

# CONFLUENCE

a 360° perspective

Orchid School - Donner Gymnasiet

India Sweden exchange program





When cultures meet, many things happen.  
Most importantly, learning happens.  
Learning that is life long & beyond text books.

Lakshmi Kumar

## On Board

The Orchid School is Pradnya Niketan Education Society's first educational venture. They have supported the exchange program with Sweden in spirit and action. Mr. Shinde went to Sweden in the year 2007 and formalized this exchange by signing a MOU with Donner Gymnassiet, an upper secondary school in Gotland, Sweden. From then on there has been no looking back. The exchange program which began with faculty members from both the institutions reached newer heights every year.

In order to make it possible for our staff to visit Sweden, the Board allocated a fixed fund which is evenly distributed each year amongst the staff that is selected for this exchange. This is part of the Training and Development budget.

The reason for this acknowledgment is that they feel this program is in tune with the school's vision of providing our students with an education that will make them locally rooted and globally competent citizens of the country. The teachers are the leaders and their rich experience of observing another culture, teaching practices will percolate down to the students and will shape their ideas and thought process.

The reason for extending this program to the student community was to enable them to have a first hand experience to know the world, observe other cultures, be

able to take what is best from a new culture and will work back home, and then make the judicious choice of being locally rooted for the right reasons. This is also an opportunity to be the brand ambassadors of the school, city and country. This exchange, in fact, is the part of the whole picture of enabling them to make the right choices. It is a well thought out strategy of developing the self, be able to reflect and evolve.

Thus the exchange has the dual advantage of satisfying our customers i.e. the students and also shaping their personalities. And this is achieved through the teachers who are instrumental in creating a better product and also the students themselves as they also get the direct exposure.

They have seen the confidence level rise in both the teachers as well as the students. They have observed that the thinking has also changed and the outlook towards life is much broader.

Mr. Shinde found the experience very good. After the exposure to another country, be able to view our country from different perspectives, compare the similarities and also understand the uniqueness of both the cultures. He found the content of discussions comprehensive and enlightening and also appreciated the quality of interaction. He is of the opinion that these meaningful interactions and collaboration can influence our

educational practices positively.

The partnership benefits both the countries and cultures and all the stakeholders get the maximum advantage out of this collaboration.

The Board is keen to take this exchange to the next level i.e. expanding within Sweden, to technical institutes, also to replicate this model with other countries, open further doors for a rich and varied cultural experience. The program can be integrated into the school curriculum and can culminate into a project.

On behalf of PNES

Amar Jadhav & Balasaheb Shinde





## Learning and beyond...

Sometimes we need to go away to find ourselves. Travel can help us see routine in new ways and the very act of seeing it differently somehow lends us a fresh burst of energy. Each of these journeys gives us a way of reconnecting with our inner selves. Some carry teaching moments - rediscovering pedagogy, trying new things, learning new things; while others simply revitalize our minds and hearts. That is the very experience that entralls us on our journey to Sweden year after year

Spending time with people / professionals who think and live differently too can offer us a new lens through which we may rethink the narrowness of our work. Each of us, who have written about our experiences, has looked at it differently, and in the process, we have learnt the benefits of a getaway like this.

The exchange program has had a great impact on my own professional development. I was keen to know more about the Swedish system and what I could bring back to enrich my teaching and understanding of pedagogy. It made me appreciate and reflect about what is good in the Indian education system and what new perspectives to return with that will further augment my teaching presence.

I was able to learn new teaching practices as well as reflect on my own practice in a new setting. Their methodology was different but not 'foreign'. Great attitudes from the students and staff made it a positive learning experience for me. I had the

opportunity to share how we did things 'back home' as well.

If I were to elaborate on the pedagogic value of such an exchange program, these are some of the many things I can list -

- This exchange program gave opportunity for increased awareness of educational / pedagogic concepts and practices, apart from developing respect for, diverse ideas, values, world views and ways of life.
- It helped to gain a unique understanding and appreciation of the similarities and differences in the education systems between India (Pune) and Sweden (Gotland) and between Donner and Orchid. (Though both are just a narrow view of what the cultures and school systems that exist in the two countries, however for many, it is the beginning to open doors to the world).
- The first hand experience helps to build new awareness of other school practices, critically analyzing the observations with their realities.
- With the exchange of teachers, the schools in both countries can move forward and enrich their regular instructional programs/ teaching methods, share their new knowledge and experiences with students and colleagues, thus widening their circle of influence.
- A byproduct of the exchange is that many have the opportunity to develop lifelong friendships and professional relationships.

- Exchange programs for teachers have a multipronged impact, assuming this experience abroad affects what teachers teach and how, as well as their perceptions and attitudes towards other countries and cultures.

The exchange has been one of the most invaluable experiences, both personally and professionally. However, the value of the program certainly doesn't stop when you board the plane to return home. The memories, new pedagogy, travel experiences, hilarious stories and of course amazing friendships will possibly last a lifetime.

Shilpa Solanki  
TOS Principal



# Sweden-India Exchange Programme



This document outlines Donner's views on the pedagogical value of the exchange programme with The Orchid School for our institution.

## Background statement

Donner Upper Secondary is an independent school located on the island of Gotland, in the vicinity of the Baltic Sea. We attract students from local surrounding rural areas as well as from the Swedish mainland; consequently, many of our students have little or no experience of international travel before they enter our school. Demographically, the majority of students are from a Swedish background with the minority made up of immigrants from various countries. Donner is a relatively small school and the current enrolment figure is 250 students.

## Exchange programme

Donner sees the exchange programme with The Orchid School in India as an integral part of our International profile. The school seeks to educate citizens of the global community, and that can only be achieved in collaboration with others. Through offering our students real, hands-on experiences in India, we see that they grow and develop in many ways. Learning experiences are integrated with real life events.

The Swedish Curriculum requires all students to have a global awareness and thereby create new and critical thinking, sustainability, responsibility and democracy. These attributes are created through team work, flexibility, entrepreneurial skills, health and self-esteem. These core

values underpin all learning experiences, and we believe that each and every one of these pillars of education are made real through the exchange.

By living in a host family, our students are given the opportunity to expand their views on cultural and religious customs, and see India from the eyes of locals rather than as a tourist. Likewise, we see the value of our students hosting visiting exchange students here in Sweden, and taking ownership and contributing to the success of their stay.

Academically, we see the benefits are enormous for our students. They are exposed first hand to study visits and interactions with companies and various organisations. They are given opportunities to meet with Indian youth and get insights into how another culture and education system works. Donner students complete hands on tasks during their three week stay in India, which are integrated into many study areas such as English language courses, Environmental Issues, Computing Technology, Sociology and Religion.

## Participants

At this stage of the exchange, Donner has had participating students from two of our university preparation programmes as follows:

The Natural Science Programme

The Social Science Programme

During the next year, it is hoped that students from a third university

preparation programme can participate in the exchange:

The Creative and Performing Arts Programme

Furthermore, we see possibility and opportunity for some selected students to take part in work placement positions at The Orchid School. We were delighted to send our first two student ambassadors to begin this process in September 2012, from the work preparation programme:

The Child and Recreation Programme

Our exchange programme is highly sought after and many students apply to participate in one of the above schemes.

### **Views from parents and caretakers**

Many parents have thanked Donner for giving their child the opportunity to take part in the exchange over the years. Families have expressed gratitude at being able to host an Indian student from The Orchid School and we are finding that more and more hands on experiences have led to positive word of mouth, regarding the exchange project in the local community. Furthermore, it can be seen that the local press have taken an interest in the exchange project and have interviewed both Indian and Swedish groups of students and teachers about their experiences.

### **Views from students**

The exchange programme is very popular and we have many students who apply. At the school level, we have a process where students who have been on the exchange programme meet and talk to prospective participants. Their first hand stories and experiences seem to plant a seed of

interest amongst our first year students, many of whom go on to participate in the programme in their second or third year at Donner. Our aim is that this collaborative learning will continue to sustain the longevity of the exchange programme.

### **Student reflections pre-departure**

These quotations encompass student reflections and expectations from pre-departure sessions run during classes in English. They come from Natural Science and Social Science students.

“What I hope I can do when we get to India is to look a little closer at the landscapes and the environment of India, by maybe taking a walk outside in my spare time. I also hope to see some great attractions and how India expands within the technology. And let us not forget that I highly hope that I get to pat most of the holy cows in India, they truly fascinate me!

I have great expectations for the family I will live with and I hope we will get to know each other well and that they also will teach me more about India.”

