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FIRST GEN GRADUATES

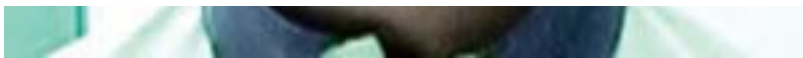By Vidya Iyengar, Bangalore Mirror Bureau | Jun 29, 2015, 04.00 AM IST

Parikrama started in 2003. After 12 years, amongst the first generation of school-goers emerge its first engineer and doctor

Parikrma. Circle of Life. It's a philosophy. And it is also a 360-degree model of education. A school for the underprivileged like none other. The children here come from homes filled with violence — 98 per cent of the fathers of the children are alcoholics.

The children, first-generation school-goers, benefit from the 360-degree model of education — the marginalized children receive high quality English medium education (affiliated to the ICSE board), three nutritious meals a day and the right to primary healthcare.

When Parikrma (a not-for-profit school) was started in 2003 by Shukla Bose, the world around was skeptical. Today, amongst that first

generation of school-goers emerge Parikrma's first engineer and doctor — Shiva Madappa and Lamcy Haokip.

Nearly12 years after the holistic Circle of Life programme was started, its positive impact is beginning to be felt. "It's been a long journey from where they started off. Many of them are able to move away from their slums and able to rent apartments," Bose says.

Dreams do not discriminate

From the age of 12, Lamcy Haokip wanted to be a "doctor". But her circumstances often made her wonder if she was "dreaming too big". Today, 24-year-old Haokip is all set to fulfill her dream. Currently, pursuing her internship, Haokip will pass out of Ambedkar Dental College in a few months' time. Hailing from a poor farming family in Manipur, the fifth of nine siblings, Haokip was sent to Bengaluru to her uncle's house so she could go to school.

However, on her arrival to the city, Haokip says something went terribly wrong ("there was some grave miscommunication") and she landed in a children's home instead of her uncle's house. And her parents were too poor to come and fetch her. So, Haokip remained in the home. "I had never stepped out of my village Mongbung. I was lost in such a huge city. But there was no going back," she recalls.

It is through the children's home that she came in contact with Bose and joined Parikrma in 2003. "Those were the best years of my life. There were times that I would miss my family. But at Parikrama, I rarely felt lonely," she says. Haokip pursued medicine because she wants to go back and work in Manipur, which is "lacking in healthcare". After all these years, Haokip went home to see her parents after finishing her rigorous five year course. "It was so odd to see my parents after so many years. I used to speak to them only once a year," she says.

Turning crisis on its head

In 2005, Shiva Madappa had to discontinue his education for lack of funds. "I wondered whether I would be going back to school again," he recalls. However, his family had heard of Parikrama and within a few months, Madappa was able to resume class 6. "It was a complete change. Although the style was engaging, I was a poor student and couldn't cope up," he says. That meant having to repeat the year. Soon his teachers began spending two extra hours after school to help Shiva improve in his class. Two years later, Shiva got a double promotion and skipped class nine to class 10. "During high school, my teachers pointed out that I should pursue engineering," he says.

Madapa, son of a driver and a homemaker, completed his engineering from University Visvesvaraya College of Engineering and now works his first job — at a leading international tech giant in the country. Today, not only does he contribute a large chunk of his salary to his family, (which also goes towards care for his physically-challenged 8-year old brother), but also contribute a couple of hundreds to Parikrama. "My parents always told me to study for a good life."

PIONEERING MODEL

*Parikrma was started in 2003 by Shukla Bose * The first school was run from a rented property in a Koramangala slum that housed over 75,000 residents living below the poverty line. It accommodated 165 kids. Today, Parikrma has four schools. Educates over 1,500 children from 69 slum communities and four orphanages in Bengaluru * The non-profit school runs on a 360-degree model — poorest of poor receive high quality English-medium education (affiliated to the ICSE board), three nutritious meals a day and the right to primary healthcare * The school acts as caretaker from age five to 25, until the student bags a job. To ensure this, Parikrma spends Rs 27,000 annually per child * Parikrma has 1% drop out * The students have no textbooks till class eight 98% of its students go on to pursue college education * Parikrma also runs a de-addiction programme for the alcoholic fathers, and offer soft loans to homemaker mothers to launch small businesses * They also have an afterschool adult literacy programme*