

'Volunteering is Time Well-spent'

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Bengaluru: Not many know that Cisco's Dinesh Malkani spends his spare time applying corporate lessons to script the roadmap for a Bengaluru-based nonprofit. The president of Cisco India and SAARC Operations is a regular volunteer at Parikrma Foundation, an entity that provides formal education to children from low-income families and slum areas.

Lending a helping hand to educate children is Malkani's passion. He took the plunge when he moved to the city from Singapore in 2013. Recalling his first visit to the nonprofit, he describes how astounded he was to see kids from families with low-income full of beans, talented and punctual. "It's a humbling experience. I don't judge people by degrees any more. It does not matter whether you are from Stanford or from an NGO school. If you have the will and the hunger, you can achieve," says Malkani.

As an advisor to Parikrma, he sup-



Cisco's Dinesh Malkani with students of the Parikrma Foundation

ports one class of 30 children every year. He has also roped in friends from Singapore to adopt other classes. He curated a CEO's soccer tournament and Parikrma Soccer League with participation from international schools.

Malkani rubs shoulders with industry and influential people and wants to capitalise on it. "Corporate

life builds an unbelievable network for you. You should never shy away from asking for help from your network for a cause," explains Malkani.

It starts from his home. His wife counsels the teenagers at the school. Their son Shivant is curating a coffee-table book with Parikrma's founder Shukla Bose. It's a book of recipes from a competition organ-

ised for the mothers of children studying there.

Currently, Malkani is working on implementing a teacher training initiative. "Education and internet are the way forward. I am designing an IT-enabled structure. Teachers need to be digitally literate," he evangelises.

Malkani's philanthropic side was piqued during his days in Singapore when the avid cricket fan organised a match to raise funds for polio eradication. "Fundraising is a skill you pick up as a sales and marketing professional."

How does he handle the skeptics who sneer at NGOs? "General stereotype must not be the reason to stop supporting a cause. Seeing is believing. Make a visit and see the work being done. There is an immense need for help in the world. It's an absolute responsibility for one to run or support a cause nowadays."

He says that Cisco has added five holidays in a year for its employees to volunteer for a cause. "Volunteering is not a stress-buster. It's time well-spent."