ArvidBoberg, Natural Science Programme

“The thing that I think will be best about the trip is all the things I will learn, about the religion, their education system and foremost how they are as people. How they act, talk, move and react to me as a tourist. I also want to try their food, to see if the Indian food in India is the same as the Indian food in Sweden, I am not so sure about that one. I also want to learn about their politics, not only from a general point of view, but also from teenagers.”

Kristoffer Warden, Social Science Programme

“Living in a host family may be a good experience and an education for us, to live in another culture.”

Rohan Johansson, Social Science Programme

### **Student reflections after returning**

These quotations have been taken from classwork in English, where students have written about their experiences after returning from India. Some were written during the stay in India. They are from Natural Science students.

“It's now roughly a week since we first set foot in this country. The first days have been spent trying to cope with the shock you get from replacing quiet and slow Gotland with fast and noisy India. Adapting along with you is your stomach ... The family which I live in is great. They're all very hospitable and nice to me.”

Emil Tingström, Natural Science Programme

“Everything we got served on the table was delicious and I would prefer their food culture before ours any day ... Already at an early state during my trip to India I realised that religion is everywhere. We visited a few temples in India.

...To sum up this little comparison between Sweden and India I would say that the countries are very different from each other but at the same time it only took me about two to three weeks to get used to the cultural differences and feel at home. We have a lot to learn from them and they have a lot to learn from us.”

Elliot Sundlin, Natural Science Programme

“Indian culture in general is very different from Swedish. Everything is more spicy, colourful and loud ... Their dresses are very colourful and are so full with colour that they literally shine.”

ArvidWarte, Natural Science Programme

“In India everything about the environment is very new. Projects related to environment have been recently started. Most of the places and companies that we visited have identified the environmental related problems and began to work towards environment conservation. We in the Environment group went to a lot of places and companies that are trying to make a change on the environment in India.”

Fanny Magnusson, Natural Science Programme

From Donner Team



## From the Coordinator's Desk

The exchange program with Sweden began in the year 2008. It was a new assignment for me as training in-charge. This was the first time I was going to interact with Foreign Delegates and had a lot of apprehensions, butterflies in my stomach and needed a lot of hand holding. Lakshmi di and Shilpa di were like a pillar of support and they mentored and trained me to do a good job.

The role of an exchange coordinator is full of challenges; one is holding many strings together. It is a meticulous planning of the entire process that can spell success; a slip can lead to chaos and disturbance. But along with challenges comes the excitement, experience of handling various situations, learning from past mistakes and improvisation of the program.

The coordinator's role has created many opportunities of meeting people, visiting various likeminded organizations; exposure to the best practices in the educational field, going to Sweden, the list can go on..... The most memorable

experience of my life is when I accompanied the first group of TOS exchange students this year to Sweden. Their energy and enthusiasm was infectious, their confidence level was something to be proud of. Their fundamentals were very clear, "You want us to listen to you, then you got to see things from our perspective, you got to be one of us". And soon I was just not their teacher in charge, but their friend and guide as well.

Every group that comes from Sweden or goes from here teaches me something new and my effort has been to constantly improvise and upgrade this program.

The challenges of this job have been instrumental in my growth and travelling to Sweden twice has boosted my confidence level and broadened my horizons.

This project won the jury's award this year in the World Education Summit. It was a proud moment for me and it has really motivated me to set a bench mark for this exchange program.

Baishaki Bapat



# Debriefing TOS student visit to Donner

## 21<sup>st</sup> April To 7<sup>th</sup> May 2012

At Orchid, we recognize that it is imperative for our learning systems to gear and prepare students to be global citizens. The importance of crossing boundaries, relating, connecting and communicating are imperative HR skills required for students to adapt and adjust successfully in a multi cultural scenario .Our exchange initiatives provides first hand experiences and insights into the host country culture and enables them to witness how it influences people's behavior. We see these exchanges as helping individuals to hone attitudes like empathy, sensitization and awareness in turn contributing to enhancement of our teaching program.

The student exchange programme began in September 2010. 9 students along with their tow teachers from Donner Gymnasiet, Gotland visited Pune.

The program was a huge success, and it was agreed mutually to continue the student exchange between the two schools. Since then, there has been an annual exchange of 15 -20 students along with 2 -3 faculty members from either side.

The objectives for TOS participants who are part of this exchange are multifold, namely,

- experience a new culture, the traditions and value system, make friends across borders
- see and study the rich heritage sites of Gotland's medieval town, and

also understand the issues concerning conservation

- draw parallel to the sites in India
- do hands on programme at Donner's media studies department
- enjoy the bounties of nature and understand the innate commitment of the citizens on this island to preserve it in its totality.

The group went through a series of orientation programs as preparation for the journey, of which a session on intercultural perspectives is of utmost importance as it prepares them for experiencing a new culture.

The feedback and debrief session with the students of April 2012 exchange revealed an insight which is far beyond the classroom teaching and text book.

To quote some of them:

### **Akhil Andrews**

“I had an idea that the children [in western countries] are not bonded with their parents, but not so, they have the love.

The Donner Classroom was similar to Orchid School's classroom in many ways... But, what I found most interesting was that the teacher was there just to guide them, the students did their own research and interpreted outcome hence learning in a very creative way.

If you compare both Swedish Student-teacher relationship and Indian Student-teacher relationship you will

find that the Swedes do not find it necessary to inhibit or show respect in terms of speech i.e. Calling (sir, madam)but have it mutually instilled in them. They feel and practice respect in terms of actions and not speech. Whereas Indian schools have a age old culture of respect and hierarchy”.

**Aalok Bhatwadekar**

“I think that this visit has made me more confident of myself and I would like to keep this confidence and build upon it. It has also made me aware of different cultures and thoughts.

I helped my peers whenever needed. I was a positive person who helped to bind the group. I also interacted with my host family and with the other students from other schools”.

**Anisha Sharma**

“This showed me how much we need to be more independent and understand our responsibilities. It showed me how getting freedom doesn't always mean to do anything and everything you wish to. There is some responsibility which has to come with it.

As said, it has helped me realize a few responsibilities and made me understand how one needs to be serious in studies as well as do other fun work as well.

Interaction was immense. Helped support some people when they felt low. Sometimes I was a cause for them to be that way but then I tried to get things right”.

**Snehal Barhate**

“Being away from home teaches anyone self dependency. Personally



being away from home in another country and living with people I have never met before I became more self aware of what I have been doing and how I was mingling in with the society and my contribution to the family. I did miss home but I loved the feeling of being responsible for myself and my actions and I became more mature. I started doing my own laundry and helped wash the dishes and at times I cooked. I kept my room pretty clean.

Professionally I became a more responsible student and learned the importance of deadlines and took an active part in discussions voicing out my opinions. During group projects I had a desire to take leadership”.

**Aparna Bose**

“They shared their personal lives and made me think of my life – that in some ways I am privileged and in others, not”

**Srinidhi Bavani**

“Made me a bit more confident as I was away from my family”.

“Before the trip I thought I will know the Swedes better but I know this group better. Majenta Ruby wall has been broken”.

To summarize, collaborative learning is the need of the hour, the more we open our doors to the world and also step out of our comfort zones to embrace other cultures, traditions, practices, methodologies, the better will be our performance in the global market and our future citizens will aim at a world where there is peaceful co existence, where one draws upon each other's strengths and minimizes the weaknesses.





# PERSPECTIVES



HOST FAMILY  
SOCIETY  
BOARD  
EDUCATIONISTS  
TEACHERS  
STUDENT  
INSTITUTION  
PARENTS

## Living With A Swedish Family

My host's name was Joel and he lived in Visby. He had a lavish duplex apartment. He lives with his mother, who is an architect. His father, a renowned filmmaker lives in the South of Sweden due to the nature of his work. His sister lives in South Africa.

When Karan and I first met the hosts at the dinner, I thought they were a bit nervous, and they actually were. The main reason behind their nervousness was "how comfortable would our house be for our Indian guests, what type of food will they like? what are their dinner timings?" But after 2 days or so, they became less formal, frank and more relaxed. They then told us about their lives, their grievances, and the history of Sweden and also how the crimes are same in both India and Sweden.

