



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Sevalaya's News Letter

August - 2004

Dear Friends,

The Kumbakonam school tragedy has shaken the whole world. Condolence messages and aid for the families are pouring in from all corners of the world. The Tamil Nadu Government is also taking very strict actions to regulate schools. In this regard let us look at the already existing norms and rules.

Every school must have 5 acres of land. They must show enough deposits in the bank so that the running of the school does not stop for want of funds. The school building must be a proper building, very well ventilated and spacious. The local authorities must approve the building plan. Schools should get certificates from an authorized engineer (for every district, the district collector's office publishes this list of engineers), certifying that the school building is stable. Based on this, schools should get building license certificate from the Thasildar. Schools should also get certificates from fire service agency. Certificates from the local public health center certifying that the water and toilet facilities are good enough are also required.

Schools should apply for recognition with all these certificates. Based on this application educational department authorities at various levels come and inspect the school and first they only give permission to start the school. After this, when the school has started functioning, the series of inspections are again conducted and only if found satisfactory, the recognition is given. This is also valid only for a period of three years and the whole process is repeated every three years. In addition to this, there are visits at various points in time

by educational authorities, both announced and unannounced. Even if a school has got long term recognition, they have to submit the building stability certificate every three years. All these procedures and processes are followed in Sevalaya's school, which does not receive any government grant. We assume that the control will be more elaborate if a school is getting grant from the Government.

All the rules and regulations are already in place. But the incident at Kumbakonam proves that all laws can be broken. Education has become a lucrative business. As long as people use education sector to make quick money, such accidents will not stop. Government is only looking at all schools now, as the incident took place in a school. I think we should look at all educational institutions, as situation in many colleges are also not very safe.

We have come a long way from the old Indian belief that 'Vidya' is not for sale. Whatever the student offers as 'Gurudakshana' (offering to the teacher) should only be accepted. But we have gone too far. Successive governments are worried about saffranization and de-saffranization of education and changing books and wasting time in parliament. What is more important is to stop commercialization of education. If public education system is good, the demand for private schools will come down and Business men will vacate education sector and leave it to educationalists to handle it.

Thanks & Regards
Murali



Study Circle Meetings

Date : 03/07/2004
 Book : Panchali Sabadham (Vow of Panchali)
 Author : Mahakavi Bharathiyar
 Speaker : Mr. T.S.Venkataramani
 Venue : Service Centre

Date : 10/07/2004
 Book : Mana Valak Kalai (The Art of Enriching the Mind)
 Author : Vedathri Maharishi
 Speaker : Mr. A.A.Kingston
 Venue : Service Centre

Date : 17/07/2004
 Book : Bharathiyar-Thiruvalluvar – Sindhanai Thirattu (A Compilation of Thoughts of Bharathiyar & Thiruvalluvar)
 Author : Venugopalan
 Speaker : Ms. S.Mariyammal
 Venue : Service Centre

Date : 30/07/2004
 Book : Manasae, Relax Please
 Author : Swami Sugabhodananda
 Speaker : Mr. R. Vijayaraghavan
 Venue : Administrative Office

Date : 31/07/2004
 Book : Karaiyora Mudalaigal
 Author : Balakumaran
 Speaker : Mr. P.Selvam
 Venue : Service Centre

Quiz time

Chinmaya Yuva Kendra conducted an inter-school quiz Competition on "Awakening India to Indians"



for classes VII & IX. 750 children from 11 schools in Thiruvallur District participated. Our school secured the V place and the successful participants K.Chitra U.Radha and R.Bharathidasan of VIII Std were given certificates and cups by Swamiji of Chinmaya Mutt in a function organised at Chennai.

Trip To Temples

The inmates of the Old Age Home were taken to visit Pachai Amman temple at Thirumullaivoil near Ambattur on 2nd July, being a full moon day in the Tamil month of Aadi, an auspicious day to visit temples of Goddesses. They also visited two other ancient temples in the nearby area. The hostel girls were taken to the ancient Siva Temple and Vishnu Temple at Thiruninravur on 23rd July.

