

# Parijat Academy: A young man's dream

## Start of a dream:

Pamohi on the outskirts Guwahati is located near to the Assam Meghalaya boarder. It is 15 kms from Guwahati Airport and 8 kms from the Guwahati Railway Station. Pamohi is mainly inhabited by tribal people, comprising about ten tribal villages with approximately seven thousand people. Most of the people of the villages work as daily wage earner in the quarry.



Uttam Teron, a young man who graduated in 1999 from a city college started to think about a way to keep the children of the village engaged in a safer environment when their parents were out in the field earning their livelihood. This is how the idea of Parijat Academy was conceived. The word "Parijat" means heavenly flower.

Uttam had saved Rs. 800/- from the fees he received from private tuition. With that amount, he got a pair of desks and benches and set up the school. Initially, parents were reluctant to send their children.

## Parijat Academy

Parijat Academy started on 18th January 2003 with 4 students, one boy and three girls - a school for underprivileged children. Parijat started with the aim of educating the poor and to create awareness on the eradication of child labour by providing **free education** irrespective of caste and creed. At the end of the school year of 2003 number of students increased to 18 - ten boys and eight girls and two teachers.

The villagers came to know about the activities of Parijat and the number of students started growing. From 4 students at the start has grown over the years to 497 students at the end of the year 2009. Both the boys and girls are equally represented.

Thanks to support of well wishers, Parijat was able to provide free uniforms to the school children. In 2009, 180 students received free school uniforms. Since parents cannot afford, more free uniforms are needed, especially for the girl students.

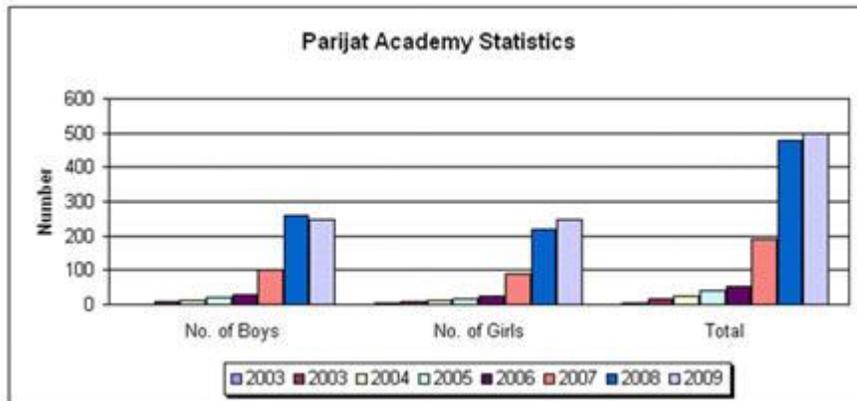
The age of the students varies from four years to fourteen years. Until now education is free except an admission fee of Rs. 2/-. There are 18 teachers including Uttam and two other persons to help with different activities of the school.

Year	No. of Boys	No. of Girls	Total	Number of teacher	Free School uniform
2003	10	8	18	2	0
2004	12	13	25	3	0
2005	22	17	39	4	32
2006	28	26	54	5	30
2007	102	90	192	9	35
2008	260	218	478	17	50
2009	249	248	497	18	180

Growth of students

### **Parijat Academy now:**

Uttam's persistent paid off. Parijat Academy is now covering nine tribal villages. They have



difficulty in enrolling new students. Parijat covers the whole trajectory of primary school education – from Nursery classes to class IX. The aim of Uttam is to extend the education to class XII which will prepare the students for the final examination before

starting as college freshman.

At present Parijat also takes care of a physically and mentally handicapped child. Their number is likely to increase. A generous lady from Delhi donated a wheelchair for the handicapped girl. Further assistance is needed in the form of specially training teachers and training aids for handicapped children.

### **Children home (Parijat Ashram):**

Uttam's dream is also to provide for free shelter and education to children of the poorest of the poor. In February 2007 Uttam started hostel facilities for eight underprivileged school children. At the end of the year 2009 fifteen children are staying in the school hostel. They stay in one big room in the Parijat Academy. Besides accommodation, the children are also provided with food, clothing, bed, blanket, bed sheet, mattress, quilt, pillow, mosquito net, school uniform, items for personal hygiene, etc.

In addition to imparting education in collaboration with the Institute of Child and Women Health Care, Uttam has arranged for bimonthly medical care. This caters not only for the school students but also to the local community. Together with a nurse and an ambulance, a medical doctor visits the Parijat Academy every second and fourth Sunday of the month.



### **Some of the Activities of Parijat Academy:**

Parijat has extended its activities outside the four walls of the school.

1. In cooperation with Aaranyak<sup>1</sup>, a society working in the field of biodiversity conservation in North East India since 1989, Parijat participated in an Environmental Education Programme

<sup>1</sup> [www.aaranyak.org](http://www.aaranyak.org)

in the neighbourhood. This programme included also Deepor Beel Wetland conservation.