They also told us why they leave their children alone to do what they like after a certain age. It is then that we realized it was due to the fact that they wanted them to experience life, the consequences of their own decisions so that they become more confident and self-reliant. These times together helped Karan and me to gain insight into their culture. This bonding also brought us much closer and we had a lot of fun after that,

We visited a vintage car museum, went out for dinner, watched movies and saw TV together and also ate a lot of ice-cream. My experience was great. I got an insight into the Swedish culture, like, -how do the kids show respect to their parents, their culture, society etc Our host mom also prepared some traditional Swedish dishes. They loved our Indian gifts which we brought as souvenirs from India. It was like a home and family across the border. Frankly I didn't want to leave Sweden at all!!

Akshay

TOS Student



## Responsible

This trip has helped me gain a greater sense of responsibility as I have been completely independent and have taken decisions on my own, keeping in mind the consequences. I had to be alert knowing I was completely accountable for myself. I have discovered my adventurous side and have become more self-reliant and independent. I have learnt to become more flexible and have become more social.

I have also begun to participate more enthusiastically and with greater vigour than before. My confidence has been enhanced throughout this trip as I presented my work on many occasions. I realized that every occasion is an opportunity to voice and share your perspectives and I did not want to lose out on that. And I saw that I could stand in front of an unknown crowd and speak sense.

I have become more organized with my work and with my thoughts and it has helped me stick to deadlines and understand their importance in the smooth functioning of any schedule, program or society. This was the first opportunity I got to manage my

finances for a period of two weeks and I think I managed my finances very well by keeping track of my expenses.

I believe the above changes have shown my growth as an individual and I am proud to see them.

Looking back at my time in Sweden, I regret not having kept my parents informed on a regular basis. I think this was because my parents gave me a lot of inner strength and so I was able to overcome the urge of calling my parents frequently. My parents perceived me as an arrogant child. I guess it is important to keep the lines of communication open, all the time, so everybody knows your intentions.

Aalok

TOS Student



## But, that's not fair...or 'Is it?'

My trip to Sweden gave me a different perspective about Sweden in its totality. One of these insights was that of Donner and it's students.

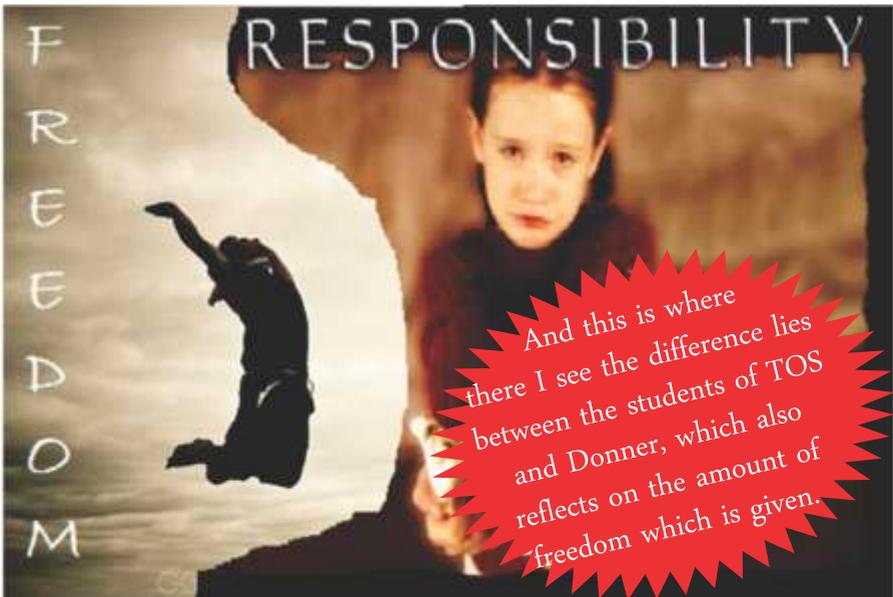
As children, we often say "But that's not fair", and when we first saw the students at Donner we said and felt the same thing! Each one of them had cell phones, they were allowed to do what they wished to, as they wished to, had an optional day on Wednesday, that is they could actually choose if they wanted to come to the Gymnasiet or stay at home and so on.

Of course the first impression isn't always right as we don't know the story behind the truth or the whole story either. After a few days of interaction, we found out the way the children behave, that is with teachers and with their work. We found out that they earned their freedom because of the responsibilities that they took for it. Though they were allowed to do as they pleased, they always remembered that there is some work for them and that they need to finish it for their benefit and no one else's. They are independent and dependable.

Now at Orchid school, the teachers and children have interactions similar to that of Donner, the only difference being that the students are, in a way, dependent on the teacher. We always need someone to tell us what is to be done. We may know our duties and responsibilities, but the problem is that knowing isn't everything. One must also work on, or according to, what they know and have learned.

Anisha

TOS Student



## Varied Lifestyles



The lifestyle of a particular person or country differs from country to country and person to person.

To understand this difference, one must go and live with them as a part of their country and not as a tourist. Tourists, who go around the world, clicking pictures and seeing the place as set for them, are very different from students, who go as a part of an exchange program.

The very first difference is that when you are a tourist, you are treated lavishly and have no work. You are tagged as a guest. You live in hotels and don't plunge into the lifestyle of the country. However; when one goes as part of an exchange program, he lives with a Swedish family and has a daily routine to follow, which includes buy grocery, making your own food and even washing your dishes! It was interesting how a simple thing like cooking could change my whole experience. It brought me closer to the family in terms of miniscule habits and preferences. For instance when I would reach home from Donner, it would be dinner time. Both my host parents used to work ,so, they had to come home and cook dinner. So I helped them as we met in the evening and had a bite together or sometimes just had cheese sandwich if they were out.

A tourist witnesses everything that is portrayed but never thinks how it affects the people of the country or even why it is used in their day to day life. Simply relating to the habits of the society is hard to relate to. Although, when a person stays as a local, he realizes it's importance and can easily relate to it. Staying on the country side, I found it a little similar to how Vikings influenced them in terms of the basic day to day activities in some cases.

A person going on a trip to stay as a local can comprehend and learn a lot from the trip. The main learning is that of adaptation. To adjust into a family and follow their routine and everyday habits is quite a challenging task at first, but with an open mind, one realizes that it is through this that the essence of any city can be felt. One of the big challenges that we adapted to was to have dinner at 5 or 6. It was too early for us and if we looked out of the window, we could see it was bright and the sun was still there.

How can we forget the importance of language? Visiting the city along with a local can give you the upper hand in areas where language becomes a problem. Some shops in Visby considered us as locals and would start talking to us in Swedish. There is an exchange of culture when you live as a local. A lot of quality time is spent with the people, conversations about the different customs and different ways of life are exchanged and experienced. This helps us both understand each other. It is what will help to bridge borders and restore peace in this world! I think living as a local is fun ,you get to learn a lot and brings about changes in your own lifestyle too. It is also fun because the people you stay with are very helpful and tell you the best places to visit!

I would rather stay as a local than go as a tourist.

Aseem

TOS Student



## Donner and Orchid: Can they be same side of the coin?



Donner Gymnasiet is a secondary school in Sweden. Orchid is a school in Pune. They are similar in a lot of ways and also quite different. The difference is generally because of the culture and location.

But Orchid can adapt a lot of things to make everything smoother and better. For example Donner students have a free day to study or ask their doubts. A whole free day is just not possible due to the vast syllabus at Orchid. But we can explore the possibility of having a free period each week or every Saturday specifically for meeting the teachers and clearing our doubts.

Sell coffee or tea with restriction of only 1 or 2 cups per person per day. I agree that it can be addictive but it can also be very relaxing when we are stressed, especially before a test. It also calls for the opportunity to sit together, chat and unwind.

Another great concept would be to have a lot more of interaction time during language classes. At our school, we focus more on completing the syllabus. I am not convinced about the benefits of this if we are unable to attain the proficiency that is expected of us. These small things will definitely make a difference in enhancing our program.

Although such small things can be introduced, we cannot include anything major because of cultural and education system difference. It can create havoc and we don't want to lose our cultural values. A little bit of mixing is ok and if we are able to identify these exact points where we can mix the cultures, we will make a significant difference in our society for the good, make schooling even more relevant and fun.

Rahul  
TOS Student

## **Travelling vs a life living in a different country**

I have lived in America for approximately nine to ten years, so I know a little about the western culture and lifestyle. I have often travelled abroad on holiday after moving to India

Each time, my family and I would travel abroad we would stay in a hotel, go on some sightseeing, visit amusement parks and have fun; but I realize I have never got to know anything much about the culture or lifestyle of that place. But, when you live in a native's home and experience how they live every day, talk to them, live with them, you get a different learning experience altogether.

