

MONA SHARMA

WHEN IMAGINATION HAD WINGS



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Stories Matter

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please contact:

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS

www.BlueRoseONE.com

info@bluerosepublishers.com

+91 8882 898 898

+4407342408967

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Dedication

With the blessings of my parents, late Shri Narendra Kumar Sharma and late Smt Urmil Sharma, I dedicate this book to my granddaughter Shrivika. Though, she is still very young, she has influenced and changed the lives of the people around her. She has brought a new sense of purpose and tremendous amount of joy in our lives. There's nothing like a grandchild in your arms, to put a smile on your face and a warm feeling in your heart. That is why they are called grand. When she starts schooling, she will know, what to do and what not to do through this book.

Acknowledgement

My book would not have been completed without the push and determination my children Ankita, Karthik and Amitesh gave me. Their relentless prodding, prompted me to pen down this book. It takes more than just writing. Editing is also an important part of the book and my sister Neeru Punj Sharma put in endless hours of work to correct rephrase and restructure my book to bring out its essence in the simplest way.

All sketches have been done by Akshat, who is a budding artist. It has added charm to my book. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the silent yet persistent support my husband Shri Ranjiv Sharma, gave me, whenever I was at a loss of words. His faith in me rekindled my faith in myself and the result is this book.

About the author



The author is an avid reader, you tuber, blogger and a story teller.

Her immense experience as a teacher has helped her pen down these memories which she has shared with the readers. Hope you enjoy it as much as she has penning it down for you.

About the book

This book is all about the pearls of wisdom I have gained over the years while teaching.

In my 30 years of teaching, I've realized that teaching or rather learning is mutual. It is not just me teaching them but the students also taught me a number of life lessons. Classroom fun banter, teenage problems, peer pressure, parent's expectations, focusing on goals, coming out on their own, respect and integrity of character are all very well documented in this book

There are many life changing motivational stories which will force the reader to rethink about life.

Children and their childish pranks, their dreams, their worries, their happiness, their endeavors are all captured in this book.

Table of Contents

Soumil.....	1
Mandatory.....	4
Don't Bark.....	7
Helmet and motorcycle.....	10
Don't want to get 90%.....	14
If you can dream it, you can do it.....	17
Hostel perils.....	20
Lottery nickal gayi.....	24
Gol Gappa Stall.....	27
Did not go home after exam.....	31
Want to eat Kala.....	36
Papa can't become God.....	39
Don't turn back and talk.....	43
Do good always.....	46
Children's day.....	50
The day my class won a prize.....	54
Shrivika false alarm.....	58
Eye specialist.....	61
What goes around comes around.....	65

Never give up attitude	69
Being consistent and determined is a virtue	72
How my students remember me	76
A promise is a promise	79
Ma'am please admit my daughter	83
Great Principal	87

Soumil



Those days I remember with a lot of joy. It was the time when students treated their teachers as their gurus and respected them immensely.

I had a genius in my class named Soumil. There was nothing that Soumil could not do. You name it and Soumil would be doing it. He could write with both his hands simultaneously. Once he wrote on the blackboard 'Happy Diwali', 'Happy' with his left hand and 'Diwali' with his right hand, using both his hands at the same time.

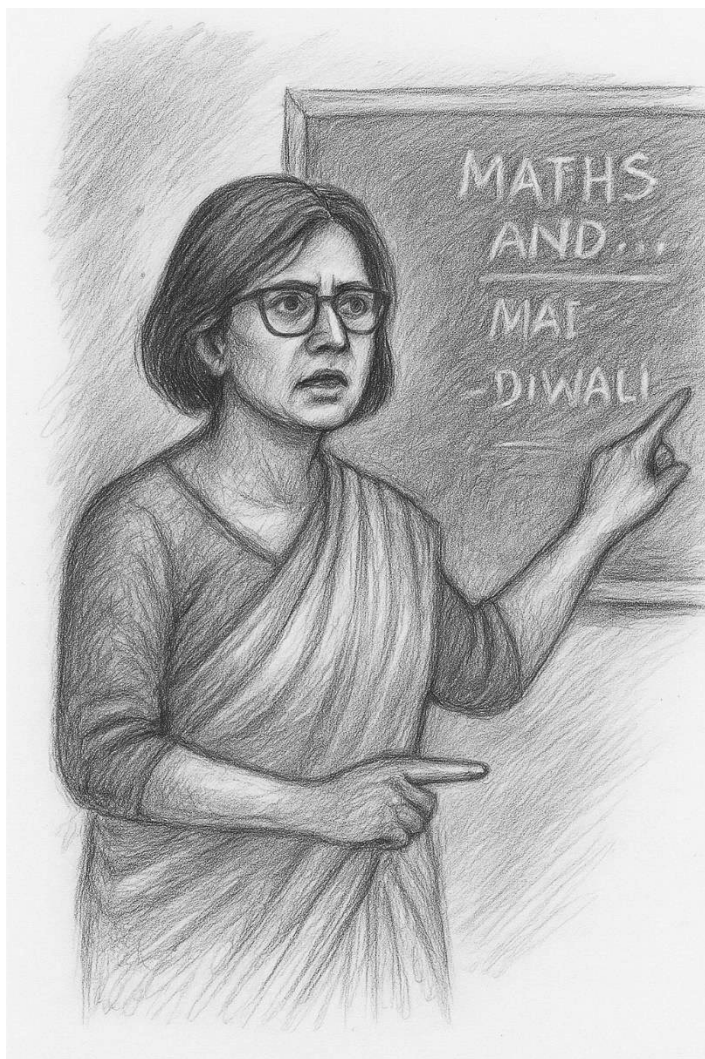
During lunch break, he would be helping students with maths and other subjects. I, being the class teacher, would check on him to see if he had had his lunch and would often find him surrounded with students, his lunch box unopened, even his water bottle untouched.

Soumil was an epitome of a good student. He would be ever so polite and respectful. So it came as a shock to me that one day a student complained to me, as soon as I entered my class. He said, in unison with the entire class, that Soumil had called me a “maid.” “What?” I exclaimed, not believing what I had heard as I could not fathom Soumil using such a derogatory word for me.

As the entire class was unanimously saying it, I had to confront Soumil. I demanded an explanation. Soumil, polite as ever, came with his head down and stood next to me. “Why did you call me a maid?” I questioned. “I did not call you a maid ma'am, ” he replied. They asked me “what do you call mother in Marathi? Soumil was a Maharashtrian, so he said he replied “Aai”, they again asked “what do you call a teacher in Marathi?” to which he replied “Mai”.

So this was it. Mai in Hindi means maid. But in Marathi it is used as a symbol of respect for an elderly lady. Students had conveniently misconstrued the meaning of Mai. This shows the towering personality that Soumil was. The entire class had to get together to plot and plan against Soumil, who was otherwise unbeatable. They had conveniently forgotten that Soumil had helped them on and off.

Words can be used wrongly or misrepresented. It is our duty to weigh everything and then come to a conclusion instead of jumping to one.



Mandatory



26th January and 15th August are celebrated with zeal and enthusiasm everywhere in India. It is a national holiday. We have flag hoisting in our school on those days. To inculcate patriotism and a sense of pride in our country and our freedom fighters, a function is also conducted every year.

So, a few classes are required to be present for the function. That year it was decided to call class 11

I was the class teacher of class 11 so I went to my class to announce that they all had to come to the school for 15th August. I said, it was mandatory, for everyone to come. I deliberately used a heavy word mandatory to convey the importance of the day. The next day all class 11 students of every stream came except my class. I couldn't for the life of me fathom the reason why they had not come. I was called by the principal and asked for

an explanation. He told me that this was a very serious neglect of my duty that I had not informed the students about such an important day. My explanation had no meaning for him that I had informed the class.

Next day when the students came I asked them Why they had not come?

I also told them that because of their casual attitude, I got a dressing down from the principal. The class showed surprise that I had expected them to come when I had myself said that it was mandatory.

“What do you think mandatory means?” I asked. “We thought mandatory means if you want to come, come otherwise stay at home”, one of the student replied.

Oh my God ! Class 11 and none of them knew the meaning of mandatory. It was my fault. I should have used simple words like compulsory, nevertheless the entire class went with me to the principal and explained the entire thing. The principal was also surprised but he understood too. So that they do not make this kind of mistake again, he gave them an assignment. For one month all the students of my class had to pick 10 words from the newspaper, find their meaning and use them in sentences.

Hope, if not anything else at least this will improve their English.



