



# LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Love 4 **Sevalaya's News Letter - April 2009** Serve 1 Price-Re.1

## Dear Friends,

Many years ago, when we bought the first piece of land for Sevalaya in Kasuva village, one weekend, we had started fencing the land. I was there checking if the boundaries were marked properly. The person, who owned our neighboring land, was an old man and he was working in his land. He was wearing only a loin cloth and from a distance smiled at me. I waved to him requesting him to come closer. He was so happy and came almost running to me. He was a typical simple villager, had no problem in appearing in his 'single piece' dress, looked very cheerful, happy and contented. I asked him about his family, what he was planting etc., as I knew nothing about him. But to my surprise, it looked like he knew everything about me! He must have enquired about me when we were finalizing the land deal, a couple of months ago.

"I am told that you are a very busy person. You keep travelling all over the world, doing big computer business, earning lot of money. I have not met such a person so far. No such person has come to our village before. I want one favor from you. When you go abroad next time, buy me a radio. I want a foreign radio. That is my only wish! When you fly above Kasuva, you can just drop it here. We see many flights flying above our lands here!" He enjoyed his joke and was laughing for the next ten minutes. Then he said "I don't even cross the boundaries of this village, but I get my food, clothing and shelter. What else I want? I am happy". Then I looked at him and told him "I envy you. You don't have to miss your family even for a day. When close relatives get married or die, most of the time I am in the other part of the globe, so only convey greetings or condolences over phone or e-mail. You don't have to wear tie and suit in Chennai in the month of May to please your clients. You don't know what jet-lag is. As you mentioned what we need is food, clothing and shelter. But we

have created many more wants – we can't live without clearing our mails, surfing the internet, answering or making calls on our mobile phones. Even the food clothing and shelter need not be as per our climatic conditions but should reflect our status in the society. So we need more and more money to take care of these extra wants. So we work harder, may be all 7 days a week, may be 18 to 20 hours a day, making more and more money. We are selling our life to earn a living. We have no time for anything else, and hence, at the end we are not happy. But you seem to be so cheerful and happy. Yes, I will get you a foreign radio, when I go abroad next time. That seems to be your only unfulfilled dream".

As I had mentioned in the last newsletter, I had long decided to work only for 25 years and then try and see if I can do full time voluntary service for rest of my life. The time has come to implement that decision. I have quit my software career to spend time on Sevalaya and other such institutions. Suddenly I am reminded of that old Kasuva farmer, who is no more now. I can be a good replacement for him!

Thanks & Regards  
**Murali**





### Events

"Club Mahindra Holidays" celebrated Corporate Social Responsibility Day in a nice function got up at Sevalaya campus on 14/03/2009, presided over by Mr. V.S.Shanmugam, Chairman, Thiruvallur. M/S. Prabakaran Nair, Biswaroop Chanda and Satyanarayanan participated in the function and eulogised the services of Sevalaya in the cause of the poor and downtrodden. On the occasion they gifted items worth Rs. 2 lakhs, which included 6 water Heaters, 2 fridges, 10 fans and a LCD Projector to the institution. Mr. V.S.Shanmugam joined Sevalaya in thanking the corporate for their benevolent gesture.

On 15/03/2009, a team of employees from Hindustan Motors, Thiruvallur visited Sevalaya and regaled the children and old people with fun and frolic. There were several sports events in which the children and the old people alike participated with all enthusiasm. The way in which the visiting team mingled with the residents was refreshing. Several prizes were distributed at the hands of Mr. P.S.Mohan, Manager of Hindustan Motors. They also sponsored lunch for the residents of our Homes to mark the occasion.

A farewell function for the outgoing students of Sevalaya school was organized by the Old Students' Association on 22/03/2009. Partings are proverbially sad, and naturally the atmosphere was emotionally charged. Ms. K.Chitra who was a resident of Sevalaya Home since Balwadi days, and who was the top scorer among the 10<sup>th</sup> standard students in Thiruninravur, now taking 12<sup>th</sup> standard examinations vividly recalled her days in Sevalaya. She expressed her deep sense of gratitude to Sevalaya for all the support, love and affection showered on her. A few other students were moved to tears and were finding it hard to express themselves. In his address to them Mr. V.Muralidharan stated that Sevalaya had only one expectation from all of them-they should lead a happy, self fulfilling life rendering help to the needy in society.