When you travel to a country you go as a tourist or just a visitor. Those who live there and have imbibed the culture are the citizens of the country.

When you travel abroad you are treated luxuriously as you are staying in a hotel where you don't have to do anything on your own as everything is done by the hotel employees. When you live abroad on your own or with a native, you are treated like a local person and you live the way others do so you get familiar to the true lifestyle of the country.

When you travel overseas, everything is new, so you don't really know about the country. The little research or reading you do before going there is generally about the weather, so you are prepared to dress accordingly. By living in a country you come to know about its culture through observing your surroundings and by giving attention to detail about the way people dress, interact, their choices and the reasons for them.

When you travel, you stay within your comfort zone and do not come out of it. You do things and visit the places that are comfortable to you. But when you live like a native, you have to come out of your own comfort zone, adapt, adjust and do things their way.

One thing that we should remember is that different countries have different cultures and everything is for a good reason. When you go abroad and see a girl wear small shorts you think that she should not wear them or that is so cool! But it is actually their culture that allows them to wear such clothes. Adopting such things might not be allowed in your country. So, there is a difference between travelling and living abroad.

When you travel, you just observe, but when you actually live in it you absorb it and take away some good experiences.

Natasha

TOS Student

## Donner and the Orchid School Can we adopt a few practices?

At Donner there are no compulsory, regular subjects like Math, Science, English, Hindi, etc. Each student chooses a programme and they specialize in it. Some of the programmes are Child and Recreation programme, Natural Science programme, Media programme, Hotel and Restaurant programme, etc. There are continuous opportunities for hands-on activities for the students.

For example: The Social Studies students had to guide us through a tour in Visby and tell us about the history behind each monument, the restaurant students had to prepare dinner for us for our first two days in Sweden. I think these experiences are very useful as they accelerate the learning process for the students. They provide them with a context in which they can actually put into practice all that they have learned and that makes their learning even more complete. It also enables them to be confident about what they have learnt.



Our experience at Donner was amazing. The students were older to us but were very approachable. The teacher-student relationship in Donner is very open and friendly, just like Orchid. Another similarity between Donner and TOS would be that both the schools have a very free atmosphere. This was about the similarities.

One of the things that impressed me greatly and I would like Orchid to adopt from Donner is the continuous opportunity provided for experiential learning. It is simpler for children to learn things when they do it practically. By the inclusion of such small things like this Orchid and Donner which are quite alike can be the same, and become better.

Sakshi

TOS Student

## 2 Institutions, some similarities and some possibilities!!!



When we travelled to Sweden, we collaborated with Donner Gymnasiet. It is really a school worth visiting and studying at. I was impressed with much that I saw and experienced.

There are many features, facilities and attitudes at Donner that I wish we could adapt and adopt here at Orchid. However, I realise that will not be possible for many reasons-both practical and cultural.

Donner is a school where a lot of freedom is granted to the students and they are allowed to do as they wish to. Along with all the freedom that they are given, they also have responsibilities of their own. It appears that they study for themselves and not for others. Accountability for their actions, decisions, their future and its consequences lies in their hands alone. They are able to use their freedom maturely.

Wi-Fi is freely available and the students are allowed to bring their phones, Laptops and other devices to school. They can keep them and access them during classes as well. Donner has a big premise, where

there is place to stroll, relax and pass time.

The teacher-student relationship at Donner is friendly and open. The students can go up to the teacher and talk about whatsoever they wish to. Similarly, at Orchid the rapport between individuals is more or less the same.

Acknowledging that the age group is widely different, i.e. while Donner students are between 17 and 19 Orchid students are from ages 3 to 16, the amount of freedom and activity is bound to differ. Herein adapting some of the policies of Donner is not possible for Orchid.

At Donner, Wednesday's were free days and the students could come to school to clear their doubts, or stay at home and study. I see the possibilities of Orchid being able to adapt such a policy of a free day

Orchid could also adapt the "Café Donner" idea. The Café is a good place to engage in group discussions, get together in school, unwind and avail of food as well.

To conclude, it strikes me that each place implements policies and practises that suit their realities and needs. No matter however much they may be attractive and enticing, they may not work everywhere.



Saurav  
TOS Student

## **Putting aside the lens and looking through your eyes!!!**

Being a tourist allows you to visit other countries and learn about their culture and their lives through a lens. You go to a place, live in a hotel, do a bit of sightseeing and go back home. Tourists never experience the essence of the country, the essence that lies in it's people.

As an exchange student, we lived in Swedish homes with the people, fitted in as family. We ate typical Swedish food at their regular meal times. Nothing was done out of their comfort zone. During those two weeks, we tried to live like every day, average Swedes. In doing so, we experienced their culture, soaked in their deep-rooted philosophies and values.

As a tourist, locals leave no avenue undiscovered when it comes to our comfort. We see everything as smooth and perfect. They go out of their way to ensure the experience is flawless as far as possible. As exchange students, we experienced their everyday problems and worries along with all the “perfect” moments. We went grocery shopping, helped with the cooking, laundry and other such activities. Swedish chores, at least some of them, are quite different from Indian chores due to the space available and the temperature difference. I helped my host family change their winter tyres to summer tyres. We assisted them with the gardening, plumbing, painting-activities not considered chores in India since we have workers specialized in these areas.

Despite the disparity in chores and way of life, we also learned about the similarities between Indians and Swedes. We understood their views on family, on relationships, through our interactions and conversations over dinner. The exposure we gained opened us up to a whole new perspective of European living it now, with an Indian twist.

Sanjana  
TOS Student



## Is the perspective of the tourist the same as that of an exchange student?

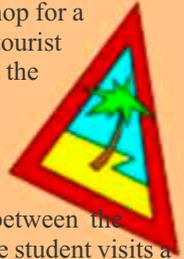
Everybody loves a good holiday; whether it is to visit a historical monument, for relaxation, or for pilgrimage. When someone visits a place as a tourist, they visit the famous tourism destinations, try some of the local cuisine and shop for a little souvenir to carry back home as a memory. Through the trip, the tourist gets a feel about the local language, weather and a little bit about the culture of that region.

But, have any of us ever wondered about the daily lives of the people or about how they spend their free time? A tourist generally does not visit a place with these objectives; an exchange student does!

This trip to Donner Gymnasiet brought light to the difference between the perspective as a tourist and that of an exchange student. An exchange student visits a place to learn about the lives of the people, the etiquettes, the customs and religion of the place. Living with local family gives the student a deep insight on daily life beginning with the breakfast time to the kind of recreational activities they pursue.

As an exchange participant, students also see the region from the point of view of the locals. Apart from visiting the tourist hotspots, they get an opportunity to visit places which are not frequented by tourists. This creates for many a learning opportunities.. Students also learn to do their own errands, to be responsible with money and be independent in the absence of parental guidance. They become conscious of the fact that in addition to representing their school, they are also representing their country.

Shrinidhi  
TOS Student



## Wave of Changes

The expedition to Sweden was very unique, special and useful for my family and I. The entire process from the beginning to the end was a learning process and a great time for self assessment.

To be away from your family, on whom you have been dependent on for your entire life, is a challenging thing!

I never used to do my laundry by myself

I am a born spender and shopper.

Left to myself, I never thought I could be on time.

During this trip, I ended up astounding myself:

when I took charge of my own clothes,

when I spent my money wisely, I realized that I know how to handle money, prioritized and did not spend recklessly.

I also learned that I can be on time, when it is demanded of me. We were allowed to roam around until 9:30 pm in Stockholm and I surprised myself by coming back on time.

When I realized that I have matured and have begun to take responsibilities for my own. For my parents, it was an experience of letting go and giving me more freedom with the belief and confidence that everything would be okay. Now I definitely have more freedom and I know how to use it responsibly. I am far more

confident of myself. My sister learned the value of her “didi”(elder sister) and now not only does she respect me but also is glad that I am home and with her.

I am really thankful for this trip as it showed me that I am capable of being on my own though I missed my mom and dad.



Snehal

TOS Student



## My fabulous Experience

How many times does it happen that you think of one thing and something completely different happens? As I pondered upon this thought, I realized that this has happened to me quite often. I thought that the Swedish family will be very different from my family in India.

In my host family everybody was independent; but, they cared for each other a lot. Especially my host mom, she was the best. She would always ask us what she could do for us.” Are u comfortable here?”, “Do you want me to change anything?”, and many more such questions. She was so loving and caring. She was like my mother. She even bought ketchup for me, as I needed ketchup with every single thing I ate! This really touched me.