Don't Bark



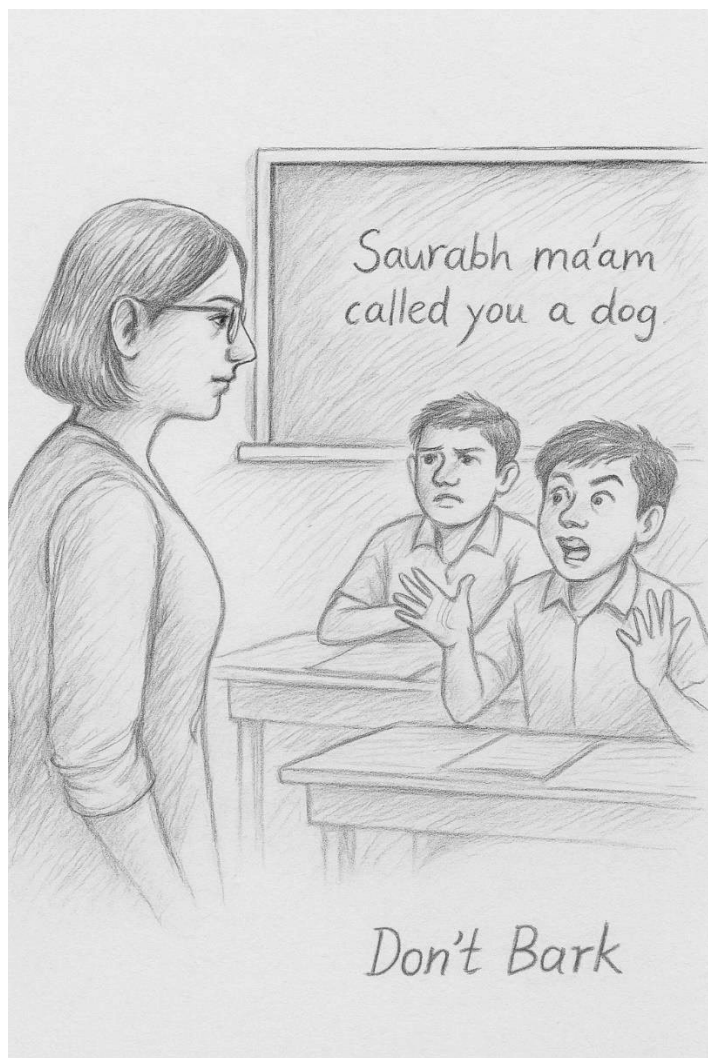
Gone are the days when we used to have fun banter in our class. Everyone took everything in their stride and there used to be a lot of merriment and teaching used to be absolute fun.

One such incident, that comes to my mind, is when one day after I had finished teaching my lesson, I gave some free time to my students. I strongly believe that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, so I often incorporate quizzes, riddles and fun games in my teaching. Some students wait for this time.

This makes my teaching interesting. So this time out that I had given was basically to re-coup what I had taught. But I saw that, though some students were revising, some were talking softly and two students in particular seemed to be fighting. One of them was flaying his hands in all

directions and speaking loudly. To stop him, I immediately said Saurabh stop barking”.

Saurabh stopped immediately. Amit who was having a tete-a-tete with him pounced on Saurabh and said "Saurabh ma'am called you a dog". He said it so loudly that the entire class fell silent and Saurabh's face fell. I could feel the situation getting tense, so to diffuse it, I said "it takes one to know another Amit". This time Saurabh had a smile on his face. "Ma'am called you a dog too Amit", both burst out laughing and the otherwise tense environment was diffused. Those days students respected and listened to their teachers. They knew that their teacher would never do them any harm or do anything wrong for them. Even if they were scolded, it would be for their own good.



Helmet and motorcycle



Boys will be boys. They are boisterous, naughty, respectful, cheerful and charming all at the same time. I had this boy called Rishi, who had all these characteristics. Sometimes he would be naughty and loud and at other times innocence personified. He was always very respectful.

It so happened, that one day I was on my kinetic driving ever so carefully, that all of a sudden a voice bombarded in my ears 'good evening ma'am', I almost fell from my scooter.

Even before I could collect myself and register what had happened the boy on the motorcycle had sped away at full speed. The rider was wearing a helmet so I couldn't make out as to who he was.

I was still trembling and shaking from the incident that it dawned on me that the person on the motorcycle must

be one of my student and though his intention of wishing his teacher good evening was good, but the manner was not. What if I had trembled and banged against something I could even have had a heart attack. It was so sudden and out of the blue.

He had come so dangerously close to me, to wish me good evening that I needed to take up this topic with my students. If I simply asked the class, who had done such a thing, nobody would have accepted, so I devised a plan. Next day when I went to class, I told them that yesterday a boy wished me good evening in sector 34 market. He was on his motorcycle and was wearing a black helmet so I could not identify him but I would like to appreciate that there are children who wish their teachers outside the school too and guess what ? Who got up ? None other than Rishi. He even told me the time when he wished me and that he recognized me from my kinetic.

My plan had worked. I appreciated him in the class but rebuked him for such a reckless behavior in private. He understood his folly and promised to not repeat it in future.

Since then I have met him a number of times in the market. He always wishes me, but first he parks his motorcycle, takes off his helmet and then comes and wishes.

Those children who are always ready to listen and learn go a long way in becoming successful people.

Today Rishi is a very successful businessman. God bless him.

Good Evening, Ma'am!



Don't want to get 90%



Child is the father of man.

This saying holds a lot of depth. One of my student Ankit was a very promising boy. He was very quick to grasp things. He had a very sharp intellect and was always curious about things, but so far as marks were concerned, he wouldn't score above 70% marks. I would often wonder as to what happened to him during exams

In one PTM his mother addressed the same concern to me. She was rightly worried, that though Ankit was a very intelligent boy, it did not show in his marks. Since he was in class 12 and his board exams were near, she was rightly worried,

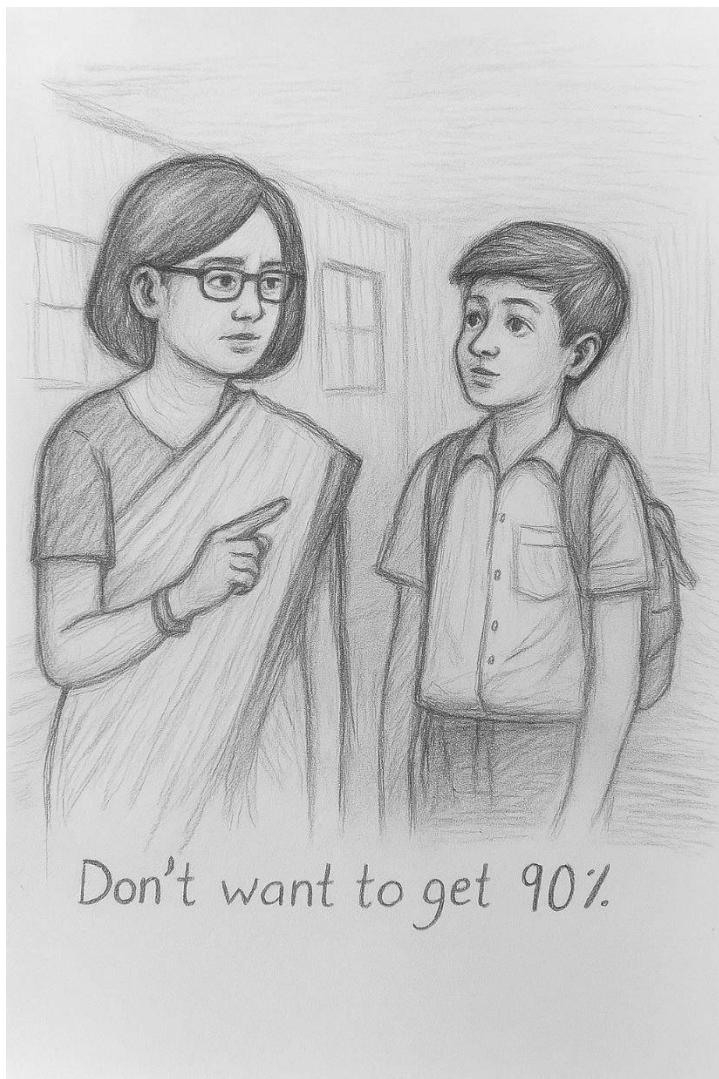
I assured her that I would talk to Ankit and find out the reason and do whatever I could to make sure he does better.

So the next day, after my class, I called Ankit to the library and sat down with him and asked him the reason for not doing well in the exams despite having such a high IQ. Ankit was quite reluctant to tell me, but on my prodding him again and again, he finally answered my question on the condition that I won't tell his mother. I assured him that I would not do so. What he told me, shocked me beyond belief. What a strategy he had. Such a young boy could think of these things

I was stupefied. Ankit said, "Ma'am I'm getting 70% so my parents are expecting me to get 90% and above in the board, if I start getting 90%, which I know I'm capable of, then they will expect 98% from me and if I don't get that, then they will be disappointed. I am leaving questions in the paper so that I get around 70% marks only, so that when I get above 95% in my board exams, my parents would be thrilled. I want to see them happy. I couldn't argue with Ankit because I knew whatever he wrote in the exam was all correct it was only that he never attempted the entire paper hence he scored around 70%

Ankit got 96.4% in the board exam and made it to a very prestigious college.

All the newspapers covered it and his parents were very happy. What a brilliant mind Ankit was and what a strategy. Students like Ankit are rare. This strategy should not be used by students, they should study and get marks in all the exams.



If you can dream it, you can do it



“There is hope in dreams, imagination and in the courage of those who wish to make those dreams a reality”. Jonas Salk

This quote sums up my story very well. Everybody should have dreams and ambitions and the discipline, dedication and determination to achieve it.

Amish was a very shy student, he would keep to himself. He spoke when talked to but would listen very carefully to every word I spoke.

We had an annual class decoration contest, so I told my students to decorate the class with charts and other things. All the students got busy. Some made charts relating to various subjects and some made charts of quotations. Others got decorative items for the class.