Divine Music

On the evening of 2nd July the inmates of the Old Age Home were treated to a devotional music programme rendered by the group Sunad. Ms. Sowmya Madangopal & Party enthralled the audience with a soul-stirring rendering of Bhajans of Tulsidas, Mirabai and Bharathiyar Songs. 2nd July 2004 started and ended on a devotional note in our Old Age Home.

Sevalaya's NSS Clubs (National Service Scheme)

Three units of NSS were formed at Sevalaya in the names of our three great mentors – Mahatma Gandhiji, Mahakavi Bharathiyar and Swami Vivekananda. As a part of their club activities on 9th July the Bharathiyar team members planted 30 saplings on the Kasuva village road leading up to





Sevalaya under the guidance of our staff Mr. R. Vijayaraghavan & Mr. P. Narayanamurthy. On 16th July the Gandhiji team planted tree saplings in the Old Age Home campus under the guidance of Mr. Arockiaraj Kingston and Ms. Annapoorna Narayanaswamy. On 23rd July Swami Vivekananda team planted trees on the road to the right of Sevalaya campus. The saplings were donated by the Wild life warden Office.

School Clubs:

This month witnessed the inauguration of English Club On 7th July and Social Science Club on 8th July. In the initial meeting the students were divided into groups and activities for the next month were planned.

Street Plays:

The Kottu Murasu Cultural Troupe of Sevalaya conducted a street play depicting the various welfare activities of Sevalaya as a step towards creating awareness about Sevalaya. The play was conducted in the ground near the Siva Temple at Thiruninravur, which is an ancient temple. The programme evoked the interests of the locals and the response was encouraging.

Spreading the Message of our mentors....

With a view to spread the life and message of the Holy trinity of Sevalaya we organise programmes in nearby schools in which our staff speak to the children about the lives and message of the great men. On 16th July Mr. T. Nagaraj spoke to the students of Pakkam Government High School and Ms. Nirmala addressed the students of Pakkam Elementary School on Bharathiyar's life and poems. On 21st July Mr. T. Nagaraj spoke about Bharathi's life and poems to the students of the Government Higher Secondary School at Velliyur.

Yoga Camp

A free one-day Yoga camp was conducted at Sevalaya campus by Yoga Siromani Shri. P.D. Narayanaswamy on 25th July. 6 students from Pakkam and Balaji Nagar participated in the camp. The usefulness of yoga and the basics of Yoga & Pranayama (breathing exercise) were taught to the students. The participants expressed their desire that such camps should be conducted weekly.

The sweet taste of success...

Our sub junior and junior Volleyball team (boys) were the winners in the Poonamallee Zonal level

Tournament for the 3rd consecutive year. The senior Volleyball team were runners up. Our school participated in the Kho Kho Tournament for boys in Poonamallee Zone conducted by the Thiruvallur Educational District Secondary & Higher Secondary Boys Athletic Association at Dasar's High School, Thiruninravur. Our sub- junior and junior teams were the runners – up.

Visit to Tata Consultancy services Sholinganallur

18 students of the 1-month free computer classes in summer organised by Sevalaya, 4 teachers and Sevalaya Trustee Mr. K. Mohan visited the Sholinganallur facility of Tata Consultancy Services. Mr. Padmanabhan a senior official of TCS welcomed the visitors, took them around the facility, screened films on Tata Group of companies. TCS staff explained the working of mainframe computers. It was a novel experience for the rural students and they were full of admiration. Their feed- back reflected their sentiments. All of them thanked Sevalaya for providing this wonderful opportunity. While some of them expressed their happiness some commented that though they do not have the fortune of getting an employment in TCS they were at least fortunate to have visited the facility.

External Interface...

Mr. T.S. Venkataramani, Hony. Coordinator was the chief guest at Kamaraj Day Celebrations by Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust on 15th July. He distributed prizes to the winners and spoke to the children on Thirukkural & Kamaraj.

