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## GOLDEN GOAL

### Parikrma, A School In Bangalore For Underprivileged Children, Is Scoring On Fields Across India

**Do you like Bhaichung Bhutia? A shy smile, followed a firm nod.  
Do you want to be like Bhutia? "I want to play like Ronaldinho."**

There's no hesitancy in the reply. The head is held high and the fist is clenched. Tongmang Kipgen, 16, from Manipur, is a student of the Parikrma Humanity Foundation in Bangalore, a staggering educational venture for underprivileged children. Tongmang is a standard XI student, and an outstanding football talent. His scrapbook is full of pictures and stories of the Brazilian and AC Milan superstar. Some of Ronaldinho's pictures have made his textbooks. Sometimes, between lessons, he looks at those shots, perhaps to remind himself of the direction of his journey.

Tongmang, sporting sunshine yellow shorts and a blank expression, lives at an orphanage close to the Sahakarnagar premises of the school. He knows little about the family he left behind in Manipur almost a decade ago, but he does know that by the age of 21 he will be playing the 'J' League in Japan. At least that's his goal.

Tongmang is one of two boys from his school, the other being Lalsanglen Haokip who made the Karnataka under-16 football team in November '09 that triumphed in the South Zone championship, where Tongmang slammed five goals. The Karnataka side then went on to make the all-India final, where they fell to Jharkhand. The duo, along with Zamzai Touthang, captain of the Parikrma team, form the cream of the school's football talent pool.

There are few things the Parikrma player has got going for him, especially in competitions against better-equipped and privileged sides, but what the school has is uncommon talent and a passion for the sport. Despite the many constraints that range from ground to gear to diet and opportunities, the rise of the school's football teams — under-12, under-14 and under-16 — has been heartening to say the least. The planning and training for sports in Parikrma is managed by Ravi Babu, a former professional footballer.

The school's head of marketing Vivek Raju, who played cricket in school and college in Mumbai, summed up his team's progress in football as, "At the under-12 stage, there's a huge difference between our kids and other school teams. They are bigger physically, and better-equipped, but in the higher age-groups we are as good, if not better."

Parikrma Humanity Foundation, the brainchild of Shukla Bose, offers children — of labourers, construction workers, domestic helps, lifeterm convicts and street kids — a chance to get an education, and live life full. The school takes care of the child's education and co-curricular activities, even providing food and uniforms.

The other sports that Parikrma provides training in are athletics and taekwondo. The Taekwondo Association of Karnataka's instructors Ashok M Hoodi and Pradeep J train the children in the school. The students have been quick on the fight with six of them — Usha Kanaya (11), Lamgoulol Kipgen (12), Nehminlal Haokip (14), Meiraba Huldram (12), Nahminlen Haokip (12) and Amarjeet Singh (13) — clinching gold medals in National age-group competitions. Three of the above — Meiraba, Nahminlen and Amarjeet — will head to Kazakhstan for the Asian junior meet and later to Belarus for the junior World Championships.

Shukla Bose, who has a sports budget of Rs 12 lakh per academic year, is however woefully short of funds. "An ideal figure would be Rs 25 lakh."

"It's hard for anyone to understand what our main costs are. It's transportation. We need to use the school bus to take the children to the grounds to practice, since we don't have our own ground. We do that every other day, if not every day. The other area is diet, it's mainly carbohydrates and not enough proteins, we are trying to change that slowly. We would also like to send some of our children to specialized camps and competitions and all that costs money."

Shukla and Vivek called for a regulated calendar for school sports in Bangalore, which will allow teams to prepare for the competition. As it stands, it is done in random fashion, with little time for training and preparation. In the coming season, they plan to show the way with Parikrma's annual invitational tournament.

The school's sports programme is only just beginning to sprout. They maybe short on many counts, but they're not lacking in vision or will.