



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Sevalaya's News Letter

AUGUST - 2005

Dear Friends,

When we made the annual plan for this year (we involve all children also in the annual plan preparation), most of the day scholars in our school were asking us to provide a good place for them to have lunch. Many of them bring lunch from home (the younger ones get lunch in the hostel along with the hostel residents) and have lunch in their classes itself, which was not very convenient. They had suggested that we could build a platform under the neem trees we have in front of the school. So we took this suggestion very seriously and started talking to building contractors. When we got minimum quote of Rs.60, 000 to build such a platform, we were not really happy. We didn't want to spend so much money on this project.

We discussed this point with some of the villagers. Some of them, whose children are studying in our school, are construction labourers themselves. They said that as this is a very simple work, we don't have to depend on engineers etc., and they can do it themselves. When we asked how much we have to spend on this, they said "You are giving free education to our children; so we will also do it free for you". Then our headmaster approached some of the brick kilns near-by. Many of the brick kiln labourers' children are studying in our school. The brick kiln owners agreed to supply bricks free of cost. We had to spend money only on few bags of cement and the entire platform was ready in two weeks – the labourers were free only on Sundays and it took two Sundays to complete the work.

If we had asked the villagers to donate Rs 60,000, the amount which they will never see even if they work whole of their life time, they would have said that they are very poor and can't afford to donate anything. But in the process of donating their labour, that is exactly what they have done.

On 23rd July we had our 17th annual function. The entire village turned up for the function. The whole village was decorated as if there was a wedding in each house. The poor mud village road was colourful with the 'rangolis'. The entire stretch of 1.5 KMs of the village road leading to Sevalaya was decorated with 'Thoranam's'. The villagers did all this spontaneously. They were competing with one another to decorate the front of their house. The whole village wore a festive look. This was not clearly a Sevalaya function. This was the function of the village.

Such participation from the village and cooperation is hard to get. I know of many organizations, which are not able to get local support. For many years the villagers were looking at Sevalaya as the 'giver' and they were the 'receivers'. They never felt that they can also participate and they can also Give. Now, they are also giving and not just getting a free lunch.

We consider this transformation in the village as a great achievement. This is what is real village upliftment.

Thanks & Regards
Murali



Annual Day Celebration

Annual Day Celebrations

The entire village of Kasuva wore a festive look on 23/07/2005. The streets were decorated with rangolis and festoons and festivities were in the air. Yes, the occasion was the 17th Annual Day celebrations of Sevalaya. It was more of a village festival than an institution's function. All the proud parents of the children studying in the school and the village elders gathered together for the function. Mr. S.Ramadorai, CEO & MD of Tata Consultancy Services was the Chief Guest and released the 17th Annual Report of Sevalaya. Mr. K.V.S.Vijayakumar of Rathna & Rao Wisdom Trust, who contributed to the very first classroom of the multi-storeyed school building standing majestically now, received the first copy. Dr. V.L Dutt, Chairman of the Chennai Willingdon Corporate Foundation, inaugurated the completed School Building. The foundation granted Rs 45 lakhs to complete the structure and for furnitures and fittings. The students presented a variety entertainment programme. Staff, who had put in 5 years of service, were honoured. Staff whose students achieved 100% results in X and XII Std were also honoured. The top ranking students of Std X and XII were also awarded prizes.

Camps and Tours

All the staff were taken on a one day trip to Buhari's Blue Lagoon Beach Resort, Chennai, to celebrate their achievement of attaining 100% results in the X Std Board Examinations for the third consecutive year. A welcome change from the sweltering heat, they relaxed and enjoyed the day.



Medical Camp

Educational trips and tours

Students of XI and XII standard were taken on a tour of the Sholingnallur office of Tata Consultancy Services on 09/07/2005. TCS Sholingnallur hosted lunch for them in honour of the students securing 100% pass in the X std Board Examinations. The students were taken on a tour around the facility. They were awe-struck and very much inspired.

Senior officials of the TCS spoke to them about employment opportunities in the IT sector. The students returned to the campus enlightened about the heights they can reach by academic excellence and a resolve to put in their best efforts.

Medical Camps

Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi- Kilpauk organised a free one day Siddha medical camp at the service centre on 10/07/2005. Villagers from nearby villages also attended the camp. In all 300 persons were examined by the team of doctors. Free medicines were also distributed.

NSS Activities

The Gandhi NSS group – 22 boys and 22 girls with 4 staff members went to Sivan Voil village on 15/07/2005. They divided themselves into groups and cleaned the entire area around the village temple, put fencing around the trees and watered the trees in the temple premises and drew 'rangolis' in front of the temple. The temple was clean and spruced up and the students faces gleamed with happiness.



The Bharathiyar Group of NSS students along with 4 staff members cleaned up in and around Sevalaya Campus and planted saplings near the temple at Ramanathapuram as a part of their NSS activity on 21/07/2005.

Participation in External Programmes

Our children participated in the Thirukkural Oratorical Competition conducted by Sriram Literary Society on 16/07/2005.

School Clubs

The English Club met on 20/07/2005. To improve the vocabulary of the students, a game was devised where the students divided themselves into four groups and tried to interpret the meanings of new words. The Byron team won the game with 120 points. To prepare the students to stage plays in English, the story "The Diamond Necklace" by Guy De Maupassant is selected and the students are being trained. The play is to be staged in August 2005.

The Social Sciences Club met on 21/07/2005. Mr. P.Narayanamoorthy spoke to the children about the importance of study of Social Sciences and highlighted the fact it will help them to prepare for the Civil Services Examination and become an IAS or IPS officer.