Ms. Bhuvaneshwari Muralidharan, Hony. Correspondent participated in Ignition 2004, an awareness programme organised by Yuva Shakthi for the students of Arumbakkam D.G. Vaishnav College on 25th July. She spoke on what inspired her to engage herself in social service activities.

Mr. T.S. Venkataramani Hony. Coordinator participated in the 1 day seminar on Quality Institutional Care and Alternatives organised by Indian Council for Child Welfare on 27th July. He was nominated to the core committee. The council members decided to visit Sevalaya and associate the organisation in the model-building process.

AN EYE FOR ART

Among the many extra-curricular activities that we teach our children at the Mahakavi Bharathiyar Higher Secondary School, the teaching of drawing, colouring, and painting, takes an important place. Our idea is to inculcate in the young minds a sense of beauty, and encourage them to express their ideas of beauty through a strong medium. The children also take to the art lessons with great enthusiasm, and create beautiful greeting cards and other items, which are very happy to mail to our friends worldwide. Our three guiding lights of Sevalaya — Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Mahakavi Subramania Bharathi - were all endowed with keen eye for the visual arts such as architecture, painting and sculpture. They all looked upon such arts as mediums for expressing the highest moral principles. And they all spoke of the joy that beautiful art brought them.

Swami Vivekananda had his first exposure to the wonderful world of Indian architecture when he saw the grand Mogul monuments at Agra and Lucknow during his wanderings as a monk. The grandeur of the Taj Mahal overpowered him and he visited it a number of times. "Every square inch of this wondrous edifice is worth a whole day's patient observation", he used to say. So also, the beauty of the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma, which he saw at the palaces of the Gaekwad of Baroda, stunned him. The characters from Hindu mythology appeared to have come to life in these paintings, and he was moved by intense emotion. Such sense of wonderment at the extraordinary artistry present in Indian art would return to him whenever he visited any of the famous temples and saw the grandeur of their sculptures.

Mahatma Gandhi, as is well known, was devoted to a life of Spartan simplicity. He wore coarse, hand-spun cloth, ate the simplest food, and his dwellings were of the most basic nature devoid of any decorations or embellishments. He adopted the simple lifestyle of the poor peasants of rural India. But many of his contemporaries misinterpreted his simple surroundings as indicating a lack of aesthetic sense. In fact Gandhiji himself had said on occasions:

"I am not an art student", "It would be impertinent on my part to hold forth on art" etc. But he held what he termed as his "fundamental convictions" on the question of art; and when he gave expression to some of these convictions it became very clear as to how deep his appreciation of visual arts actually was. "Painting is silent music" said Gandhiji. A nephew of his was thinking of taking painting as a career, and Gandhiji's advised him to use art as a means for communicating noble ideals (the way we use classical forms of music in India), and not to cheapen and commercialize it. In a similar vein, he told an English friend of his that he hated the idea of "Art for Art's sake". Gandhiji held that art has a similarity with religion, in that art like religion belonged to the domain of man's relationship with God. "Indian art symbolizes this relationship", he said, "and I believe firmly that both religion and art have to serve the identical aims of moral and spiritual elevation".

Such profound thoughts on the nature and purpose of visual arts could not have come to a person unless he was himself endowed with a perceptive and artistic vision. Such indeed was the case with Gandhiji.

He appreciated the grandeur of the temples of Tamil Nadu as "marvels of architecture", the art of Nanda Lal Bose and Abanindranath Tagore as "rare, beautiful art" — and felt extreme revulsion when he saw filth in his surroundings.

Subramania Bharathi as a writer and poet was a man of letters - a practitioner of liberal and performing arts rather than the visual arts. But that did not make him blind to visual arts. Once on being introduced to a painter, he told him: "You paint me in an *oviyam* (a painting). I will paint you in a *kaviyam* (a poem)". He saw divinity in the visual arts, and sang of Goddess Saraswathi:

*In the deft, flawless workmanship
Of temple towers and beauteous things
She resides with sweetness and bliss
Her body bright, there She is!*

For Free Circulation :

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