

#### **4 Jatin - Digital Visionary Student**

Jatin Deepak Jadhav was born with eyelids he can barely open. In spite of this difficulty, he has excellent powers of observation. He notices the smallest of things – which makes him much sharper, in many ways, than his (able-bodied) classmates. When he first came to our Central Pre-Primary School in Balad Budruk, Jatin was extremely shy and timid. He was wary of participating in any class activities, or even speaking with the other children. One time, when he was still in the 1st Std, he bumped into a cycle on his way to school and fell down. Though he escaped with a few minor bruises, he was so traumatized by the incident that for nearly a week afterwards he stopped going to school.

I went to his home to ask about him, and found that his folks were very poor. Both his parents worked as agricultural laborers. Because of Jatin's eye problem, they mollycoddled him. I suggested to them that we get him medically examined, and emphasized that he would gain confidence only if he started attending school. I spoke about the importance of education. Jatin's parents were convinced by my appeal, and the boy began coming to school once again.

Ours being a digital school, every classroom has a computer and a projector. I decided to use this set-up to keep Jatin engaged. He thoroughly enjoyed watching educational programmes, songs and stories. He took to the computer like a fish to water, and it soon became his best friend. Jatin learned his numbers and letters, and also reading and writing, from the videos he watched. Over time, his fluency in English grew as well. He lost his earlier shyness, and started mingling more with the other students.

We soon realized that Jatin was more interested in technology than his classmates were. While the others were absorbed in following a story on the computer screen, Jatin would be looking at the keyboard, and observing how the mouse was used to move the cursor. He would study the computer closely, and ask questions about it. I would answer his questions till he was satisfied. His eyes would shine as he absorbed all the information. Jatin can now boot up the computer, using the password, and access any folder and file he needs. More

Dada, the 3rd Std class teacher, says appreciatively, ‘Sir, look at this child! He remembers the passwords of all the computers in the school!’

At present, the school has five desktops and one laptop. We have appointed Jatin ‘Techno-savvy School Minister’. He is a natural, an ideal candidate for the post. Starting the e-learning software, opening the desired digital book, handling the projector, computers and tablet, checking the cables: he does all these things with great ease and expertise. Jatin looks different because of his eyelid problem, but he has never let it get in the way of his studies. He can see and observe very well.

Even so, we are exploring possible treatments to help fix the problem, as we do not want him to develop a complex about it as he grows older. We have had him checked by doctors both at the school and district levels, and they have said his eyesight is fine. Dr Amit Mahajan from Chalisgaon, who is a friend of mine, has referred Jatin to JJ Hospital in Mumbai, where he is soon to undergo surgery. Jatin would watch me carefully when I began working on sound. I was connecting an HDMI cable once when, before I even realised what he was up to, he had selected the HDMI output under Sound Settings on the Control Panel, and “24-bit” under “Quality” in Properties. I was both surprised and happy to note his comprehension of such an advanced setting. I recalled my own childhood. The first time I ever touched a computer was after my 12th Std. “How far behind we were, compared to this new generation!” I thought. And then our little Minister asked me to activate the Internet on my mobile phone. Next, he started up the portable hotspot on the mobile. He typed “Christmas” in the Google search engine, and found out information about the festival on Wikipedia while disabling the annoying ads that kept popping up. I was elated by Jatin’s progress.

Jatin now helps other students in school. Sometimes he asks us technical questions that we cannot answer, and we have to look for the answers. He is doing well in his other study subjects as well. He stood 10th in the recently held ‘Bharatiya Pradnyashodh’ exams Jatin’s parents are very proud of him. They dream of his becoming an engineer. Our wishes for a bright future are with him, always.

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