My host sister was also very nice. She was very open with us. It was a lot of fun, watching movies together, partying, and jumping on the trampoline in the garden! My host family also took me to a dog show! It was amazing. I could see almost every dog breed in Sweden.

The female dog named Ulva was the cutest of all. We watched five Harry Potter movies and Kung Fu Panda!!We went for shopping in Visby many times.

My host brother and father used to help the mother in everything like vacuuming, doing the laundry, making dinner, washing the car, taking the dog out for a walk and so on. They were very helpful and kind.

When I left my host family, I had mixed feelings. Majorly, I was sad. I almost made my host mother cry. I was so nostalgic. My family was so similar to that of my host family.

In short, my experience in my host family was Superb!



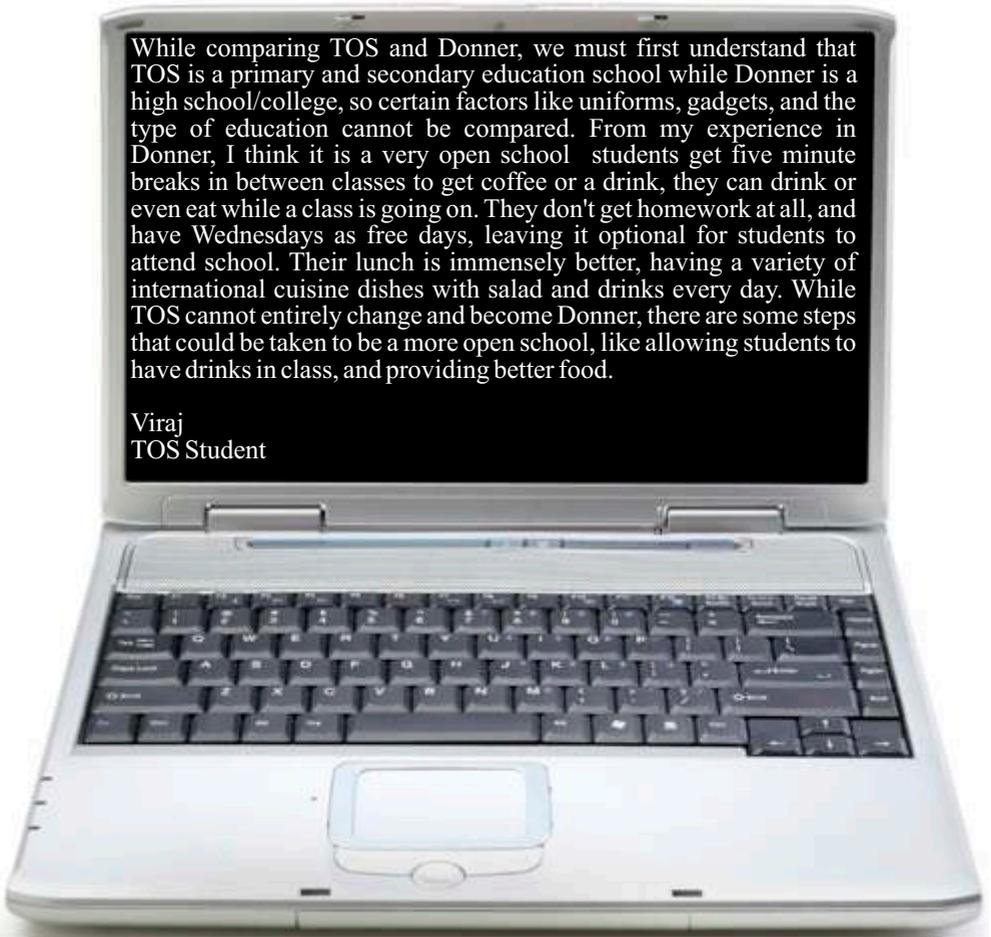
Tanvi  
TOS Student



## TOS and Donnergymnasiet

While comparing TOS and Donner, we must first understand that TOS is a primary and secondary education school while Donner is a high school/college, so certain factors like uniforms, gadgets, and the type of education cannot be compared. From my experience in Donner, I think it is a very open school students get five minute breaks in between classes to get coffee or a drink, they can drink or even eat while a class is going on. They don't get homework at all, and have Wednesdays as free days, leaving it optional for students to attend school. Their lunch is immensely better, having a variety of international cuisine dishes with salad and drinks every day. While TOS cannot entirely change and become Donner, there are some steps that could be taken to be a more open school, like allowing students to have drinks in class, and providing better food.

Viraj  
TOS Student



## A fellow traveller with students - some Insights

Travelling helps us to broaden our horizon, change mindsets and provide ample opportunities for learning. With this vision in mind, 'The Sweden India Teacher Exchange Program' was started in the year 2008. After a few fruitful rounds of faculty exchange from either side, this program was extended to the student community with very clear achievable objectives and goals.

20<sup>th</sup> April 2012, 18 Std. X students embarked on a journey which was new, challenging, exciting and enriching. These kids along with 3 teachers were part of the first student exchange program to Gotland (Sweden). It was a fruitful learning experience for all. The new found independence charged them up and there never was a dull moment throughout the trip.

In order to acclimatize to the new surroundings, we spent the first three days at 'Snackan' holiday cottage close to the sea shore. The peaceful and beautiful locale, the solitude were the perfect start to help the group bond with each other. Coffee sessions and midnight snacking, jokes and laughter, sharing and caring brought us close to each other.

The unique feature of this group was that they accepted each other non-judgmentally. There were kids from two different divisions, and the loyalty and support towards their class mates were impeccable. They soon crossed borders, which proved that children can adjust and adapt themselves more easily than adults.

They appeared to be having a really good time, very casual on the surface, away from home having a merry time, but all along, an internal churning was going on. Discussions and debate on various issues reflected deep thinking and processing.

Children are our best teachers and we too realized this soon enough. They accepted us when we accepted them as they were, being their buddy and confidant made them trust and respect us. Soon we got used to their pranks and mischief and joined in their jokes and laughter. Now, they accepted our feedback and advice positively and also at times our reprimand as well. Mutual respect is a foundation for a long lasting relationship and love and affection can bridge all gaps.

Their confidence level was really high and was evident during travelling, the ease with each they maneuvered their way around at the different airports, in their interaction with the Swedish students and teachers, in making their PPT presentation, conversing in English, adjusting to their host parents.

When given the freedom they behaved responsibly. While in Stockholm, they were allowed to go for a walk by themselves to eat a burger or an ice cream. The loosening of rope slightly fetched amazing results. They stuck to their deadlines of reporting back, mostly before time, went out in groups and set their own limits.

To summarize, this trip went off smoothly without any major hiccups and each one has grown in their own way, learnt life skills which will surely manifest in their adult life, made life time friends and have been great ambassadors of our school, city and country. They will be the best mentors for the next group which goes to Sweden as they can proudly boast of a rich repertoire of knowledge and experience.

Baishaki Bapat  
TOS Staff



## Student of Donner and TOS

I visited Sweden as a student of The Orchid School: me along with 17 of my friends were all a part of this team. Our hosts were all two years elder to us; I guess that was the basic difference between us.

Other than age, much of it was similar.

We had similar opinions of many related topics.

The students of Donner were used to a more open background.

I don't think we Indians are frank enough & talk openly with our friends.

Donner students were much more independent than us.

They themselves had to decide what's good for them and worked to achieve their goals, unlike us, who mostly are dragged into a situation we are not ready to deal with.

We made great friends back there in Sweden, most of us had quite similar thoughts and feelings as their's.

We have a lot to learn from them, and I guess we left them with a lot too. Despite my initial nervousness, and my apprehensions as to how I would socialize with them ,finally it was all just right. We all had loads of fun in spite of our differences

Mohit

TOS Student



## Spirit of Sweden

I desired to go to Sweden ever since I joined The Orchid School. A truly wonderful learning opportunity, I thought! My dream came true this year and I was all set to go. Leaving family and especially my kids behind was not easy but in the mind of my mind I was waiting to be away and to be myself.

What will Sweden be like? I kept thinking all the while in the journey. I have lived abroad for a long time before and hence knew what to expect. But this was different...I was going out on a job. My job was to observe and absorb all that I could. Think and assimilate what came across. And ultimately to come back home enlightened and aware.

Being with my colleagues and with the bunch of teenagers from the school was already very enlivening. Donner Gymnasiet was really not a stranger once we started being there. We connected very soon and exchanging ideas began immediately.

