

Here, learning travels full circle

Parikrma, a school for the underprivileged children, emphasises on the all-round development of the students through various activities. VANITHA POOJARY visits the school

"I want to be a police officer." "I want to join the army." "I want to be a doctor." These are very common ambitions among children, one would say. But for these little ones, imagining such ambitions is in itself an achievement. These children have come from very poor families, whose parents are uneducated. In fact, they are the first generation of school-goers.

The parents of these children have learnt that education is the only divider. That it is what separates the masses from the classes. Gone are the days when poor parents refused to send their kids to school because they needed a hand around the house, another earning member, no matter what his or her age was.

Today they have realised that education provides them with an opportunity to crossover to the other side, to climb the much-coveted social ladder, stresses Shukla Bose, Founder of the Parikrma, Humanity Foundation. Her school takes in children who have never been to school before and offers them a fair chance to succeed.

"Parikrma, which essentially means a full circle is an end-to-end programme," she says. The school today has 160 children, all from the various slums spread across the City including Ejjipura, Viveknagar and Rajajinagar, among others. The families these children belong to do not earn above Rs 600 a month.

Elaborating on the workings of the school, Ms Bose insists that this is not a 'chalta hai' type of school which makes a pretense at education in the name of social service. "What we are aiming at is an all-round development of the children, so that they go on to be contributing members of the society."

She further states that, "Since these kids have never been to school before it is tough to decide where to put them. Therefore they are put in classes charmingly named after planets, depending on their age. Parikrma gives these kids all it can including lessons in Attakkallari (A form of martial arts originating from Kerala), football, Taekwondo in addition to the regular classes," she adds.

Physical fitness, mind control, relaxation techniques closely follow the all important lesson of cleanliness, which is particularly stressed because these kids do not come from a background where cleanliness is next to godliness. Ms Bose also says that the school is not residential and the kids go back home everyday, they make a difference owing to what they learn. Their day at school starts with breakfast which the school provides in addition to the books and uniform among other essentials. After the breakfast the kids join the assembly wherein they enact a skit composed wholly by themselves on the theme of the day. And these kids were not even aware of the use of

English language, some time ago.

The entire school building is designed with careful anticipation of the children's needs. However pointing at the empty library space, Shukla says it's time that the society looked beyond its own needs. The school would appreciate books, magazines of all kinds, no matter how old they are.

The foundation intends to continue standard education up to Class X, fully prepared for ICSE exams. Those who want to continue studying will be sponsored for higher education in the field of their choice. For the rest aptitude tests, vocational skill training and jobs at the end of the line, is promised. Ms Bose's drive and determination sparks off every word when she promises that no stone will remain unturned to give the 'undeserved' the opportunity to earn their rightful place in the society.

Parikrma is at 1846, 3rd Main, Block 'C' Sahakaranagar; Bangalore-92. For more details' call Kalpana Singh on 91803635781/ 3635224/ 3635225 / 080-31856495.