



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Sevalaya's News Letter

DECEMBER - 2003

Dear Friends,

For many people, their philanthropy is restricted to their caste, their community, their land, their sex or their religion. Rarely do we come across people whose love for humanity crosses all borders. I happened to read about one such person recently, as reported in press in Tamil Nadu.

Col. John Pennycuick was an English engineer. He was posted in south Tamil Nadu, during the British India time. Tamil Nadu has been having water crisis from that time onwards. For centuries together, Tamil Nadu depends on Rain God, for all its water needs. Even today, Chennai city is helplessly watching clouds over its skyline moving from Chennai to down south. If it does not rain in the next two to three weeks, Chennai will have its worst water scarcity this summer. To be in such a state for couple of centuries, does not speak well of our planning ability.

Let us get back to John Pennycuick.

When he was posted in India, he wanted to take some effective corrective action to this water problem. He studied the situation of south Tamil Nadu and decided if he can reverse the course of a river flowing west, the area south of Madurai will be able to get water. Thankfully we didn't have regional Governments then and also no regional political parties! So it was easy for John Pennycuick to propose this solution. He worked out a detailed blue print for the project and submitted to the Government, with detailed budget. As the water had to flow through a hill, the budget was quite high. Initially the Government was hesitant to spend this money. John Pennycuick came up with a

suggestion that he will get the local workforce to contribute labour and by that he can reduce the overall cost. The Government agreed after lot of follow-up and finally the project work started. But the local workforce lacked commitment and often stopped work as they had to attend to many local festivals! I wonder how we can have so many festivals, when we had a water problem! So the cost went beyond the budget and the British Government cancelled the project, when it was half-way through. John Pennycuick was very upset as the project was his baby. He then went back to his home town and spoke to his wife. He explained to her how the project will help south Tamil Nadu and how he is duty bound to complete this work. Finally his wife donated all her jewellery for the expense of the project! John Pennycuick returned to India with his own money now and with that, completed the project successfully! The west flowing river was made to flow eastwards and south Tamil Nadu, got the much-required water at last!

We often hear cases where officials take money from public projects for their own use. Very rarely we come across instances where a person sells the jewels of his wife to fund a public project. Very rightly and deservedly a statue for Col. John Pennycuick has been erected in front of Madurai Public works department. Recently Col. John Pennycuick's great grandson visited Madurai and he was welcomed very warmly by the public.

History should also talk about such people, not just General Dyers!

Thanks & Regards
Murali

STOP PRESS : Sevalaya accepts contribution through Citibank Cards.

STUDY CIRCLE MEETINGS AT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE ON FRIDAYS

Date : 07.11.2003
Speaker : Mr. R.Vijayaraghavan
Book : Simple, Very Simple
Author : Thiruvallur N.C.Sridharan

Date : 21.11.2003
Speaker : Ms. Mohana Chandrasekaran
Book : Mind And Prayer (Tamil)
Author : Dr. M.S.Udayamoorthy

Date : 28.11.2003
Speaker : Ms. P.S.Manimegalai
Book : How to make your future bright?
(Tamil)
Author : Mr. C.F.Devanathan

STUDY CIRCLE MEETINGS AT SEVALAYA CAMPUS ON SATURDAYS

Date : 01.11.2003
Speaker : Mr. R.Kesavan
Book : As a Man Thinketh
Author : Mr. James Allen

Date : 08.11.2003
Speaker : Mr. T.Nagaraj
Book : How to Relate to others pleasantly?
(Tamil)
Author : Vincent

Date : 22.11.2003
Speaker : Mr. K.Mohan
Book : Tao of Physics
Author : Fritjof Capra

Date : 29.11.2003
Speaker : Mr. E.Senthil Kumar
Book : Problem Solving (Tamil)
Author : Archana

IN THE MEDIA.....

City Express of the New Indian Express made a mention about the volunteers in Sevalaya in their column titled "A few good men and women who love to help" in its issue dated 25.11. 2003.



Tharagambadi Fort

Philanthropy Newsletter of the Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy published from Mumbai has reproduced the Editorial letter of Sevalaya's Managing Trustee Mr. Murali that appeared in the September issue of our Newsletter. They have published the article in their issue of Sep-Oct 2003 under the caption "Indian Philanthropy in New York...."

REACHING OUT....

Slide shows and Lectures on the Life of Mahatma Gandhiji conducted by our Trustees in schools nearby:

Date : 6.11.2003
School : Jaya Matriculation School, Thiruninravur
Conducted by : Mr. G.Ram Mohan, Trustee

Date : 8.11.2003
School : Angel Matriculation School, Thiruninravur
Conducted by : Mr. K.Mohan , Trustee

Date : 28.11.2003
School : Sri Hari Saradha Matriculation School, Pakkam
Conducted by : Mr. A.Annamalai, Trustee

Date : 29.11.2003
School : Good Shepherd Matriculation School, Pattabhiram
Conducted by : Mr. K. Mohan, Trustee

Lecture on life of Mahakavi Bharathiyar delivered by our staff in nearby schools

Date : 30.10.2003
School : Komakkambedu Panchayat Union School
Conducted By : Mr. T.Nagaraj

Date : 20.11.2003
School : Nathamedu School,
Conducted by : Ms. B.Nirmala



Kanchipuram Temple

MONTHLY LEADRES MEET

Leader's Meeting for the month of November was a brain storming session on shop floor issues. Various practical problems were freely and frankly discussed.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

On 15.11 2003 Mr. A.Arockia Raj Kingston and Mr. R.Vijayaraghavan , Staff of Sevalaya were deputed to ASPIRE a Training Programme for teachers organized by Yuva Shakthi at Chennai.

