

► School of Thought

"YOU don't need to be a multi-millionaire or a Bill Gates to get into social work," says a confident Shukla Bose, Founder and CEO of Parikrama Humanity Foundation. Much like Shukla, who quit her high-paying corporate job more than a decade ago to become a torchbearer for education of the underprivileged children, Parikrama is also noteworthy in terms of its unique approach towards education and empowerment.

"The Parikrama 360 degree model is distinctive," says Shukla, sitting in the office of the Parikrama school in Jayanagar (one of the four in Bengaluru; apart from one junior college), with artworks drawn by 'her children' adorning the walls. "In emerging economies like ours, you cannot isolate education. How can children attend school if they are hungry? Do well in studies if they are ill? Or, have the enthusiasm to participate in anything if they come from a dysfunctional family? So, Parikrama brings about a social re-engineering of sorts."

"While our children receive high-quality English medium education (affiliated to the ICSE Board) and global exposure, we also provide them with wholesome breakfast, lunch and high-protein snacks that are prepared in consultation with leading nutritionists. We even have regular health check-ups done." In order to involve students' families in their development and upbringing, Shukla runs de-addiction programmes for alcoholic fathers, provides vocational training to mothers who wish to supplement their income and had also launched an after-school adult literacy programme. "We even help parents find employment," asserts Shukla. "In most cases, we employ them ourselves. Most of the non-teaching staff is mothers, fathers and grandfathers of children studying in our schools."

In Parikrama's end-to-end model, the school educates students from



the age of five, sponsors their college education and also provides them with job interview training (sometimes even placements) and communication skills. For this, Shukla spends almost Rs. 30,000 annually per child. "We ensure that the children are empowered and never feel inferior to anyone. In fact, one of our girls was selected to San Diego last year to represent the country in a global youth leadership summit," she proudly says.

To keep the Parikrama Model up and running, and raise awareness, Shukla conducts various events and

fundraisers year round, the latest one being Heart for Art, which, after being conducted in San Francisco and New York, was held for the first time in India. The event raised funds through the sale of the artwork made by the children

and was tremendously successful in the same. That's not all, through her Education Transformation Centre, Shukla trains teachers and administrators of government schools, so that the Parikrama Model would benefit more and more children.

Years of Shukla's efforts have certainly not gone in vain. If their statistics are anything to go by, then Parikrama schools lock 96% attendance rate (which, they claim, is the highest in the country) and have less than 1% dropouts. And this, Shukla insists, is just the beginning. Way to go, we say!