Amish was also told to make a chart and he made a chart on a quotation

“If you can dream it you can do it”

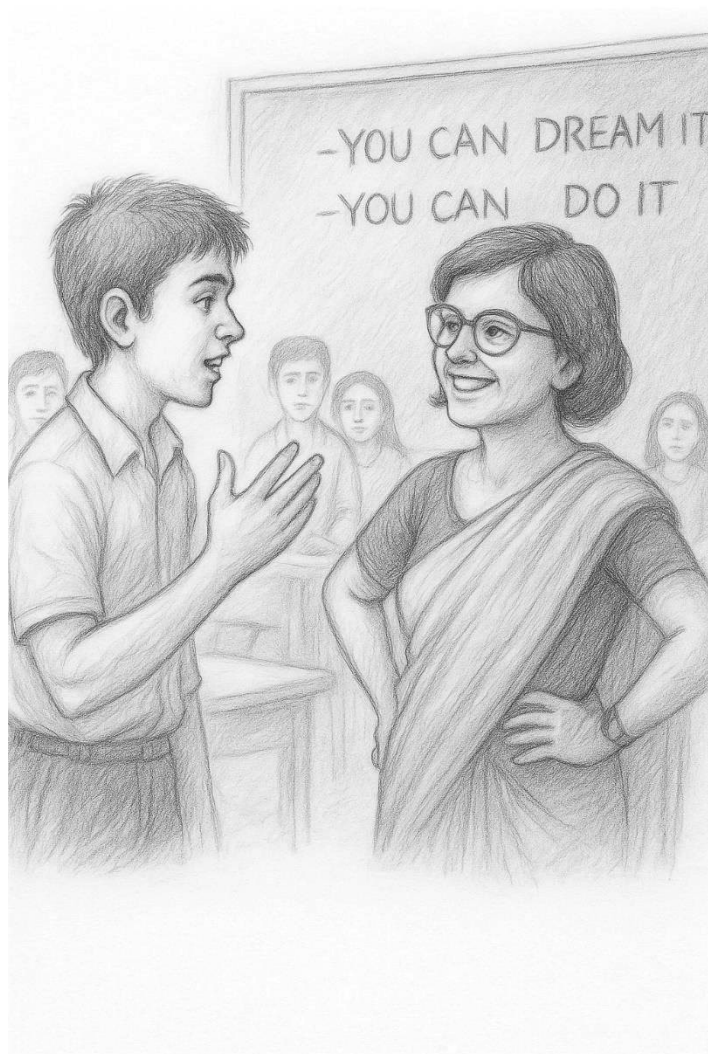
It was a simple chart, with one line quotation, but it spoke volumes about the person who made it and had a very deep meaning. I asked Amish why he had chosen that quotation to which he answered that he sincerely believed in it and followed it. He took out a slip of paper from his purse and showed me what was written on it. It was written my aim is to get admission in SRCC. He also told me that he had a poster with these lines in his bedroom and the first thing he sees on getting up is this quotation and his entire day goes remembering it.

I was deeply impressed with him. Not only did he write a quotation but he also believed and followed it. God willing his dreams would definitely come true.

If you sincerely work to achieve something then the entire universe works with you.

Needless to say Amish made it to SRCC and fulfilled his dream.

This is the power of dreams, but you have to dream with your eyes open.



Hostel perils



In my 30 years of teaching career, I came across a number of brilliant students. They have left a lasting impression on me. Some students have a natural flair for excellence. Their every move, every thought and effort is directed towards their goal, which is clearly etched in their mind. They know what they want in life much before the other students and they put all their efforts in achieving it.

One such brilliant student was Gaurav. He was a very quiet and disciplined boy. He always spoke in measured words and his eyes would sparkle with wisdom.

He participated in debates, quizzes and many other literary contests with full preparation and would almost always win. He topped in his board exams and got into the most prestigious college. My school and the college had the same premises so I would bump into him on and

off. He would update me regarding his studies and future plans.

All seemed to be going fine. He had even subscribed to a monthly general knowledge book which was a good source of current affairs for IAS aspirants. In one such meeting, I found him a bit dejected and disturbed. I asked him the reason which he tried to avoid answering, but on my persistence, he told me his problem. As he was staying in the hostel the GK magazine which he had subscribed, never reached him, as some miscreants would take delivery of the magazine and confiscate it. They were goons and no amount of discussion with them helped

Nobody could do anything about it even the warden was helpless

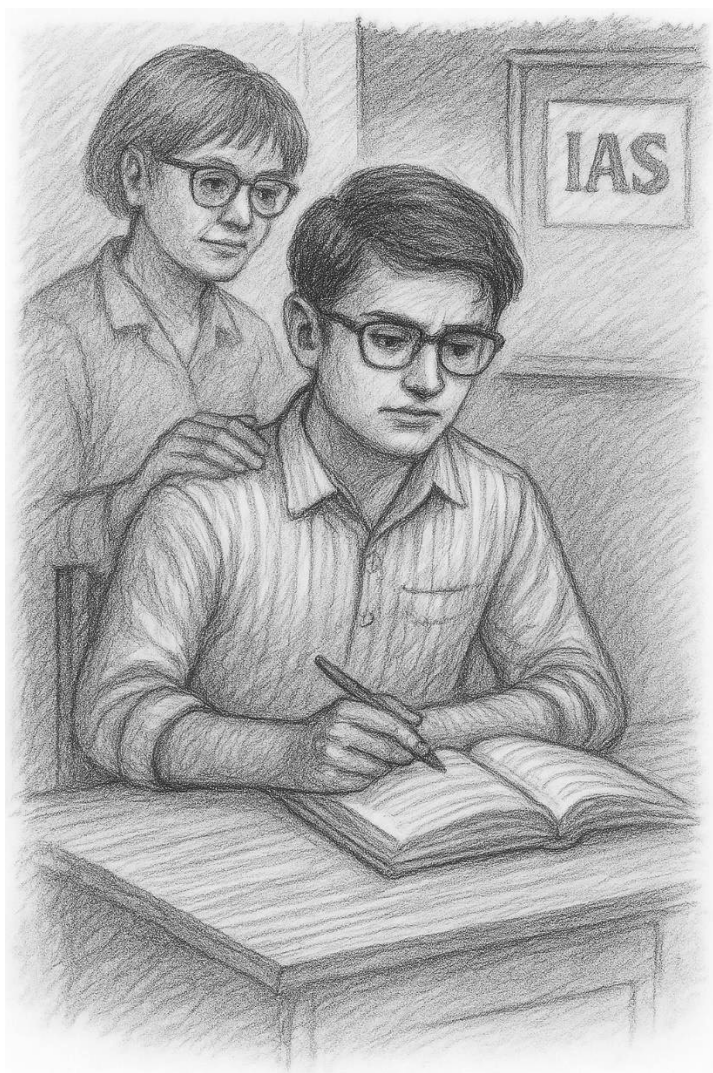
All this was affecting his preparation for the IAS.. With no access to TV, newspaper and magazine, it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to prepare for the administrative services. He was going to the state library to study but that was not enough.

As I listened to him, I realized how focused he was and that if I could do something, I should. An idea struck me. I offered to receive his magazines at my house and then I would send it to him and that way he would get his magazine without delay and in proper condition.

He agreed and immediately changed his receiving address from his hostel to my house and all the remaining editions reached him on time.

Sometimes the small step taken on time can help fulfill big dreams.

He is an IAS officer today.



Lottery nickal gayi



“Abhas ki Lottery nickal gayi”, is what the school ayah told the grandmother, when she went to collect new clothes for the nursery student.

Abhas was a small shy student. He generally kept to himself. When he joined nursery in a nearby school, he took a lot of time to adjust. Needless to say that for all the activities he had to be coaxed to do it.

One day a painting activity was going on in his class. Abhas was also participating but he was not feeling well. It took him a lot of courage to finally ask the teacher to allow him to go to the washroom. The teacher sent an ayah with him. But alas it was too late. He dirtied his pants on the way to the washroom. The ayah was in turmoil as to what to do. She informed the teacher, who told her to go to his house, which was nearby, and get a new pair of clothes. This is what the ayah said when

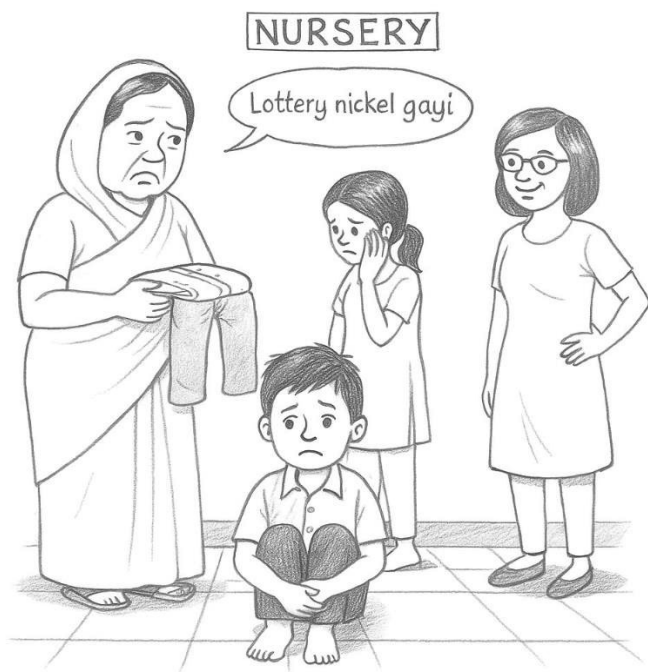
grandma opened the door. “Latrine nickal gayi”, but because of her accent, it sounded like she had said “”lottery Nickal gayi”.

Grandmother was very happy. She thought that there must be some contest and her grand son had won a prize, so she took the best pair of jeans and shirt and even went to the school with the ayah to witness the ceremony.

What a come down it must have been when on reaching school she was informed that her grandson had dirtied his pants and that there was no lottery to be collected only soiled pants.

The entire way back Abhas got an earful. He might not have understood, as to what he had done to get such a dressing down.

Words and dialects sometimes change the meaning of the things all together.



Gol Gappa Stall



Our school arranges a lot of activities for our students and students too participate with full vigour and enthusiasm.

On children's day we usually have a fete, where students put up various stalls like games, eats, lucky dip, music on demand etcetera. We teachers supervise the fete and see that everything is going on fine. Aarav had put up a golgappa stall. He was selling each plate for rupees 10. It had cost rupees 5 per plate. So he was making a profit of rupees 5 per plate. Every time we went up to his stall he would be serving golgappas to some one or the other and be very happy.