### External Events

On 10 & 13/03/2009, Sevalaya put up a stall of its literature and products at Oracle Financial Private Ltd. Similarly a stall was put up at Yes Bank, Nungambakkam on 13/03/2009. The stalls attracted many enthusiastic visitors.

On 19/03/2009, Sevalaya arranged a presentation by Mr. G.Rammohan, Retired Safety Commissioner, Indian Railways and a Gandhian Activist., at Potti Sriramulu Hall, Mylapore, Chennai. The theme of the presentation was "Is Gandhiji for sale?". He expressed his concern that the Gandhiji memorabilia in different Museums and memorials in India are not properly protected. He feared that many of them might have been stolen and smuggled out of the country. He called for a campaign to create an awareness in the matter.

On 21/03/2009, Ms. Bhuvaneshwari Muralidharan was presented the "Achiever Award" by Lioness Assembly (Dist.No.: 324-A). On the same day, she was a special guest and delivered an address on "women Empowerment" at the "International women's day" function organised by State Bank of Mysore at Russian Cultural Centre, Chennai.

On 29/03/2009, Mr. V.Muralidharan was the Chief Guest at the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Day function of Holy Cross Matric. Hr. Sec. School, Thiruninravur.

Our weekly classes at Puzhal prison II were as follows: 07/03/2009 - Bharathi's social outlook by Mr. V.Muralidharan.

14/03/2009 - Gandhiji's satyagraha by Mr. Vijayakumar.

21/03/2009 - Wandering monk Vivekananda by Ms. N.Annapurna.

28/03/2009 - M.K.Gandhi to Mahatma Gandhi by Mr. P.Narayanamurthy.

The 30 session course on Mahatma Gandhi, Bharathi and Swami Vivekananda was inaugurated at Vellore prison for women on 28/03/2009. Mr. R.Duraisamy, D.I.G. (Prisons) inaugurated the



programme. Mr. N.Sekar, Superintendent, Central Jail, Vellore was the chief guest. The officials lauded the initiative of Sevalaya in taking the messages of the national leaders to the prisons. Mr. V.Muralidhran thanked the officials particularly Mr.Nataraj I.P.S., D.G.P.(Prisons). Mr. G.Rammohan presented a slide show on Gandhiji's life on the occasion. Mr. T.S.Venkataramani spoke on the life of Swami Vivekananda. Mr. V.Muralidharan's talk was on the life of Mahakavi Bharathiyar.

In the men's prison, Vellore, classes conducted on the same day were, Vivekananda's life by Mr. T.S.Venkata Ramani and "Stories that inspired Gandhiji" by Mr. G.Ram mohan. Mr. V.Muralidharan spoke to them about Bharathiyar's life.

#### Staff Book Review

On 07/03/2009, Ms. L.Anusuya spoke on "Bharathi's Compositions". "Ennai Valartha Bharathi" by Ma.Po Sivagnanam was taken up for discussion by Ms. S.Mariyammal on 14/03/2009. On 21/03/2009, Ms. K.Shanthini shared her views on "Paar Athira" by Kumaridasa. On 28/03/2009, Ms. S.Amul spoke on "Bharathi & Society" written by Ma.Pa.Periyasamy Thuram.

#### Students study circle

On 07/03/2009, R.Ramesh shared his views on "Nadai Paathai" by Guhan. S.Augustin Anburaj talked about Dr.Ambedkar thoughts on 14/03/2009.



On 21/03/2009, M.Arunakumari shared her thoughts on Abdul Kalam by Mr.N.Chokkan. On 28/03/2009, K.Chitra spoke on "Edison" written by Mr. Ramasamy.

#### Temple visit

On 06 & 20/03/2009, Hostel girls went to Ramanathapuram Vinayagar Temple. On 20/03/2009, Hostel boys went to Palavedu Ancheneya Temple. On 24/03/2009, the 10<sup>th</sup> Std. Students went to Pakkam Shiva and Anchaneya Temple and offered prayers for success in Public examination. On 27/03/2009, Hostel boys went to Ramanathapuram Vinayagar Temple.