Study Circle Meetings

At the weekly study Circle meetings every Saturday at the service centre, each staff reviewed a book every week. Monthly once, i.e the last Friday of every month a book review meeting is held at Sevalaya Administrative Office, where the staff takes turns to review a book read by them. MS. Annapoorna Narayanswami discussed the book "Life is an Attitude" by Billington on 02/07/2005. On 09/07/2005



Mr. Palanichamy reviewed the biography of Scientific Genius Einstein by Appadurai. Mr. C.Saravanamoorthy took up the Book "Thought is Life" by Abdur Rahim for review on 16/07/2005. On 29/07/2005 at the administrative Office, Ms. Thenmozhi discussed a book by J.Krishnamurthy, which focuses on dealing with sorrows and living a Happy life. The biography of the Social Reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy by Nagai Mohan was the book taken up by Mr. Vijayaraghavan for review on 30/07/2005 at the service Centre.

In the Students Study Circle meeting, R.Dharani spoke about a book in Tamil on Magic done by Scientists, written by Mr.Deiva Sigamani, on 3rd July 2005. B.Silambarasan reviewed the book Ulaga Puratchiyalarkalin Kathaigal by Mr.Jegatha on 9th July 2005, in Tamil. R.Prabu reviewed the same book on 16th July 2005.

Temple Visits

The Hostel boys were taken on visits to the Vinayaka Temple at Ramanathapuram village on 8th & 15th July 2005. The Hostel girls went to the same temple on 02/07/2005. All the hostel Students went to the Krishna Temple at Kasuva on 29/07/2005.

Yoga Classes

Yoga Master Er. Meyyappan conducted Yoga classes thrice a week at our administrative office from 6:00 AM to 7:00 AM during July 2005. About 9 persons from areas in and around Karpagam Gardens, Adyar, where the office is situated joined the course and were benefited. The Yoga master gave away as donation to Sevalaya, the "Gurudakshina" contributed by his students.

Mahatma Gandhi and the Sanatanists

On November 7, 1933 Mahatma Gandhiji started on his Harijan tour from Wardha. The purpose was to educate the people on the curse of untouchability and to mobilise funds for the Harijan cause. He traversed the length and breadth of the country visiting Harijan colonies, talking to people, particularly women and students. There was an overwhelming response from the people. Funds were pouring in. Temples, wells and roads were spontaneously thrown open in different places. However the tour was not without its darker spots. Sanatanists led by one Pandit Lalnath staged black flag demonstrations against Gandhiji at different places, obstructed his movement, and disturbed his meetings.

In Ajmer, before he arrived at the meeting spot, Pandit Lalnath was at the venue and tried to address the meeting condemning the Harijan movement, with the result that he received a lathi blow on the head. On reaching the spot, Gandhiji learnt what happened. He rebuked the audience and then called upon Pandit Lalnath to speak. He announced his decision to fast for seven days on completion of the tour. "This is the least penance I owe to Pandit Lalnath and the sanatanists whom he represents. May it (The penitential fast) cover all the errors, conscious and unconscious, of omission or commission, of my co-workers and me... Let it open a new and cleaner chapter in this struggle for the emancipation of nearly fifty million human beings from thralldom, imposed in the sacred name of religion. Let it also be a warning to those who are in, or will join the movement that they will approach it with clean hands and hearts, free from untruth and violence in thought, word and deed."

The tour was concluded at Benares on July 29 1934. The day was observed as a day of thanksgiving for the successful completion of the tour. In Benares, on that day, when just as Gandhiji was about to leave for the meeting, he

received a warrant on behalf of the Lord of Kashi, calling upon him to appear before the Kothwal of the Lord and there be tried for the breach of the Sanatana Dharma. This was the last of Pandit Lalnath's demonstrations. "Who gave you the warrant?" asked Gandhiji of the young sanatanist who served the warrant. "The Lord prompted me to serve the warrant and arrest you," replied the young man. "Then, why does not the Lord prompt me to obey this warrant?" asked Gandhiji. "Because you are a sinner against Sanatana Dharma," promptly replied the youth. Now, Pandit Lalnath himself appeared on the scene and asked for two portraits of Gandhiji. He replied that he never kept any portraits himself and in any case, he would not comply with any of the requests made by the party. The sanatanists procured Gandhiji's portrait and publicly burnt it. On the completion of the tour, Gandhiji did go on the fast, notwithstanding the abrasive behaviour of Pandit Lalnath.

At the conclusion of the 7 days' fast, he issued a statement." The fast was primarily and nominally intended for the hurt caused to Swami Lalnath and his friends at Ajmer at the hands of the sympathisers with the movement. But in reality, it is a call to all workers and sympathisers to be most exact and correct in approaching opponents. Utmost consideration shown to them is the best propaganda for the movement.

The fast was undertaken to impress upon the workers the truth that we can only win over the opponent by love, never by hate. Hate is the subtlest form of violence. We cannot be really non violent and have hate in us."

Gandhiji was able to distinguish the evildoer from the evil. He never bore any malice towards, but could show love to, the evildoer.

Does this episode have any lesson for the contemporaries as to how to conduct a movement?

FOR FREE CIRCULATION :

Send your comments to: Sevalaya, #3, First Link Street, Karpagam Gardens, Adyar, Chennai-600 020.

Phone : 24468202 / 24468205 E.mail : sevalaya@vsnl.com visit at: www.sevalaya.org