How is it going ? We would ask to which he would reply, "very fine ma'am, doing good business". After all he was earning rupees 5 per plate. He would invite us also to try

his golgappa but we would tell him that we were on duty and that we would try it later.

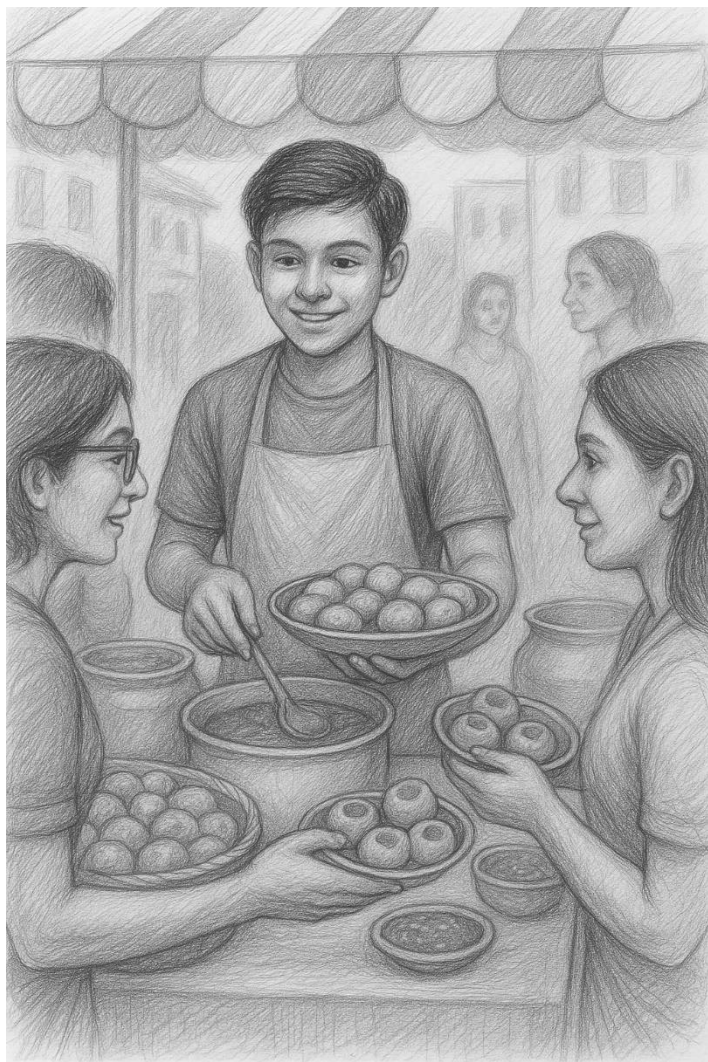
The fete came to an end by 1:00 pm. Everybody started winding up. We also took our last round to see if all was fine. When we reached Aarav's stall, we saw him very sad, almost weeping. 'What happened ? I asked. I thought somebody had robbed him. In a very small voice he said that he had not made any profit. "What ?" I exclaimed! You were making a profit rupees 5 per plate. Yes ma'am, that I was doing, but I sold very few plates as compared to the stock I had. He further explained that he had bought 300 plates for rupees 5 each. So his investment was rupees 1500 but it sold only 100 plates for rupees 10 each so he ended up earning only rupees 1000. I felt very sorry for Aarav.

Throughout the fete he was so happy and cheerful and now he was so crestfallen. It was children's day and no child should be unhappy, so I quickly gathered the other teachers and explained the situation to them. We all swarmed his stall and asked for golgappas. Though the fete was officially over, he was allowed by the principal ma'am to continue selling as she too had been informed about Aarav's status.

Some got 5 some got 10 plates packed in their tiffin boxes, some took the raw material, some ate there itself, even principal ma'am got a few plates packed. Within no

time all his plates were sold. A smile slowly found its way back on his face.

I felt very happy seeing him happy. This is how children's day celebration should be.



Did not go home after exam



In my teaching experience, I have come across many different types of students. Some children are outgoing and boisterous and have a I don't care attitude even if things don't go according to their plans, they still carry on as if they are not affected. While on the other hand there are some students who work hard and when they don't get the result as per their expectations, they break down. Outwardly they try to put up a very brave front but inside they're broken and disillusioned.

Sudhir was a very good student. He was very hard working and determined. If I gave him five questions for homework, he would do them as well as do the illustrations. He would be forever getting very good remarks in his copies. But he used to panic very fast. If he couldn't solve any question, tears would start brimming up in his eyes. He would lose confidence in

himself very fast. I had talked to his parents too regarding this, but they also showed their helplessness in this matter.

Before the board exams, when I went to wish him at the exam centre, I took him aside and told him that, if he came across any question he didn't understand, he should take a deep breath and keep saying to himself "I can do it". Leave the question he couldn't answer and go on to the next question, come back to this question later. This way he won't panic and will be able to finish his paper on time. After listening to me he seemed relaxed and confident.

How three hours passed even I don't know. When the students came to discuss the paper with me, I realized that though it was an easy paper, some questions were tricky. I prayed that they had done them correctly. Some had got them correct, but not all of them. I didn't tell anyone that their answer was wrong lest they brood over it and spoil the next paper. I noticed that Sudhir had not come to discuss his paper. Maybe he was tired. Students burn the midnight oil before exams. I decided to call him in the evening.

When I reached home my mobile started ringing. I saw that it was Sudhir's father's phone. I picked it up immediately. He sounded very stressed and in panic. Sudhir had not come home from his exam centre, he had gone to the center also but there was nobody there. He

had called Sudhir's friends but they did not know about Sudhir's whereabouts. They also tried to call Sudhir's number but it was switched off. I tried to calm Sudhir's father and said that Sudhir was a very sensible boy and that we would all join in to find him.

I had tried to sound positive and hopeful but inside I was clueless as to where Sudhir could be. His father had already contacted his friends. Where could Sudhir go? How to trace him? I tried to remember if Sudhir had told me about his favorite places. Suddenly, it struck me, that once he mentioned that there is a temple near his house where he goes when he is worked up and he finds solace there.

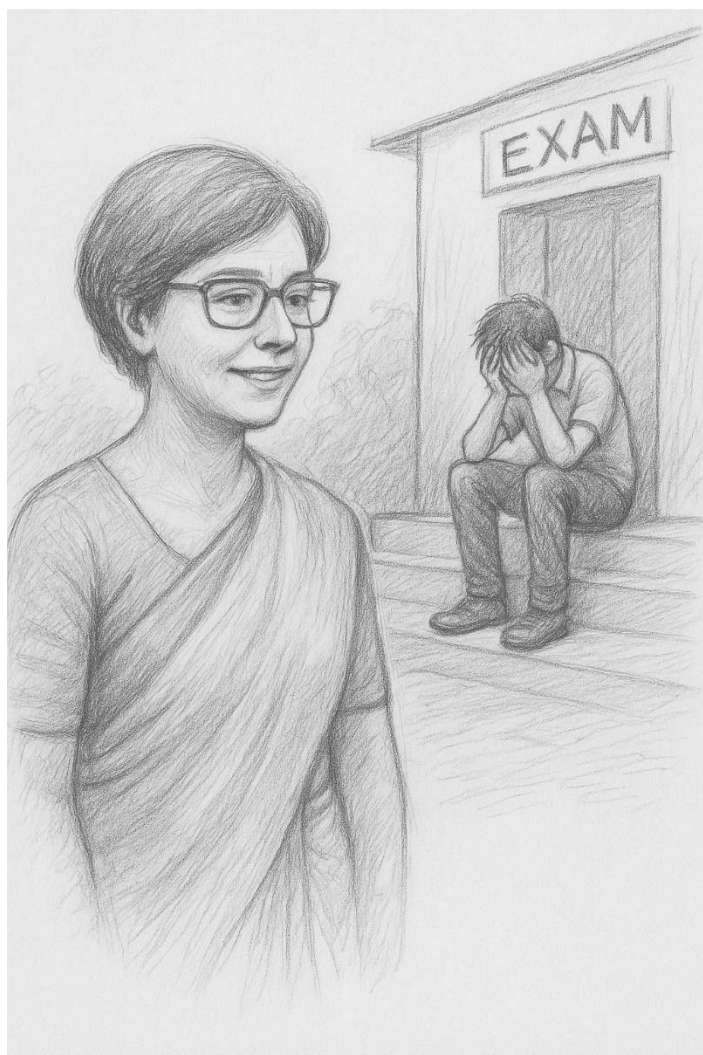
I called up one of his friend who stayed near his house and requested him to go to the temple and see if Sudhir was there and take him to his house. Sudhir was sitting in the temple but refused to go anywhere. So, I talked to him through his friend's mobile and convinced him to come to my place to discuss his paper. In the meantime I called up his father to inform him that Sudhir had been found and that he was coming to my house and I would reassure Sudhir and send him back home.

Sudhir was crying badly as his paper had not gone well.

He had expected 90 plus marks but now it seemed that he wouldn't even get 75%. He was very disappointed and disillusioned with himself. All his dreams to make it to a

good college had come crashing down. I sat down with him and together we went through the paper and one by one started assessing his performance. He had made a number of mistakes but due to step marking everything was not lost. I graded his paper and started allotting marks that he would score. I kept a lenient hand. In some questions even though I knew that he would not score much, still I gave him a higher score. His marks aggregated to 90% according to me. He couldn't believe it but his trust in me lit up his eyes and he became confident and happy. He even had lunch with me and thanked me for helping him get over the crisis. I kept praying that God please don't let him down.