#### Tour & Picnic

On 11/03/2009, 36 students and 2 staff went to watch a humourous play "Patti Vadai Kukka Nari" enacted by Children from homes run by Directorate of Social Defence, organised by The Directorate, UNICEF and an NGO - The Nalanda Way Foundation, at Egmore museum.

#### Training Programme

Mr.Dhanakodi, a National Awardee teacher conducted a workshop for our Primary teachers on handling primay classes, on 11/03/2009.

2 staff members Ms. N.Annapoorna and Mr. S.Jayakumar attended the Global School Partnership workshop conducted by British council at Residency Tower, T. Nagar on 17/03/2009.



## Nothing to despair! (Kuraiyonrumillai!)

He was an "untouchable". He had a deep driving desire to visit Tirumala temple and have the dharshan of the Lord. His desire could not be fulfilled, as in those days, "untouchables" entering temples was an offence punishable under law. Day by day, his desire was growing intense and at a particular point it became irresistible and he decided to break the law and have dharshan of Lord Govinda, come what may. He discarded animal food, had a thorough cleansing bath, wore cleanly washed clothes and had the sacred mark on his forehead, went inside the temple and had an eyeful feast of the Lord's Vision. Even as he was enjoying the Bliss, he was caught "red-handed" and was handed over to the Police for being dealt with under the provisions of law.

His friends advised him to defend himself with the help of a lawyer. In spite of his desperate search, no lawyer was willing to appear for him. There were two reasons. Many of the lawyers were holding orthodox views and were not prepared to commit the blasphemy of supporting an "untouchable" who had polluted the temple. The second reason was the Indian National Congress had issued a directive to the lawyers to boycott courts.

Fortunately for our devotee-"untouchable", a lawyer came forward to take up his case. What requires to be specially mentioned is that he hailed from an orthodox family and was also a senior leader of the Congress party and had signed the pledge to follow the directive.

The accused was all nervousness. With the whole body sweating with fear, he started answering the questions put by the lawyer,

"Is it true you went inside the temple?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did you do before going to the temple?"

"Had a bath, wore washed clothes, and put the sacred mark on the forehead."

"What were you doing in the temple?"

"I was praying to the Lord."

"How were you praying? Do you know any hymn, or

the Vedas?"

"No. I do not know any hymn or sacred texts. I was simply chanting the name of the lord, 'Govinda, Govinda'"

"My Lord," turned the lawyer to the magistrate, and said, "From what the accused has deposed, it is evident that he has neither polluted, nor even diminished the sanctity of the temple". The magistrate agreed, and the devotee-"untouchable" was acquitted.

The lawyer who dealt the case was C.Rajagopalachari, popularly known as Rajaji.

This is not the end of the story. The hard core Congress men decided to take it out on Rajaji. "How can he, a senior congress leader defy the ban? Will he not be setting a bad example to others? Moreover, he had signed the pledge to boycott the courts. According to Gandhiji a man who breaks a pledge is a man of straw and stands condemned before God and Man", they argued.

The matter went to Gandhiji, who is the final arbiter on such issues. To the chagrin of the complainants, Gandhiji not only approved, but applauded the pragmatism displayed by Rajaji. What one has to look at is the spirit, not the letter of any matter. In this case it would have been co-operation with the British and perpetrators of social Injustice if the "untouchable" had gone undefended. What Rajaji did was in the real spirit of non cooperation, he said.

All of us have heard the song "kuraiyonrumillai" written by Rajaji and rendered in the melodious voice of M.S.Subbulakshmi. This is addressed to Kannan, the embodiment of the sacred texts. There is a reference in this song to the Lord who is hiding behind a curtain and visible only to the knowledgeable ones who recite the sacred texts. It is said that Rajaji had *this* episode in the back of his mind while writing these verses. Unfortunately, Rajaji is not amidst us to day to testify to the veracity of this speculation.

Published by: [Bhuvanewari Muralidharan](#) and owned by / on behalf of [Sevalaya](#) and published from [F2, Jains Eden Park, 4 - Judge Jambulingam Road, Mylapore, Chennai - 600 004](#) and printed by: [S.Kannappan @ Gem Offsets, 24 \(Old no.-20\), Swami Achari St., Royapettah, Chennai - 600 014.](#)  
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