Their set up, infrastructure and mainly their approach toward work and life, I thought was worth mentioning here. Although we can almost always crib about the space crunch and other things we easily sense around us, a lot can be achieved even when the space is not in abundance and the weather is not very pleasant. It is all in our minds! I thought.

The preparedness and the amount of cheer the teachers brought in to their spaces everyday made many things possible and achievable. Being on time everywhere and every time helped them make the most out of their day.

The teacher was not a "know all" person. She could easily ask for more time and could get back with the right answer. The teacher was not supreme. In fact it was hard to make out who the teacher was in the group of people waiting outside the classroom eager to go inside. Inside the classroom, no "teaching/lecturing" was taking place. But rather "learning" was happening through interactions and discussions. Classrooms looked cheerful yet very quiet and structured. Everyone talked and they talked a lot. But yet there was so much of peace and silence. Waiting for their turn to talk and for other necessities and 'listening' to the other person carefully, seemed to be in their blood. They must be inheriting this gene by now.

Ashwini  
TOS Staff



## मीठी यादें



‘उत्साहित हृदय से स्वीडन जाने की तैयारी करते हुए स्वीडन की धरती पर कब कदम रखा , पता ही नहीं चला । स्वीडन की धरती पर पहुँचकर वहाँ के नज़ारे और हरियाली हमें अभिभूत कर रही थी तथा ठंडी हवाओं के झोंके शरीर में ठिठुरन पैदा कर रहे थे । बियोन और हरमन के गर्मजोशी के साथ किए आवभगत तथा एंकी और उनके शिष्यों द्वारा परोसे गए लज़ीज पकवान ने यात्रा की सारी थकान को छू- मंतर कर दिया । होस्ट फ़ैमलिज़ ने अपनी मेहमाननवाज़ी से हम सभी भारतीयों को जैसे

उनके परिवार का हिस्सा बना लिया था , जिस कारण स्वीडन की संस्कृति और सभ्यता हम नज़दीकी से देख पाए । कैमिला से मेरा एक अटूट रिश्ता कायम हो गया , जिसके आड़े न तो सरहद की दीवारें आईं न ही भाषा की दीवारें । इंडो –स्वीडिश खाना खाते- खाते दुनिया के हर कोने की , ज़ज्बातों की , मुश्किलों की और खुशी की बातें होती थीं । उस वक्त मैंने महसूस किया कि भले ही देश बदल जाए , लोग बदल जाए किंतु रिश्तों की अहमियत , एक-दूसरे के प्रति प्यार व चिंता जैसी सारी भावनाएँ एक समान हैं ।

अतिथि देवो भवः सिर्फ़ भारतीय संस्कृति की पहचान नहीं है बल्कि दुनिया की हर संस्कृति अपने मेहमानों का स्वागत दिल खोलकर करती है । वहाँ जाकर बड़ी शिद्दत से मैंने यह महसूस किया । इसी सिलसिले मे मैं एनली का ज़िक्र करना चाहूँगी , जिन्होंने मेहमाननवाज़ी कर हम सबके दिलों में एक खास जगह बना ली । स्वयं भी वह एक कार्यरत महिला होने बावज़ूद उन्होंने अपना महत्त्वपूर्ण समय निकालकर हम सबको ना सिर्फ़ भारतीय व्यंजनों का लुत्फ़ उठवाया बल्कि स्टाकहोम के विभिन्न दर्शनीय स्थलों का भी नज़ारा करवाया ।

यहाँ पर मुझे लगा कि लक्ष्मी कुमार दी ने अपने व्यवहार तथा कर्मों से जो बीज स्वीडन और भारत के मिलन के बोए हैं उसके फल हम कितनी खूबसूरती से और चाव से चख रहे हैं ।

माधुरी सारस्वत  
शिक्षक  
द ओर्किडस्कूल



## Living in Sweden

Living in a Swedish home with a Swedish family ought to have been a very strange and different experience (after all we all knew that they did not open up to strangers freely) but it was not. Maybe because I knew the family I was going to stay with, I knew I would not only be accepted but welcomed. Yet the hesitation remained because it would still be a new experience.

I was very glad to find that my friend and I were taken into our host family's home, not as guests but friends. We were never left out of any activity they did as a family. We joined them in their daily routine chores, preparing breakfast to washing up to raking leaves in the garden and even changing car tires. In a way, we felt part of the family.

I personally learned a lot from my host family friend, not just about the education system there but about the politics as well as my friend is the chairperson of Youth political party. We got to hear his political views every morning at breakfast. For me, it was a different experience because we do not usually see such intense political views being discussed in our age group.

Though we had a great many wonderful experiences in

their home, I also got to know more about the social problems there. I learnt about the young people's addiction to snuff and cigarettes and the high unemployment rate. I came to know of many family problems as well, especially with children of divorced parents, and parents who have remarried.

I do know that these problems are there in our country as well but it seemed to be very common there. Maybe because people are so independent from such a young age and live separately, it is difficult for them to adjust to others' viewpoints or to make compromises.

I have learned a lot and will cherish my time there. I know there is yet a lot to learn and now I can take an initiative to learn more about other people.

Aparna  
TOS Student



## Home away from Home

My experience with my host family, from the time I first had dinner with my host family to the final farewell, much water had flown through the bridge...

The following article is about my experience with my host family in a distant country with a completely different language, lifestyle, climate and people. My host family made my stay in Sweden very exciting and comfortable. I always looked forward to the long hours spent at the dinner table talking about subjects ranging from education and lifestyle, to marriage and career. We also exchanged photographs to understand their family and events. Narrating my day's incidents and hearing theirs also added a "family like" feeling which powered me for each day I spent without my own, biological parents. They made my comfort and happiness a top priority on their lists and ensured my safety. Let me cite an example here which touched me. I understood that Moms are after all moms where ever they are, which ever culture or tradition you follow. My host mom had three children and the youngest of them was the student with whom I spent time. He was to relocate to Stockholm for higher education and a job. Just like how moms here are concerned about their children, my host mom was also concerned and anxious about how he would be in a far away place and was so comfortable talking her heart out to me, telling me how she would miss him. My relation with my host dad, mom and the fellow student was like my dad, my mom and my brother respectively. Such a homely environment gave rise to several discussions and questions that both were equally happy to open up and share. With them, I soaked in the true Swedish values and culture that are priceless to me and I cherish dearly.

Akhil

TOS Student



## Living as a Local

The lifestyle of a person differs in each country. To realise the lifestyle of a place, we need to live with the people of the country.

Tourists do not see this lifestyle as they go, click pictures and live in a hotel. A student understands the lifestyle as he stays with another student of the country.

One difference is that as a tourist, we are treated as guests and have no work to do. We go to relax, view and return. As a student, we need to be self-dependant and work for what we want.



A tourist sees only the top of the ice berg, not understanding what lies below the simple habits of the society. Going as a student and living with the locals gives a fairly good idea of this difference.

A person going on a trip to stay as a local can comprehend and learn a lot from the trip. One of the learnings is that of adaptation. One needs to adapt with the daily routine of the family and understand the lifestyle as well. To be accepted, one needs to be open to things

and routines that may be different and new.

There is an exchange of culture when you live as a local. Living in with the locals gives you a good time to interact and talk about the differences and similarities between the countries.

I think living as a local is fun and you get to learn a lot and get changes in your own lifestyle too.

Malvika

TOS Student



## Fitting into a Swedish Family



Staying with a Swedish family gave a really good insight into the Swedish culture and lifestyle.

At the dinner on 23rd of April, when we first met our host family, I was extremely nervous. One would ideally say that the Indian going to stay would be the one who is very nervous, however that is not true.

Yes, I was nervous to meet my family and live with them, however they were equally nervous, if not more. I thus realized that worry isn't always one sided. They too had their apprehensions ,not knowing my likes and dislikes ,habits and preferences.

During the dinner, Akshay and I, interacted with the family. We talked about the difference between our schools, we told them about India and her various cultures and about our families. We tried to get to know each other well. We realized in all the different habits ,so many values were similar. Having found this connection, we did not take too much time to get along.

Once we shifted in to live with the family, I saw that they were extremely open and welcoming. It did not take me much time to feel at home.

They took us all around the island and showed us many places. We went for bowling together, visited a vintage car museum and did many other fun stuff together. This experience was a lot of fun and the family experience made it better. I hope to meet them again.