I knew that even if he got 80% in the final result this crucial time would have passed and that his other exams would go well. The result came and the first call I got was from Sudhir, he had scored 92% in my subject 2% more than what I had calculated. God is great, he listens to and fulfills even the tiniest of prayers.



Want to eat Kala



Parenting is a tough job. Children can be most unreasonable at times.

I'm a working mother, so many a times, I had to leave my 3 year old daughter in a crèche. She would be forever learning new words and seeing new things. One day when I picked her up from the crèche, she told me that she wanted to eat “Kala”. I asked her what Kala was? She said that she had eaten it and that she liked it. Kala means black. She could have eaten anything black. It could be gulab jamun, blackberries or anything else. So I told her that we would go to the market in the evening and buy it. In the evening, I took her to the sweet shop and showed her gulab Jamun. She said no, this was not what she had eaten. I showed her many other things black or brown in colour and she said no to all.

I was at my wits end not knowing what she was asking for. All of a sudden she pointed her finger at a fruit stall and said, “it is there”. I took her to the stall and there she pointed at bananas. “Banana?” I exclaimed since when have bananas become black in colour. I again confirmed from her that this was what she wanted. She answered in the affirmative.

My brain was not understanding, that how could banana be called kala, till the penny fell and it dawned on me that what she meant was “Kela “ and kept calling it kala.

Children and their vocabulary! That's why it is said that mothers are first teachers of their child.



Papa can't become God



Children learn very quickly. The sooner we start inculcating value and discipline, the faster they start implementing it. I always ensure that children learn traditions, customs, respect for elders along with their studies. For this, I often encourage them to share their stories with me. I ask them to give me proof through photos, letters by parents and grandparents. My students enjoy this exercise thoroughly and I pin up all these acknowledgements in their personal files, which I hand over to them when they go to the next class.

One such value which is very dear to me is, respect for all elders, especially grandparents. I have hammered it into their brains that at no cost should the elders be disrespected and no one should ever be rude to them. They may agree, or they may not agree with their grandparents but this disagreement should not lead to

argument. After all they have limited time with us. Furthermore, they are the senior most generation, which make them closest to God, if not God itself.

Their white hair forms a Halo around their head just like God.

Some of my students have taken this advice so seriously that there is a remarkable change in their behaviour towards their grandparents. Some are now very close to their grandparents. The same values I inculcate in my son and daughter too. My son who was aged 5 years, listened very carefully that, all old people with grey hair need to be respected, loved and helped as by helping them we are respecting God. All elders are like God on earth.

He digested this information but after some time he looked disturbed. I thought, he might have thought of some incident when he might not have behaved properly with some elderly person which he was now regretting. On prompting him to tell me what was disturbing him he blurted out “Mom if people with grey hair are God on earth then Papa can never be God, as he doesn't have any hair “.

Children take our words very seriously and are often left bewildered, if they don't understand it thoroughly. I explained to him that Grey hair is just a parameter of knowing that a person is senior. Hair or no hair elders

always represent God and godliness and should always be respected.

The very fact that my son had listened so carefully to me and had his own doubts about it, that made me think that I should share more stories with my students, so that even if out of so many of them, some of them understand and implement it in their life, then the world would be a better place to live in.



Don't turn back and talk



Some children are gregarious by nature. They are so fond of talking that sometimes, they talk amongst themselves, even while the teacher is teaching.

Sarthak came in that category. He would be most annoying at times. He would get his friends into trouble often. One day, I was teaching a very important topic, there was pin drop silence in the class, all the students were writing in their copies what I was writing on the blackboard. I turned around to explain the point I'd written on the blackboard, when I saw that Rohan had turned back and was talking to Sarthak. Such an important topic and these two were busy talking. Sarthak was known for talking in class but I did not expect this from Rohan. I lashed out at Rohan and reprimanded him regarding his behaviour and told him to leave the class, if he thought what I was doing was not important.

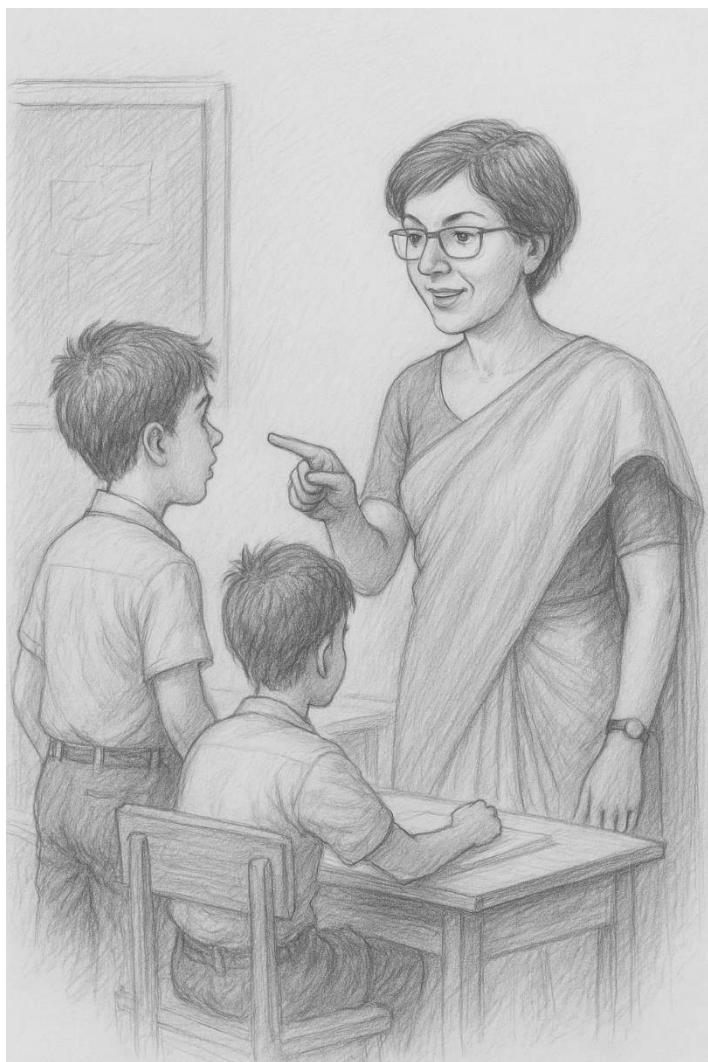
He apologized and tried to explain but I was in no mood to listen to any of his explanation.

Later in the staff room, I realized that I had been harsh on Rohan and had not heard him out. Rohan was a good student and this was not his normal behavior. I should have heard him out

So after all the classes got over, I called Rohan to a corner and asked him about his behaviour in class. Rohan was also upset with me, as I had not given him a chance to explain, nevertheless on being prodded, he said that Sarthak had pinched him from the back and he had just turned back to tell Sarthak not to do so that I saw him. I did not give him any time to explain so that was it.

It was my folly. I apologized to Rohan and promised him that I would rectify my mistake in class as I had scolded him in front of everybody. So the next day, the first thing I did, when I went to class, was to admit my mistake and tell the students that if we make mistakes we should own it up and apologize for it.

A leader should always lead from the front and set an example with their behaviour. Teachers are also human beings, we too make mistakes, but we should own up our mistake and move on, so that our students can look up to us and do the same.



Do good always



Our city is a well connected city. All roads are parallel with a number of roundabouts. Students studying in our school come from far off places and take PG accommodation, somewhere near our school.

One of my student, Rachit stayed in a nearby PG. My residence is also near the school so since his mother used to come for all the parent teachers meeting, I got to know her well. Rachit was a good student and would sometimes walk over to my house, if he had any problem in my subject. I would be advising his mother about where to buy fresh vegetables and fruits, where to dine out etc.

One day just as I had reached home from school, I got a call from Rachit. He wanted to know if I knew where he could get cooking gas cylinder filled. He too had reached home and his mother was just about to make fresh

chapatis for him that the gas cylinder ran out and they didn't have a spare cylinder. I knew a place where small cylinders were available, so I told him that I could take him there. I fixed a place for him to meet me. I quickly rolled one chapati with some veg in it as I knew Rachit would be hungry. On meeting him, I handed him the chapati roll, he smiled and ate it very quickly. He was indeed hungry.

I took him to the place from where I had once got my cylinder filled. Rachit went to the shop but alas it had shifted to a nearby place and the new shopkeeper didn't know where it had shifted. Not one to give up so easily Rachit inquired from the nearby shops and found that it had shifted to another place a little far away.

He sat in the car and we found that place. He got the cylinder and I drove him back to his place. He and his mother thanked me profusely.

A few days later my gas cylinder got over. I had a spare one, so I fixed that but as soon as I fixed it, a very strong smell of gas engulfed me. The cylinder was leaking. The cylinder had some fault, quickly I took it off and now I did not have any other cylinder.

I registered a complaint with the gas company but it would take some time. I remembered that I had taken Rachit to get a small cylinder sometime back. So I went to that place and got one for myself. Had I not taken

Rachit, I would not have known the new shop. Rachit had inquired and found the shop which helped me.

It is rightly said that some fragrance stays in the hands of those who distribute roses.



Children's day



Every year, in our school, we celebrate children's day with a lot of enthusiasm

We should never let the child in us die. The true essence of children's day is to celebrate each and every child, understand them and be there for them always. Children should be able to look up to us and share their problems, grief and anxiety with us.

On children's days sweets are distributed to students in our school. We count the number of students who are present and distribute sweets to them.

That particular children's day, as I was counting the number of students in my class, I realized that one of my regular student Pranav, who stayed in a PG accommodation nearby, was not present. He had 100% attendance till that day and of all days he was absent on children's day. I asked his friends why Pranav had not

come but nobody knew. They had met him in the evening and he was fine.

