

## Volunteering at Parijat Academy



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There are only a few moments in life when we actually get the time for ourselves and even fewer moments when we get to do something for others. The thought of doing something for issues not directly related to one's own self or loved ones is itself beautiful and rare. As such, given an opportunity to serve the needy or work selflessly towards the betterment of the society should play a vital role in everyone's lives. Only then we can be truly a part of a human culture.

Social work had always been on my mind. After doing a paper in Indian economic development in my second year of graduation, I got to know a lot about what is actually going on in my country when it comes to “development.” This paper has been enriching enough to make me realize that I should do something worthwhile in my life instead of entirely aiming for only a great job and a fat salary. Instead of blaming the entire system all the time without even knowing what actually is going on, contributing in my own little way would really make me feel proud of myself. This paper interested me so much that I started reading up on serious issues that are bothering INDIA . The statistics shocked me!

When I was finally over with my graduation in MAY 2010, I decided to do work or intern under a non profit organization in Guwahati. I suddenly remembered about my search in summer 2009 when I had got in touch with MR. UTTAM TERON, founder of “ PARIJAT ACADEMY ” which is a school for underprivileged children in a place called GARCHUK in ASSAM . I mailed him saying I would love to be a part of his venture with the children. He replied on the very same day with a lot of enthusiasm and called me in for a meeting on the next day. I was delighted and at the same time humbled. I went to “ PARIJAT ACADEMY ” the very next day and we sat and talked about so many things. TERON sir is absolutely amazing and he is doing such a wonderful deed by providing free education to so many children without any ulterior motive. That was truly an amazing experience. I was thrilled and motivated by his dedication towards securing the future of the children in the academy and many more to come in the future. He agreed to let me intern under him in his academy. The job given to me was to teach the children and to think of creative ways of teaching the younger ones, making them learn in a way that they would remember all their lives. He even asked me to teach them music as when I told him I had a degree in Indian classical music. The confidence that he showed in me was truly motivating. I shall always be thankful to him for letting me be a part of the school family. He introduced me to the children of all the classes. I met all the children from standard 1 to standard 10. The academy even had a nursery and a kindergarten class. The students welcomed me warmly. I was also nervous to an extent because I wanted to do this job right and in my opinion teaching is one of the toughest jobs. The ideas that one has in mind needs to be put in the minds of these children and that is one real challenge. Even tougher for me, but I wanted to take this task up and contribute in my own little way. So my journey in PARIJAT started.

The first thing I noticed about PARIJAT was its ambience. Trapped in the beauty of nature with greenery all around, the view was really a treat to the eye. There was enough space for the children to play during recess. I loved the natural surroundings. Every morning I felt as if the birds welcomed me with their chirps and the wind whispered in my ear. There was something very positive about the whole workplace. No matter how tired I would get, it did not matter as long as I got to see the smiling faces of the children daily. The school had enough indoor games as well that kept the children busy during their free time. The classes were really well maintained and organized. Everything was impressive and I could clearly see the hard work of so many who worked day and night for the children.

Everyday was a challenge for me. At first I thought the children might feel awkward and not open up to me. But to my pleasant surprise they were so smart and outgoing from the very first day! I remember I used to be very shy in school and I liked only those teachers who were not strict, lol. I loved teaching the children but had to be careful about the ways I used. They were bright and full of life, always willing to learn something new and interesting. It was a delight teaching them different things ranging from studies to art to music. I mostly took classes for the younger age group. I loved the most when I interacted with them. It gave me an immense sense of joy deep within my heart as I could sense their innocence and honesty in whatever they said or did. I also realized that the children learned in a better way and did their work on time when they were treated with a lot of love and care and also the thought of competition made them study regularly. I learned a lot as to how should I treat them as a teacher and luckily, they seemed to like me. I shared a great bond with the children and became dependent on them to quite an extent. I looked forward to meeting them everyday. I was having the best time of my life with the children.

The academy also had many teachers who were so kind and nice to me. I felt so good. All the teachers worked hard for the children and the school. I was never used to being given so much respect and being called “baideo” by all. I was greeted with smiles in the staff room whenever I entered or exited it. It was such a nice feeling. Pranoy sir was really nice to me. I always kept thanking him for his bike lifts till Garchuk. I made friends with Bhabani who taught the senior classes. She was my walking partner everyday till Garchuk (whenever I did not get any lift!). In short, all the people in the academy became a part of my world and I respected all of them.

My personal experience in Parijat has also been wonderful because I have been fortunate enough to have met so many people within my internship period in the academy. There are so many people who support this academy and are working for bringing about positive changes in the society. Such people have been so influential in my life. They have inspired and motivated me to give something back to the society which has given me all that I have. I shall always be thankful to UTTAM Sir for firstly giving me this opportunity of a lifetime to teach the kids. The dedication that I saw in him had been a driving force for me everyday. It feels good to see that even after man has led to so many devastations and destructions in the world, there are still such people who are working for the sake of humanity selflessly. It brings a ray of hope to everyone’s lives.

All in all, my experience has been one of a lifetime and I look forward to coming back to these children whenever possible as they are a part of my life now. I have learnt so much from this place and I have so much to take back with me. I am a much better person now and I strongly feel that the youth should contribute to the society even if it is in the minimum way possible. As a part of this generation, I take it as my responsibility to keep doing good work all my life. I would like to request all those who feel for social issues deeply to come out and do whatever they can because even a little effort can act as a positive catalyst. Holding hands together, we can truly bring about positive changes and if we all indulge in it, very soon the world shall be a much better place to live in and also the sense of satisfaction derived from such work is truly inexplicable. As for me, I will be back very soon to these children. I can never forget their smiling faces. The memories shall remain forever in my life.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep. ---- ROBERT FROST

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