Karan  
TOS Student

## Reflection from Swedish Teachers, February 2010

“I think that everyone of us did our best. That goes for both TOS and Donner staff. We are all interested in to make this exchange as good as possible and that effects the whole situation. It was great to stay together with a Swedish colleague as I think that everyone had an urgent need to talk in Swedish about all that happened throughout a day. But I must admit that my biggest challenge during the stay in India was to cope with my Swedish colleague's point of view in several questions.”



“This exchange has enriched me as human being, women and teacher. I would have loved to stay longer to have time to go deeper in several interesting issues. The visit at the model village(Ralegan Siddhi) for example is something that I would love to know more about. It would have been nice to spend some more time with the counselors at TOS and to try to find solutions to their problems and also to meet the teachers in the resource room and work closer to the children. And so on.....”

### Susanne Reich

“I thought the accommodation with families were excellent! You get to know new people and learn about India in a different way. It also opens your eyes and makes you realize that everyone is very equal in terms of thinking and living.

The schedule was good but since it's hard to know the names of the organizations it would be nice to know if it's school or some other type. It would be also nice to just have at most two visits per day, because you get a lot of new impressions witch you would like process.

It's good to have almost 3 weeks.”



### Monika Rolewska

## A Trip Outwards, A Journey Within

Looking back, two years ago, seems a long time and yet there is much that feels like it was just yesterday. I guess what makes this trip feel eternal; feel so fresh, is the depth of meaning it brings forth in its totality.

The excitement revolving round the exchange is all encompassing; one can see traces of involvement in those who have returned in different aspects-be it their confidence, teaching-learning didactics, interpersonal connections and so much more. When I sit back now to think what sets this exchange apart, what makes it leave an impact that is so over whelming and long lasting, what makes this journey so unanimously dear, what makes it linger on.....

The trip to Sweden has been in many ways an opportunity of a life time. Impressions that have a deep impact, learning that cannot be easily explained through words, it is the situations, the interactions, the observations, the translation or interpretations, that make one look with newer perspectives and makes me feel enriched in many ways. I cannot put my finger on one thing, I am unable to narrow down to what was the best for me, but what does come back are flashes of vivid impressions.

.....Of walking into Donner for the first time, yet have so many familiar faces around. Of telling myself that these are not just people, these are people who know me, know where I come from, understand me in my context.

.....Of sitting in the classes, watching closely the nature of interactions, seeing that when the adult clearly knows what they want out of each student, their world narrows down and widens out just in that area, all else gets lost and is irrelevant.

.....Of seeing that the learner exits such a space with high accountability upon his/her shoulders, well knowing that what happened within that space mattered to the adult.

.....That there need not be a power distance between the learner and the teacher, it can be an equal equation as long as you are comfortable that learning can happen two ways. As a facilitator, there is a strong belief and conviction that a pattern will emerge when you believe in the need for its creation. Its beauty lies in the way the ends have been held on , the threads woven together, the welcoming of diverse perspectives, openness to varying styles. In a calm, learner rich environment, an enthralling, equal relationship exists where learning takes place incidentally.

.....Of realizing that learning is a process that can take place anywhere as long as one is open to see it that way.

.....Of comprehending that the open ness, willingness to extend and transparency of sharing “best practices” available at Donner reflects solidly on long years of a mutually trusting, beneficial relationship between organizations that have been and are continually invested.

.... Of the overwhelming similarities that struck me time and again in terms of approach, attitude-amongst staff, teacher-students, ideologies, philosophies amongst Orchid and most schools I interacted with. In the Indian context, it says so much for the levels of far sightedness and advancement at our school. I felt proud ,once again, for being part of such a progressive institution.

....Of experiencing that deep connections are possible with people across borders ,that people are people and stories are similar all around.

And it does not end at just a one time trip, our observations are continuously woven into our realities ,leaders ensure that we bring this spirit back, spread to colleagues and our spaces in relevant ways. The completeness and detail that has gone into it's making explains the crucial role it has played in influencing me, in opening my eyes wider, in broadening my world, both professionally and personally.

Preeti

TOS Staff



# Parent Feedback

## 1. Your views, perspective on this exchange program

I am very happy that The Orchid School is able to provide the opportunity for it's students to be part of an exchange program. I think in today's global world it is very important that today's children develop not just a local or country centric perspective but they also broaden it with exposure and immersion to another culture especially one that is not so similar in many respects to their own. This is will help them develop into a better global citizen hopefully by developing a more open perspective and also broaden their career perspectives for the future by possibly considering global opportunities which they otherwise may not. The way the program is structured facilitates this in my opinion with the combination of sharing of ideas on culture, staying with the locals and then getting involved in class room activity in the international location. I wish the school offered this to all students of Class IX so that some do not feel left out and get de-motivated.

## 2. As a parent/professional how do you think this exchange is going to benefit your child?

We expected the program to teach our child to be independent, to learn about a different culture, to develop openness and understanding to difference between cultures. We expected her to share her thoughts and impressions with the people she met or influenced either in School or with the host family and friends. We expected the program to help our child develop her global outlook even further.

## 3. Any apparent, obvious changes, improvement, development that you have notice in your child post the Sweden trip.

The program has helped Natasha in more ways then we imagined. She developed the ability to be completely independent in the way she conducted herself with the host family(she used to help out with dinners etc). She had a very good sense of what the cost was and this was reflected in her shopping and her choices (she decided to shop at duty free shop thus saving money). I never knew that she understood the value of money so well. She appreciated all the good things she saw in Sweden while also understanding the differences. She saw the reasons for the differences rather than being judgemental and dismissing them as abnormal. Natasha already had developed a more global sense of the world since she spent her formative years in USA and this trip has enabled her to feel a little more different environment which added to her experience in India will definitely help her become a truly global citizen which I hope she becomes.

Salil Amonkar

TOS Parent

# **Experiencing Exchange Programs: 8 Takeaways for Parents!**

Having been through the experience of sending my daughter to Sweden through the exchange program organized by The Orchid School let me share ten takeaways with you. These are not the nuggets of wisdom or best practices that you must grasp attentively. These are takeaways. When you get ready to send your kid next year, beware, you will think about as many of these or encounter additional ones.

Shopping persists even two weeks after the planned deadline! When you are aware of this takeaway, you will enjoy the moment. Else, you may get stressed out. So, read on.

You have two months to go. You plan to finish shopping for your kid's trip abroad two weeks ahead of the travel date. You talk about it loudly with fellow parents, smile and feel better when some of them say, "Yes. That's a good idea. We must do shopping beforehand". Time travels faster than your actions. A day before the date of travel, you meet at least one of the parents in a shopping mall! This time you shake hands and laugh instead of smiling! It does not end there. Before saying bye, you exchange the customary 'We did not go through all these during our school days; anyway take care' thing. You have been habituated to this way of telling bye for several weekends!

Winter clothing goes out of stock when you visit the most frequented shop! You do a lot more of due diligence to find the right shop, its working hours and visit the shop only to find that they are out of stock! Identify two or three options and purchase winter clothing first. Else, you may come up with a fine tuned version of this take away!

Whether you are vegetarian or non-vegetarian you will have equal amount of anxiety! Prove this takeaway wrong by staying calm and curious! Anxiety is not going to help. It is a learning experience! Let our kids not be influenced by our anxieties. Teachers and hosting families do take care of our kids very well.

Be ready to experience 'The Law of Conservation' in one way or the other! As parents, you did all you can and prepare for your kid's travel. You packed some Indian snacks, candies, munchies and all that. While your kid is in Sweden you feel contented about the provisions you have planted in the carryon baggage. Every night, before going to bed you settle with 'Who Moved My Cheese' in bits and pieces until the night before your kid lands in Mumbai. Next day, while unpacking the carryon baggage you are astounded with all the clutter and all of a sudden at the bottom of the baggage you find that your kid has not moved the pack of Khakras a bit!

The older you become the better you are in giving instructions! You guessed it right! I am optimistic but this is a takeaway. Parents are good at giving instructions. These instructions may not be structured all the time. No wonder, sometimes these instructions may not go well with the people who are around! Remember! Even if

you remember all these, you will end up pouring instructions until the bus leaves. Some of them may be repetitive, redundant and yet relevant. You can go only so far. When you learn to let go, your nerves relax your muscles and you get to take a deep breath!

The same baggage weighed twice will weigh the same unless you make change in it's contents! Remember this when you weigh the carryon baggage once before going to bed and do it again the next morning! It is safe and healthy to keep it light. If you tend to increase the weight to the maximum limit by packing more and more stuff, remember, your kid may find it difficult to carry it!