I got worried. So I called him. In a very faint voice he answered the phone and said that he was not well. I inquired from him if he had shown to a doctor, to which he answered in the negative.

I felt very concerned about him. He was a very good student, he had 100% attendance and was staying all alone in his PG. I deputed one of his friends, who stayed nearby to take him to the doctor in the evening and to keep me informed about his well-being.

In the evening Pranav's friend called to inform me that he had taken Pranav to the doctor, Pranav had viral fever. He was running 102 degree celsius temperature. Doctor had prescribed some medicines, with which his temperature would come down and though, he was with Pranav right now, he had to go for his tuitions. He also informed me that Pranav had eaten some bread and butter.

I stood there for a long time, with the phone in my hand. Today was children's day and one child was staying in a PG, was not well, and had eaten only bread and butter. His parents had been informed but it would be some time before they came. I couldn't leave Pranav like that. So, I cooked a light meal and went to his place, which was nearby. His door was open, he probably didn't have

the energy to close it after his friend left. He was very happy to see me. “Happy children's day Pranav“, I said, opening the Tiffin. “You didn't come to school, so I came”. Tears welled up in his eyes. He was both smiling and crying at the same time. He finished the tiffin and felt better. I left when his friend came.

I always believe one should preach what one practices.



The day my class won a prize



Class competitions are an integral part of every school curriculum.

That year, I was the class teacher of 12th and my class was always eager to participate in various competitions. These competitions require a lot of time, effort and dedication. Some students are made for these type of activities, so class decoration competition was announced with the theme of “gratitude”. I divided the class into groups, each group had a leader who had to ensure that the charts, decoration items, pins etcetera were arranged and the one who had creative ideas and was good at drawing was entrusted with the job of making the chart.

Others, who couldn't draw, contributed by writing quotes and other things like arranging for the charts, paint, fevicol etcetera. For the first two days, the work

went on fine. We were given zero period to do our work. Everybody pooled in. Enthusiasm was high. But as the day of the competition neared, many shortfalls became evident. Our best artist fell sick, another good painter had a family emergency, hence couldn't come. The rest tried their best, but couldn't manage it.

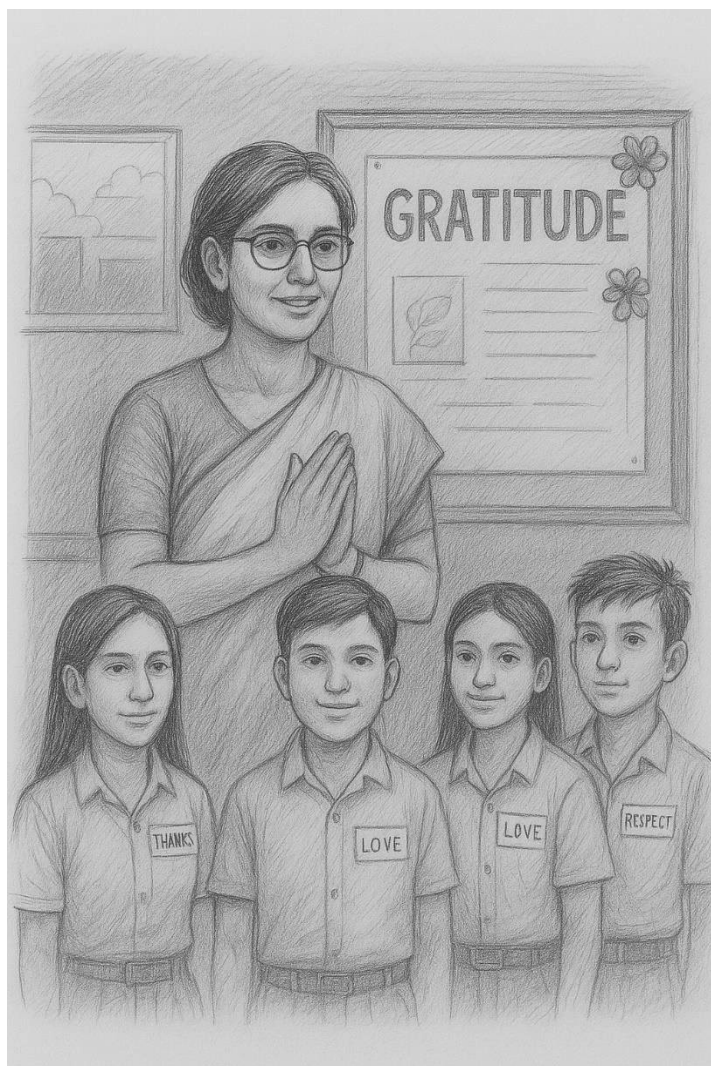
Other classes were doing well and had their charts etc. ready while we were still struggling with the allocation of work. The charts which were supposed to be drawings and paintings now were mere quotes with pictures pasted on them. To keep my students morale high was now like a herculean task. To add to all this, students from different classes, were coming and seeing our work and were laughing amongst themselves. We stood nowhere near the other classes. It looked as if we were just managing to put up a show, that too a very mediocre one.

The day finally dawned. I believe in trying till the end. It is not over until the results are declared. We put up whatever we had. We could barely cover the walls, we decorated the blackboard too. I happened to see stick-on paper with one of my student. An idea occurred to me, I immediately told my monitor to write a few values, signifying gratitude and give it to each student and tell them to paste it on their shirt pocket. Within no time, each student had a value like thanks, love, respect etcetera pasted on their shirt. I also told my monitor to say a few words like each student had chosen a value and

had not just made a chart but also implemented it in their life. They are living these values.

Needless to say our principal ma'am was very impressed and we won a prize, for which my students took a treat of a free period from me.

Perseverance, hard work and positive attitude always pays.



Shrivika false alarm



My small little granddaughter Shrivika, is a very charming, intelligent, smart and social child. She goes to everyone without a murmur. She is equally comfortable with strangers as she is with her own family. She rarely cries or throws a tantrum.

So, we were all alarmed when, one night, she started crying loudly and would not stop. We tried giving her all types of medicines, checked to see if she had hurt herself or any other such thing, but couldn't find anything wrong with her. She just wouldn't stop crying So we put her in the car and drove her to the doctor. Halfway through she fell asleep. Just like that. We couldn't understand what to do? What would we tell the doctor? The child was sleeping peacefully.

So we decided to come back and see if she cried again. She didn't and slept the entire night. Maybe she had colic

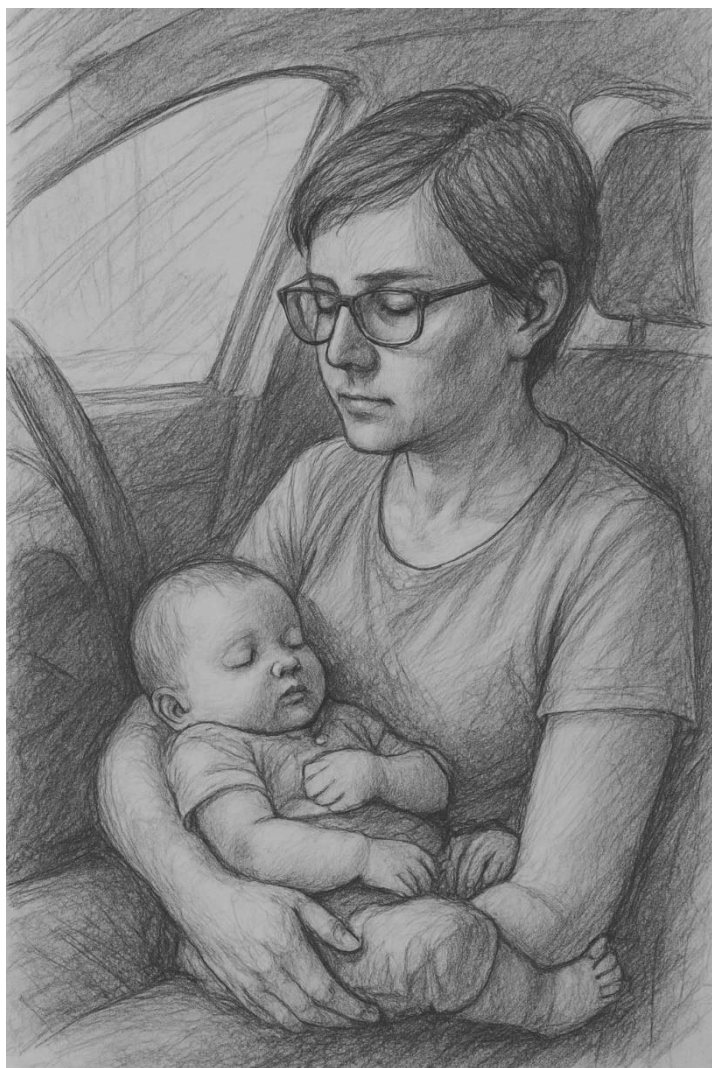
and that had settled down. Yet another time the same episode was repeated, this time we decided to wait for a little longer. We tried to walk her to sleep, but to no avail. Finally we gave in and took her to the hospital again. They say history repeats itself and so it did. This time again she slept on the way to the doctor and we had to come back again without going to the hospital.

The third time when this happened we decided to take her to the doctor immediately, so before her crying could reach a higher decibel, we went to the doctor. The doctor examined her and found nothing wrong with her, no gas, no pain, no problem apparently. He too put it down to colic. He said that the medicine takes some time to show effect. Now we had an official verdict. Nothing was wrong just plain colic but the drama that took place was for real

Now, whenever she cries we put her in the car and take her for a drive. Needless to say she sleeps on the way.

Maybe this is the way small children, in pain, draw our attention towards them and the moment they feel better they quieten down.

