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CITY & the CITIZEN - IISc grad gives robotic lessons to kids Youth Quits IT Job, Teaches Children In Govt Schools

Pavan MV

Bengaluru:

It's 2.30pm at the Seva Bharat Government Higher Primary School. As on any other day, students are waiting for their next teacher to arrive. But in one room of the school, there's an unusual excitement. A world of robotics has come alive, and the teenagers are abuzz with curiosity.

Sridhar P, 31, quit his high-paying job in an IT company to do something more meaningful. So every day, Sridhar travels many miles -from Mathikere in west Bengaluru to Viveknagar in east Bengaluru -to teach the school children robotics.

After graduating in engineering from Siddaganga Institute of Technology, Tumakuru, Sridhar worked at Karnataka Power Corporation Limited for three years and then joined IISc to pursue MSc in engineering (instrumentation electronics).

After an absorbing time at IISc, he began his journey to teach science, math and robotics in government schools. He was teaching slum kids while working for an IT company in Pune. "During my three-year stint in Pune, I would go to a slum and teach children. Then I realized that working two days with poor children doesn't bring any big change in their lives. So I quit my job and moved back to Bengaluru to work full-time for the welfare of government school children." Since January 2014, Sridhar has been working with NGO Akshara Foundation for a salary of Rs 3.6 lakh per annum. A year ago, he established Robotics Lab in Viveknagar, where three government schools - Seva Bharat Trust Government Kannada, Tamil, and Higher Primary Schools are situated.

This IISc alumnus' day starts at 7am. He travels 13km on his bicycle to reach the schools and teaches robotics to 120 students for one hour, prior to commencement of classes, and one-and-a-half hour after school hours every day. Sridhar says he pedals to work daily because he wants to save money for his personal needs.

For the children, he's their world. "We didn't even know how to switch on a computer. Thanks to Sir, because of him today we've made several robots and learnt programming," they say.

Sridhar teaches the children how to make a robot and programme them. "I've always had an inclination to bring changes in the education system of our country. To develop India, it's important to bring changes in two sectors -



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education and politics. I can't bring changes in politics, so I took up education. I'm amazed at the learning ability of these 12-year-olds. Today, they have so much knowledge, if I make any mistakes in programming, these kids correct them," he added.

Last year, teams from these schools participated in the Indian Robotics Olympiad competition, and were the only three government schools which represented the city in this competition.

He has many plans for their career development, for he knows that government school kids very often stop studies after class 11 or 12. "My aim is to build self-confidence among them by providing vocational training on robotics and other subjects. Even if they can't pursue undergraduate courses, they can at least become teachers at robotics clubs in international or private schools," he said.

Sridhar's father Pichaimuthu runs a metal fabrication workshop, his mother Manimegalai is a homemaker, while sister Sri Vidya is a commerce graduate.

K Sunil Prasad



TECH TIPS: Sridhar P teaches how to make and operate robots

DEDICATED MASTER

“To develop India, it's important to bring changes in two sectors - education and politics. I can't bring changes in politics, so I took up education

Sridhar P | ROBOTICS TEACHER

“He is very down to earth. I always wonder why such a highly qualified person is teaching our kids. He gets well with students and is very dedicated to his work. The best part is, apart from teaching robotics, he also teaches English, math and science

Geetha SR | TEACHER, SEVA BHARAT TRUST GOVERNMENT KANNADA HIGHER PRIMARY SCHOOL

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