws actually promote surrogacy. For eg. The implanting of embryos into the womb of a surrogate mother is permitted as many as five times, compared to a maximum of two times in most other countries.

The womb rental business is flourishing in India because:

- It is banned in foreign countries; low cost of mothers on rent, In India mother can breed 5 fetuses, Easiest and fastest way of developing wealth.

Surrogacy in principle is not wrong, though it can be abused but I think that is where regulation and control come into play.

Among the students presenting the view, participants were selected by a Jury based on the comprehensiveness of their views; the sensitivity to the topic, the social, moral, legal repercussions & presentation for the final debate which was held in Eklavya Hall.

44. Mixed classrooms enhance learning

Some schools put all the academically brilliant students in one class, the not-so-intelligent ones in one class and the academic non-achievers in one class.

It is a well established theory by researchers and well known educationists like Shri Aurobindo, Jean Piaget and Krishnamurthi that mixed groups enhance classroom learning. Students in mixed groups – by religion, caste, economic status, intelligence, academic orientation, capability in sports, music, dance and emotional adjustment receive a wholesome exposure to all kinds of situations. At the end of the academic year total learning is more than in a case where the same types of students are together.

In Eklavya we mix the students as per the above criteria. We also change the class sections every year. Theor class-teacher also changes every year. In many schools the same set of students is with one class-teacher for four years. We believe it is important for the child to have many new experiences and know a new teacher every year. The child then has more adjustment capacity, looks forward to change – which is so essential now-a-days and is capable of accepting a new situation easily and working his way through it.

We therefore divide classes on a more or less random basis and every class has a healthy mix of intelligence, emotional adaptability, leadership qualities, and so on.