Parenting is not an easy task. At every step there are challenges which test the patience and strength of the parents.



Eye specialist



Sometime back, I had gone to an eye hospital for my cataract operation. As I was sitting in the clinic, with eye drops in my eyes, I heard a voice calling my name. “Hello ma'am, is that you ? Are you Mona ma'am”? The voice asked. I was prompted to open my eyes but despite temptation I resisted and instead said “yes, who is this?”

The boy sat down next to me and said “ma'am you can open your eyes, I'm Vinay from your school. You were the activity incharge then and I had participated in a number of activities”

I opened my eyes and looked at him. I couldn't place him at all. I asked him “what are you doing here ?” He said that he was working as an eye specialist.

He got into a chatting mode, as if he had been wanting to talk to me for a long time. He said that though he had interest in extracurricular activities, his approach was

very casual. So once when he participated in a quiz competition and qualified for the finals, I as an activity in charge had left no stone unturned to make sure that he prepared well for the quiz. He said that I did a lot of research, collected information on current affairs, who is who, books and authors, taglines of various brands and many other things. Vinay further told me, that he was so impressed by the effort that I had put in, that he felt that it was absolutely essential for him to win the quiz. He felt that when his teacher was putting in so much of effort for him to win, then he should also put in the same amount of effort, if not more. He read various GK books, current affairs etc revised it with me and practiced it again and again. All this helped him win the quiz. He also learned discipline, dedication and determination from me which later helped him in scoring a seat in medical college.

I was glad I had made a positive impact on Vinay's life. He enquired about my surgery and we exchanged phone numbers.

When I was wheeled into the operation theatre, the doctor greeted me and said Vinay has told him to take good care of me and that I should not have any discomfort. I relaxed knowing that I was in good hands and that teaching is a noble profession, you teach so many hearts but you never know where your reward may come from.

I may have retired as a teacher but I know that many of my students have reached pinnacle of success and that they have become good human beings. That is a big reward for me.



What goes around comes around



Some children are naughty and some are beyond naughty. Saran was one of those students. He couldn't sit still even for a moment. As soon as the class got over, he would be the first person to leave the class after the teacher. He would then roam around aimlessly, in the corridor, get caught by the discipline incharge, rebuked and sent back to class. But all this didn't deter him from roaming here and there. I even tried making him the monitor of the class. They say one should make the naughtiest child the monitor of the class, then not only will they be disciplined themselves, but they will ensure discipline in the class too. But alas in his case it did not work.

It was as if he had wheels on his feet and he just couldn't help it. He was such a hyperactive child. During parent

teachers meet, I brought up this point and together with the parents we tried to find a solution. Saran's parents were also up in arms regarding his hyperactivity. He wouldn't sit still, nor would he do anything. It was as if he was drifting aimlessly here and there the whole day.

Saran's father was a rich businessman. Maybe Saran knew that his future was secure and that he would be joining his father's business and therefore he did not take things seriously.

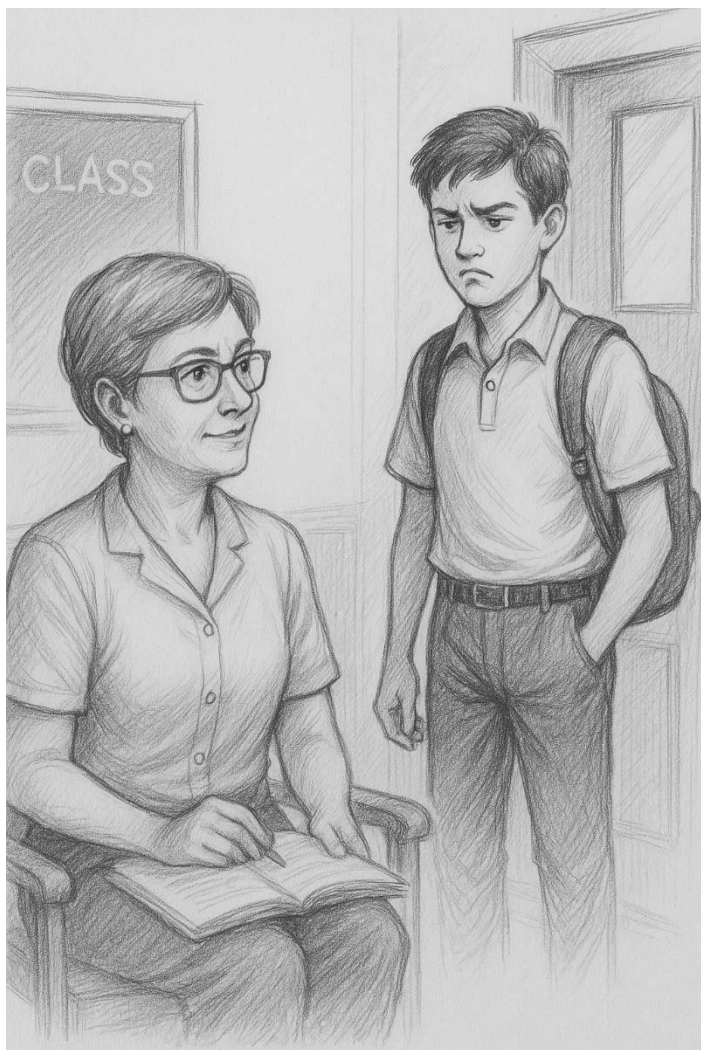
I suggested, to his father, that why not promise him a big reward if he does well in his board exams and maybe his behavior and attitude might change.

Saran had almost everything money could buy, but there must be something that he would be wanting. His father thought for a moment and said that he would buy Saran a car for college. Saran was also present there. His face lit up. He promised that he would change his ways and that he would try to get good marks. His father gave me his phone number and told me to inform him, if there was any change for the better and that Saran would get a car only if I advocated it.

From the next day Saran's behavior changed. That boy who had a "I don't give a damn attitude, " was all respectful and serious about his studies. All my colleagues also observed this and appreciated it.

Saran secured good marks in board exams. I had already informed his father about the remarkable change in Saran. So when Saran came for his mark sheet, he didn't seem to be very happy. I inquired if his father had fulfilled his part of the promise as Saran had done his part. "Yes, he did buy me a car, but it is a nano. I used to come to school in a BMW. How can I go to College in a nano?" He said he had refused the offer.

I thought, this is poetic justice, what he had been making his parents go through, now he is facing a similar situation of helplessness. But there was a ray of hope. His father was a smart businessman he knew that if Saran got the car he wanted, his behaviour might change again so he promised Saran that after graduation he would get a BMW of his own and as of now Saran could use his father's BMW. How the mighty was made to bite dust. Saran had no choice but to improve his behavior till it became him.



Never give up attitude



Ravi was a very enthusiastic boy. He would participate in every event, be it rangoli competition, mehndi competition, painting, quiz, cooking, debate or any other competition. But he rarely won a prize. I told him to concentrate on a few competitions and excel in them otherwise he would end up being a Jack of all trades and master of none. He would always say “ma'am I want to try my hand at everything”. Sometimes he would be participating in two events back-to-back. Anyway, he collected a lot of participation certificates. He was good at studies too. And so long as his participation in various activities did not affect his marks, his parents and I were not much concerned. Ravi passed his board exams with flying colours. He got admission in a prestigious college. After completing his graduation, he came to school one day and asked me for some of his certificates which were still lying with me. They were all participation

certificates. I gave him the certificates but quizzed him regarding their usefulness. He promised me, that he would get back to me, within a few days and answer all my questions.

I got busy with my schedule and forgot about Ravi's promise. So, I was pleasantly surprised when one day Ravi came to school with a box of sweets. He had got a job in a Fortune 500 company and his salary was astonishing. He was a good student but getting that job was commendable. He reminded me that I had once asked him what would he do with so many participation certificates. Well he took them to his interview and in this interview particularly when he showed the panel a huge pile of participation certificates they said, "but these are only participation certificates", to which he answered that this shows his dedication, determination, consistency and never give up attitude. He didn't get bogged down by failure. He tried again and again till he succeeded at last just like Thomas Edison.

This never give up attitude landed him a job in the company.

Oh my my Ravi could change the situation in his favour. Yes, he did have a never give up attitude. Now I tell all my students to keep on trying like Ravi did, you never know when you may finally strike gold.



Being consistent and determined is a virtue



Students should always be encouraged to do whatever they want to do. Just like a fish can't climb a tree, monkeys can't swim fast and tortoise can't run, similarly it is not necessary that every student is good at studies. Every child has something special in him or her and as a teacher it is my duty to help the child discover and polish his or her talent.

For the overall development of students, we had various competitions in our school like painting, singing, debate, mehndi, cooking etc. I always motivate and encourage my students to participate in various events. One of my student Amit, showed a lot of interest in cooking. Not only could he cook well, he could also be very innovative and creative. He could make very tasty dishes from very few ingredients and he could also prepare menu for

patients, weight watchers, athletes etcetera. He had so much knowledge about food, calories, preservation of food and balancing the various ingredients like protein, carbohydrates and fats that he could be a very good chef.

But his family was not interested in him becoming a chef. They felt that he should pursue MBA. No amount of cajoling could help. Amit's dreams came crashing down. I tried my best to convince his parents, but it didn't work. My advice to him was to finish his MBA and while working on his job, if he still felt that he should be a chef, then he could think about it. He should not allow his dream to die. In the meantime, he could cook at home and participate in various contests.