2. In February 2006 Parijat Academy in collaboration with the Asha Yoga Kendra of Guwahati, Assam started an adult literacy programme for illiterate parents of the school children<sup>2</sup>.
3. Smile Foundation<sup>3</sup>, a philanthropic organization has also joined hands with Parijat Academy for the project "Children's Education and Health Care Services in Wetland of Deepor Beel"<sup>4</sup>. This project was launched on 26th June 2007 whose aim is to establish six Non-formal education centres (NFE) with 30-35 children in each group covering 200-250 underprivileged tribal children per year thereby mainstreaming them into formal schools. The objectives of the project are to:
  - Ensure basic quality education to the disadvantaged children from class I - VII.
  - To promote health status of the children & women

In the year 2007-2008 Smile Foundation supported six Parijat Kendras (branches) in six villages. Each Parijat Kendra had one teacher. At present the students of the six centres are enrolled at Parijat Academy. For the year 2009-2010 Smile Foundation supported the salaries of three teachers.

#### **Introduction of new activities:**

1. An adult literacy programme for women is already operational on its premises.
2. From 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2008, following the concept of the Parijat Kendra's Uttam has started Children Education Centres in three tribal villages. They are situated at the villages Garbhanga (21 students), Pahamjila (49 students) and Natun Garbhanga (44 students). These centres are not supported by Smile Foundation.
3. In order to generate income of the tribal women and open possibilities for vocational training to students of Parijat Academy, Parijat has started upgrading its present infrastructure. Thanks to the contribution from Najmun Nisa Trust, 6 looms including a semi-automatic Jacquard loom have been added to the existing looms. A well wisher from Guwahati donated another loom. One of the looms is used for the school children for their vocational training. The interest in the activities of the Parijat Weaving Centre is growing. Regularly villagers visit the Parijat academy to see the work of the weavers and place order for traditional Assamese dress "Riha and Mekhela". With the increase of capacity the idea is to sell the extra production at the Nedfi-haat.



---

<sup>2</sup> [www.assamtribune.com/scripts/details.asp?id=sep1108/City5](http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/details.asp?id=sep1108/City5)

<sup>3</sup> [www.smilefoundationindia.org](http://www.smilefoundationindia.org)

<sup>4</sup> [www.smilefoundationindia.org/pr\\_the\\_sentinel.htm](http://www.smilefoundationindia.org/pr_the_sentinel.htm)

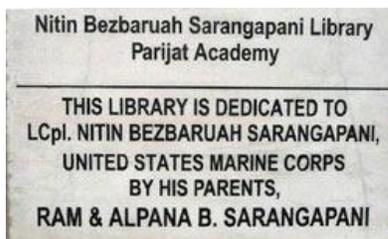
4. Another area where attention is given is in imparting knowledge of sewing and embroidery. Thanks to the contribution of Njmun Nisa Trust six sewing machines are installed and a separate Tailoring and Embroidery Centre is opened at in the Parijat Academy. This would help to give practical training and make the students (especially the girl students) self reliant with skills and experience necessary for their future family life.



5. To create public awareness and raise funds, octogenarian Gandhian from Queensland, Australia, Mr. Garvin Brown, led a charity walk<sup>5</sup> at Guwahati, Assam on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2008 Children of Parijat Academy along with a few distinguished citizens of Guwahati participated in this charity walk. Mr. Brown is a friend of Parijat Academy. Friends of Assam and Seven Sisters (FASS)<sup>6</sup> organized this event<sup>7</sup>. The charity walk was also organized at Jorhat, Doomdoma, Deepor Beel and other places of Assam. Uttam with two members of FASS also joined Garvin in Australia in a charity walk.



6. In March 2008, a library is added to the Parijat Academy. As a dedication and in fond memory of their beloved son, Mr. & Mrs. Sarangapani of USA established the Nitin Bezbaruah Sarangapani Library. They have funded a large room for the library with bookshelves, books and other materials. The long-term plan is to expand the library so that it benefits both the Academy and the surrounding communities. One of the FASS Board members is trying to get Dutch NGO's interested in the project so that the Library can be upgraded to a Knowledge Centre to get the villagers acquainted with computers. The Knowledge Centre could also have some tie-ups with agricultural department to educate the farmers regarding seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, etc.



7. A new area which Parijat has introduced is internship in Parijat. This is meant for the educators as well as students both in and outside India who would like to visit Parijat for a short period and interact with students and teachers. This opportunity is already utilised by a nineteen years old students Miss Dhaujee Kelly of Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, USA<sup>8</sup>. To teach Art & Painting to the students Miss Promona Sengupta, a B.A final year student from Lady Shree Ram College, Delhi came to Parijat and stayed for 27 days. Emeritus Prof. Margaret Andrews, a 78 years old lady from Vancouver, Canada who taught

<sup>5</sup> [www.assamtribune.com/scripts/details.asp?id=mar0908\State5](http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/details.asp?id=mar0908\State5)

<sup>6</sup> Friends of Assam and Seven Sisters is a 'Think Tank' of people from the North East mainly living outside Assam

<sup>7</sup> [www.assamtribune.com/scripts/details.asp?id=mar3108\State8](http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/details.asp?id=mar3108\State8)

<sup>8</sup> <http://djatparijat.blogspot.com/2009/06/few-photos-of-my-time-here-at-parijat.html>

history at Washington State University visited Parijat and stayed for three weeks. Friends of Assam and Seven Sisters(FASS) has promised to build a hostel cum guesthouse in Parijat.