You need technical help on electronic gadgets! We need a lot of technical help in using our cell phones, digital cameras, and other electronic gadgets. Thinking that these are hard to learn, we try our best to teach our kids about using and taking care of all these gadgets.

Many of you must have found that our kids know more features and options on these devices than us. If you haven't yet, you will go through this experience very soon! Don't offer technical help unless your kids ask for it!

Emotional intelligence is inversely proportional to our age until we mature over decades! Whether it is a hot day or a heavy traffic or an unexpected snag in the bus you will see our kids and fellow travelers having fun and looking forward to their travel. On the other hand, we may become jittery about transactional events! Watch out! It is the attitude and keeping in mind the overall purpose that makes the difference!

Do you wonder why I have shared only 8 takeaways? I could think of only eight of them. Write to the editors if you come across anything new!

Raja Bavani  
TOS Parent



## To let go----

When Sanjana excitedly asked me for the permission for Sweden trip, my immediate reply was 'NO'. How could I let her go alone with her classmates for 20 days without me??

The sheer thought was scary. What if she lost her passport? What if she got lost in Sweden? There were too many 'what ifs' crossing my mind.

But, she never gave up. She & her father kept persuading me for the permission. Finally, she was allowed to give her name in the 'Lucky Draw'. Her name was rejected in the first round. I heaved a sigh of relief because now I was not the villain.

Then, out of a blue moon, the school had a second round of 'Lucky Draw' & this time, I was not so lucky. Sanjana was selected for the trip & I was still very reluctant to say 'yes'.

I went through a lot of emotional preparation to let her go for this excursion. After, a lot of persuasion & discussions, I said yes, and once decided, there was no going back.

We had lot of fun shopping right from Bangalore to Pune for the trip.

Fortunately, the school had organized the airport pick up from the school, so there wasn't any 'rona-dhona'.

Once she left from here, I would wait for her call at least once in two days. The day, she missed it, I tried to call all the possible numbers right from Sakshi to Madhuri di.

It was a tremendous learning for me to let go of my child. This experience brought us closer emotionally but also made us independent. It has convinced me that Sanjana is confident enough to travel alone.

I would like to thank the school for giving Sanjana & me this wonderful opportunity.

Manasi Subramanium  
TOS Parent



“The Sweden exchange program has made my son more responsible, his confidence level has increased, he now has a wider vision and has matured a lot”

Mr. Dhiware  
TOS Parent



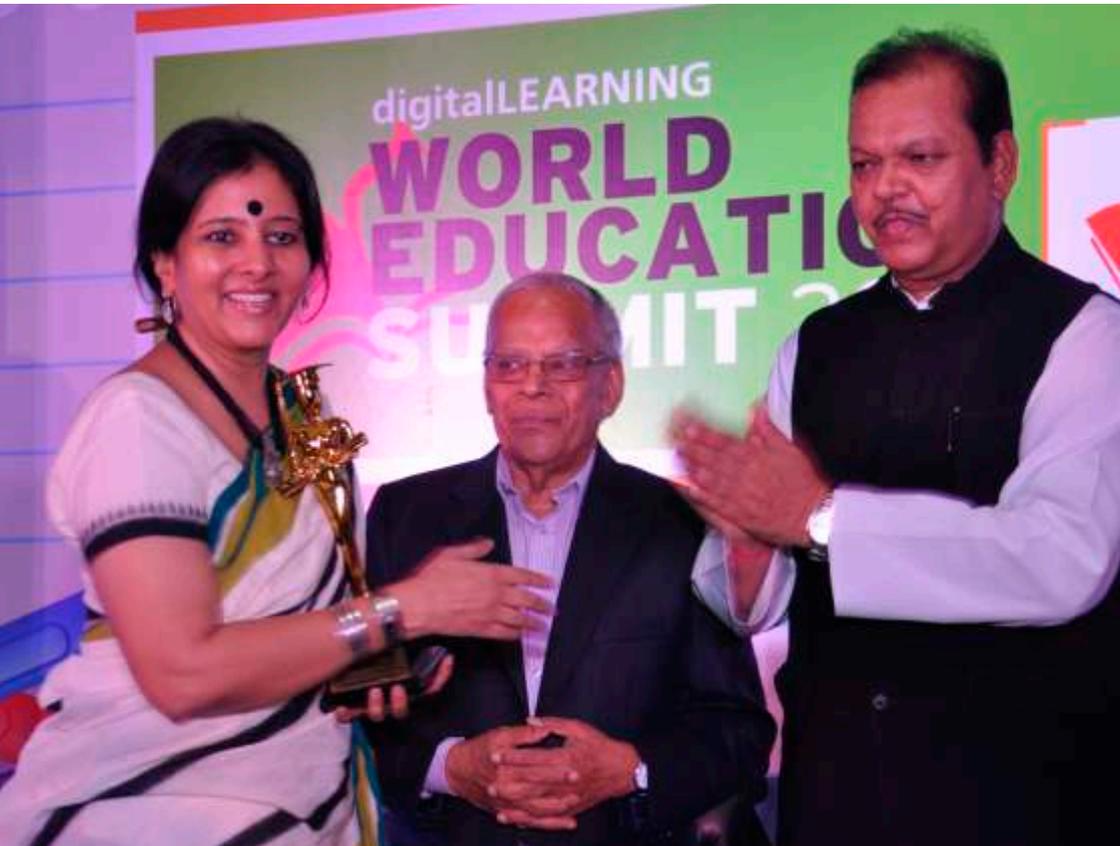


## The Orchid School receives World Education Award

Our project “Sweden-India Exchange program” has been nominated as the winner in the World Education Summit 2012 under the category - "Best Innovation in Global Collaborative Learning".

Our nomination was screened by an eminent panel of jury members from the field of education and selected as the best project in its category.

We received the award on 23<sup>rd</sup> July at the World Education Awards Ceremony held in Delhi in the hands of Honorable Shri Subodh Kant Sahay, Cabinet Minister for Tourism, Government of India. The World Education Summit is an annual event providing a platform for pioneering practices and people in the field of education to get together and share best practices, innovations around the field of education.



## आर्कीडचे चार शिक्षक स्वीडनच्या अभ्यास दौऱ्यावर

औंध : प्रतिनिधी

शैक्षणिक-सांस्कृतिक ओळख देवाण-पेवाण उपक्रमांतर्गत आर्कीड स्कूल, बाणेरच्या चार शिक्षकांची निवड स्वीडनला जाण्यासाठी करण्यात आली आहे.

हे शिक्षक स्वीडनला जाऊन त्यांची संस्कृती, शैक्षणिक पद्धती, राहणीमान याचा अभ्यास करणार आहेत.

आर्कीड स्कूलच्या वतीने निवडण्यात आलेल्या चार शिक्षकांमध्ये ब्रीडाशिक्षक जितेंद्र शर्मा, रांटी मॅडम, सीमा भट, माधुरी ओझा यांची

निवड करण्यात आली आहे.

द आर्कीड स्कूल व स्वीडन यांच्यामध्ये सन २००३ पासून या उपक्रमाला सुरुवात करण्यात आली आहे.

शैक्षणिक-सांस्कृतिक ओळख होण्यासाठी, वाढवण्यासाठी या उपक्रमांतर्गत दरवर्षी चार शिक्षकांची निवड केली जाते.

निवडलेल्या शिक्षकांनी स्वीडनला शाळांला भेटी, विविध प्रकारचे प्रकल्प तसेच तेथील कुटुंबात राहून त्यांच्या जीवनपद्धती अभ्यासायच्या असतात.







## Our horizon – The Sky

The Orchid School also receives Japanese business leaders for cross cultural training and business process.



## Confluence – Further

### Strengthening our ties

Cross cultural training for social work students. Orebro University and Mid-Sweden University will continue to be our partners.

Will reach out to more schools and universities



## Donner to Gute Skolan, Cyber Gymnassiet and beyond

Next TOS Group is going in April 2013. They will be received by Guteskolan, Visby and hosted and received by Cyber Gymnassiet, Stockholm.







Pradnya Niketan Education Society's

## THE ORCHID SCHOOL

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**Pradnya Niketan Education Society's**

**The Orchid School (TOS), Pune and Nagesh Karazgi Orchid College of Engineering and Technology, (NKOCET) Solapur, are professionally managed by Pradnya Niketan Education Society(PNES). It is registered as a public charitable trust.**

**Formed by a group of professionals - bureaucrats, educationists and entrepreneurs, PNES is committed to QUALITY education.**

**The VISION is to provide "Locally rooted, globally competent" education.**

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