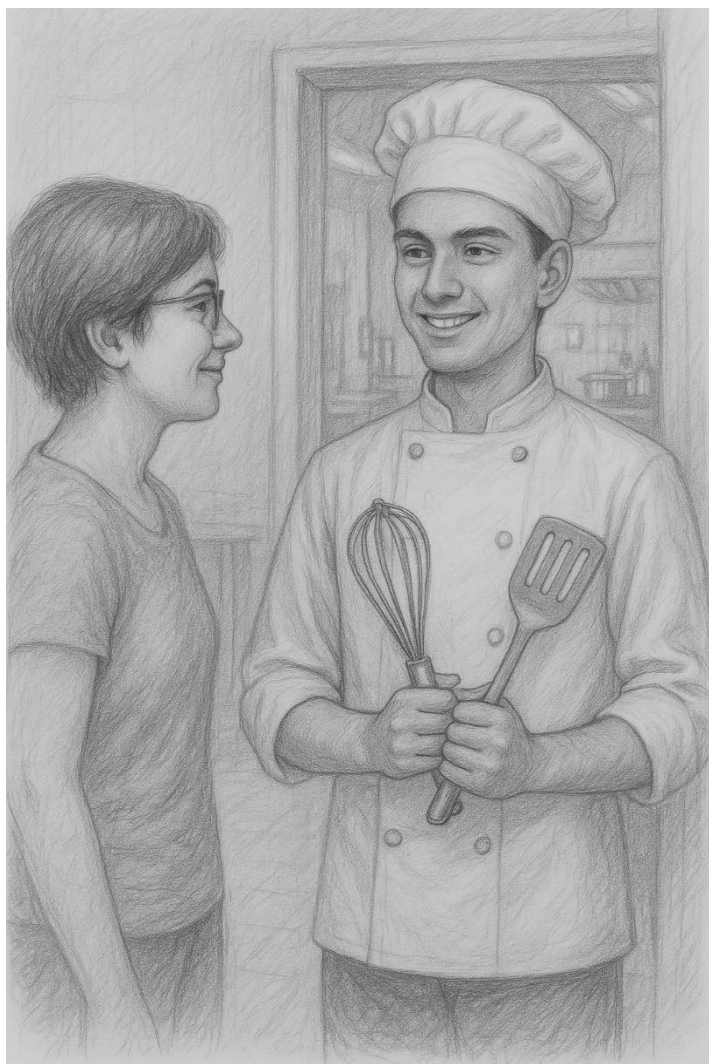
Time passed and new students came and the same rigmarole of teaching, making question paper, checking copies, tests and extra co curricular activities caught up my time and attention.

One day, a young man came to school looking for me. When I met him he looked very familiar. He introduced himself as Amit. Now I have taught so many Amits but his voice sounded so familiar that I asked him what he was doing?

"I'm a chef ma'am", he said. Oh ho, things fell in place immediately. Amit, who wanted to be a chef but his parents wanted him to do MBA. How did he manage? He told me that he went to Australia to do his MBA.

There, he had to cook for himself and his flatmate. Gradually the word spread that he cooked very well and all the Indian students nearby came to know about his culinary skills and were willing to pay for a delicious Indian meal. Though he finished his MBA and took up a job, he was not satisfied with it so he gradually shifted to cooking and became a chef in a big hotel.

Dreams do come true, but the condition is that you should never give up and keep trying and be consistent and determined.



How my students remember me



I keep running into my old students every now and then. I have been living in this city for more than 30 years and have taught so many students that inevitably I chance upon meeting someone or the other every once in a while. My appearance has remained, more or less, the same over the years but my students, who were all 15 or 16 years olds have changed a lot in appearance so when I meet them, it is difficult to place them. It is only after they remind me of some anecdote that took place in the class or names of some naughty or smart students that I have a flicker of recollection.

One day, when I was visiting my bank, I came across a very busy officer. I waited for my turn to come when someone tapped on my shoulder. I turned back and saw a young man of around 25 years smiling at me. He

politely asked me what work I had at the bank and on my telling him, he guided me to his desk.

As I was handing over my documents to him, he said “ma'am do you recognize me?” I looked up from what I was doing and scrutinized his face carefully. For the life of me, I couldn't place him. All I could say was the name of my school and asked him “did you study there?” “Yes” he said. “Which year?” I further asked. He gave me the year. I asked him his name, though it was written on the name plate on his desk. As much as I tried I couldn't remember him so I told him to name a few of his friends so that I could place any one of them and then things would fall in place. He rattled off a few names but I couldn't place any one of them. I have taught so many Amits, Sahils, Saurabhs, Ajays etcetera that it is very difficult for me to recall all of them. I finally asked him what subject I taught? I teach two subjects to pre college classes, business studies and accountancy.

Beaming at me he said “ English ma'am.” English? I speak in English, but don't teach it. That means he didn't have any recollection of what I taught. That makes it the two of us. I said, “now I remember”. We parted ways, after my work was done and coffee guzzled down. Both happy, he because I had finally recognized him and I was happy that he had made so much effort for me to remember him but he had himself forgotten what I taught him. Some things are better left unsaid.



A promise is a promise



Students should always be encouraged to do better.

They show remarkable improvement with proper motivation and guidance. Sunil was an average student. He did not show much interest in studies. On parent teachers meet, his father would always complain about the lackluster attitude of Sunil towards studies. They thought that they were doing everything within their reach for him, like sending him for tuitions, buying him reference books, also mobile so that he could join online classes but what they missed was motivating him. Sunil's father was always complaining and criticizing Sunil. So on one PTM, I had had enough and I told him that since he was doing so much for Sunil why not give Sunil an incentive, like buying a scooter for college if he gets certain marks. Maybe that might work. Sunil's father heard me out. He thought for a few moments and then

said, OK, he would buy Sunil a scooter if Sunil came first in his section in the board exam.

Now this was a tall order. Sunil had never come first in class but nevertheless Sunil agreed because he always wanted a scooter.

From that day, I saw a remarkable change in Sunil. He had determination in his eyes and a new found dedication and discipline. I was very happy for him finally something had worked for him.

The day came, when the board exam results were declared. As I was compiling my class result, I was very pleased to see that Sunil had actually topped. Now he would get his scooter and his parents too would be very happy. So when Sunil came with his father to the school to collect his mark sheet, I asked him about his scooter. He didn't get it he said, his face crestfallen. "Why?" I asked. He said that his father said that with 79% marks, coming first had no meaning. Had he got 90% then he would have got the scooter. I was aghast. Very gently, I told his father that he had broken his promise. The deal was that Sunil should come first in class not the marks. Now Sunil had fulfilled his part of the promise but he had failed to fulfill his. This will set a precedent for Sunil to promise things with no burden of fulfilling them. This is what he as a father was teaching his son.

Sunil's father's fell silent and went back without saying a word.

Next time I met Sunil, he was beaming, he had got his scooter.

A promise is a promise and it should be honoured at all cost.



Ma'am please admit my daughter



I had a very brilliant student named Shikha. This was long back when there was no facebook ,WhatsApp, etcetera, hence keeping in touch was not possible.

It was only when students came to meet us in school, that we would know what they were doing. We didn't even have an old students association in our school.

Now, I get messages from old students on Facebook confirming, if I'm the same teacher who taught them in school. So now I'm in touch with a few of my students and through them a few more.

It was admission time and I was on duty. Our school is known for its excellent results and many students, who come to seek admission, have to go back empty handed as they do not meet the required criteria. So, I was

checking the mark sheet of students very carefully and recommending them the discipline they were eligible for like arts, science or commerce. Since morning, one gentleman had been waiting very patiently for his turn to come. He had come with his daughter's mark sheet. When his turn came, he first confirmed if I was Mrs. Mona Sharma. On my saying yes, he gave me his daughter's mark sheet. The mark sheet had all As so I asked him which discipline his daughter would like to take. He said that his daughter wanted to take commerce and that she should be in my section whichever section I taught. I looked at him and as I did not recognize him at all, I asked him, "do I know you?" to which he replied in the negative. "why do you want your daughter in my section?" I asked. In a very calm voice he said he was Shikha's husband.

I had taught so many Shikhas, but I could remember only that one brilliant Shikha, whom I had taught long back. He confirmed that he was indeed her husband. Why had she not come? I enquired. Shikha is no more he answered in a small voice. It hit me like a thunderstorm. It seemed just like yesterday that I had met Shikha. Her memories were still so fresh in my mind and now this news. My eyes swelled up. It became very difficult for me to control myself. Sachin her husband told me that Shikha died of cancer and that ever since, their daughter was born, Shikha had been saying that when she reaches class 11, we will put her in Mona

ma'am's class. She used to talk very highly of me, so Sachin and their daughter were honouring her wish. For that he had got himself transferred to my city too.

All my students, wherever you are I'm very proud of all of you and I pray for your well-being, happiness and success. If possible keep in touch.



Great Principal



Since our school is a highly acclaimed school, the cutoff for various streams is also very high. We come across many students who don't meet the criteria, but want admission, so sometimes it becomes quite challenging. For such cases we always bank on our principle to take the correct decision.

So, when this student came for admission, he did not meet the cutoff criteria. He had achieved 90% in all the subjects, but just 33 in Hindi. His average came to 79%. Whereas our cutoff was 80%, so technically he did not qualify. His father had got transferred from South India so he did not know much of Hindi. Whatever marks he had secured, he had got by studying it for a few months. That was indeed incredible.

So, I approached my principal and showed her the mark sheet. She studied it and realized that the boy was indeed

brilliant. But the problem was that he was not meeting the cutoff criteria. Some discretion is always in the hands of the Principal. She can, if she so perceives, bend a few rules. My Principal did the same. She told us to take the best of four subjects and leave Hindi, as he would not be studying it in future. Then his percentage would come to 90% and he could be easily admitted. What a stroke of genius. She not only got the child admitted, to the happiness of all of us but also increased the prestige of the chair.

Such inspiring stories need to be shared so that everyone gets motivated to do good.