The foundation stone of the guest house was laid on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009 by astronaut Colonel Edward Michael Fincke.

#### 8. Construction activities:

The well-wishers of Parijat, both in and outside India have contributed generously to build permanent structures and to buy educational materials for the school. Non-Resident Assamese and others from all over the world have come forward to support this unique educational project. They have given Parijat financial assistance to build a few more rooms to be used as class rooms and hostel for the children. In this local residents have also joined



hands. Garvin Brown a Gandhian from Australia has supported Parijat from the very beginning.

9. Parijat Academy aims to achieve lasting improvements in the quality of life of underprivileged and deprived children in and around Pamohi. In order to support the education of these children, their families and their communities should be able to meet their basic needs. They should be able to earn their livelihood. Banks do not provide financial services to clients with little or no cash income or collaterals. It means the villagers - the poor and near-poor households don't have access to a loan. A well-wisher from Europe, who believes that providing small credit will help the poor people out of poverty by generating extra income and help them to stand on their own feet has come forward and donated the seed capital to offer "micro-loans" to the villagers. The loan is given for a period of one year against a nominal administrative fee. A few of the villagers from Garbhanga, Notun Garbhanga and Pahamjila have availed this possibility. Parijat is coordinating these activities<sup>9</sup>. As there is no water pump or deep well for drinking water in and around Garbhanga, the same well wisher through Najmun Nisa Trust is assisting in the erection of the first water pump in Garbhanga area for clean drinking water.

<sup>9</sup> <http://picasaweb.google.com/friendsfindia.nl>

**Recognition:**

Uttam's work has not gone unnoticed. He is invited to participate in different workshops and seminars both in and outside Assam. In some of the activities the students from Parijat also participate. As a tribute to his contribution to the society and for his work towards the upliftment of the underprivileged children, the Eastern India Women's Association on 27th December 2009 conferred its first Social Service Award-2009 on Parijat Academy<sup>10</sup>. The noted social activist Anjali Baruah gave the award to Uttam Teron, founder of the academy.

**The road ahead:**

Parijat Academy does not get any government assistance and depends on the voluntary contributions from its well-wishers.

Uttam dreams of starting physical education and sports for the children, and vocational training such as repairing TV, radio's for the students of higher classes.. Uttam would very much like to extend education facilities up to class XII. Uttam and his dedicated group need further support to continue their work. Immediate requirements of Parijat Academy are:

School furniture, student uniforms, text books, extension of existing class rooms and hostel facility, construction of extra toilets, computers, musical instruments like tabla & harmonium, sports material, tube-well and funds for the payment of the salaries of the teachers.

You can also sponsor a child for Rs. 2,000/ per year. Your donation will be used for books, uniforms, shoes, socks, school bag, exercise books and other writing materials for the under privileged students. Ankur Bora, a young software engineer from Texas has set up a special "Support a child from Assam<sup>11</sup>" programme.

Thus, in a small way Uttam is helping to build India at the grass-roots level. He works very hard at it and the results are to be appreciated. Unless Parijat Academy receives support, it would be extremely difficult for them to achieve their goal of educating the poor children in that area. Let us help to realize the dream of Uttam and the disadvantaged children by extending financial and other help, thereby setting an example for others.

A beginning has already been made. Let Uttam's dream come true – let us give him a hand.

---

<sup>10</sup> [http://picasaweb.google.com/Parijat.Academy/EIWA\\_Social\\_Service\\_Award\\_2009#](http://picasaweb.google.com/Parijat.Academy/EIWA_Social_Service_Award_2009#)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.supportachild-assam.com/>

The contact and bank details of Parijat Academy are:

Parijat Academy  
Pamohi  
P.O. Garchuk  
Guwahati-781 035  
Assam  
India

Mobile: +91-9-8640 41711

E-mail: [parijatacademy03@yahoo.com](mailto:parijatacademy03@yahoo.com)

Web: [www.parijatacademy.org](http://www.parijatacademy.org)

Name of Bank: State Bank of India;  
Account Name: Parijat Academy;  
Account Number: 3011952661-7, Garchuk Branch, Code: 5240  
Post Office: Garchuk, Guwahati-781035, Assam, India

Images of activities at Parijat Academy:

- Photo gallery of Parijat Academy at <http://picasaweb.google.com/parijat.academy>
- Parijat Academy – Blogspot. <http://www.parijatacademy.blogspot.com>
- Micro loan project <http://picasaweb.google.com/friendsofindia.nl>
- For an audio and video presentation, please visit <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=1271294513185210272>