With a view to initiating the staff members, particularly the recently inducted people into the Gandhian way of conduct in private and public life and in organizational behaviour, a series of lectures covering the life and activities of the Mahatma are being organized by Sevalaya. On 8.11.2003 and 25.11.2003 Mr. T.S.Venkataramani, Hony. Coordinator of Sevalaya spoke to the staff members on the subject.

OUR VISITORS.....

Students and teachers of Navadisha Montessori School, Velacherry, Chennai visited our school and interacted with the children of the Primary Section of our school on 14.11.2003 on the occasion of Childrens' Day. Our children presented a delightful cultural Programme for the visitors, which was well appreciated.

On 23.11.2003 members of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi Chennai led by Dr. Susila Sambamurthy visited our Old Age Home and spent a spiritually charged day with singing of Bhajans. They provided special lunch to the senior citizens and distributed sarees and dhothies to them.

HEALTH CARE

Apart from the periodical visits by our paediatrician Dr. Susila Sambamurthy, Dr. Mohan of Rajan Eye Hospital conducted an eye camp for our inmates as well as the villagers from the surrounding villages on 2.11.2003.



Children's Day Celebration

CAMPS AND TOURS

Our senior citizens were taken on a tour to the temple city of Kanchipuram on 9.11.2003. Managing Trustee Mr. V.Muralidharan accompanied them. The visits to the temples and Kanchi Mutt and dharshan of His Holiness Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swami made the visit an occasion to cherish for the senior citizens.

The staff of Sevalaya were taken on a tour to Pondicherry and Chidambaram on 14.11.2003 and 15.11.2003.

RAMZAN CELEBRATIONS AT SEVALAYA



Ramzan was celebrated at our campus on 27th November 2003 addressing the children and staff on the occasion Mr. S.N.Sikkandar, M.A , Director, Manuda Vasantham, Islamic Television Programme explained the significance of Ramzan Fasting. He dwelt at length on the good value systems preached by Islam and on how the fasting during the month of Ramzan is a training ground for spiritual growth of a person creating awareness about the omnipresence of God, cultivating humility and spirit of sharing whatever one possesses with their less privileged brethren. The session was an interactive one with the audience participating with enthusiasm.



Children of Navadisha Montessori School

EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN

One of the important if not **the most important** service activities at our Sevalaya campus is the running of Mahakavi Bharathiar Higher Secondary School where nearly five hundred children from broken homes, and from poor rural homes, are imparted education up to higher secondary level, free of any charge. This is in keeping with the teachings of our three preceptors, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Mahakavi Subramania Bharati. All of them laid the greatest stress on educating the children in poor rural areas if Indian society as a whole were to advance and prosper.

Swami Vivekananda was deeply impressed with the progress made by the Western world in terms of material prosperity and spread of scientific knowledge, even on his first visit to Europe and North America in 1893. As he traveled through many cities of Europe and saw the levels of comfort and education enjoyed by all members of the society, he thought of the plight of the poor among his own people back in India. " I used to shed tears" he wrote to a friend, 'What made the difference? Education was the answer I got. We are so near to destruction. The remedy is the spread of education".

But Swamiji was by no means an admirer of the system of education brought into our country by the British rulers. " It is nothing but a perfect machine for turning out clerks" he said. He wanted to impart knowledge of Western science coupled with India's ancient wisdom as contained in our Vedantic literature. He advocated brahmacharya (celibacy) and shraddha (deep commitment to learning) as the ideal states of body and mind for the young student.

Mahatma Gandhi was equally a believer in the need to spread education among the rural population of India to take the country forward. He also wanted to make drastic changes in the system of education. In his view the first place in education went to building of good moral

character in the young student. One good means for such character building was to develop in the young minds a love and respect for physical labour. He favoured engaging children in creative activities such as gardening, spinning, weaving, carpentry, shoe making and such other crafts.

On the question of primary education, Gandhiji's views were quite revolutionary. First and foremost, he did not believe in the use of textbooks at the early stages. He wanted that the teachers at that stage should only talk to the children and give them their lessons orally. He refused to believe that children should be taught to read and write before any other knowledge is imparted to them. He advocated the use of oral lessons to also build strong moral character in the children. He wanted that the essence of Ramayana and Mahabharata be taught to the children even as a part of primary education.

If Swamiji and Gandhiji could be called as strong believers in the role of universal education as the means for the rejuvenation of India, Mahakavi Bharathi's belief in education can only be described as one bordering on fanaticism. The depth of his belief in the importance of education and knowledge was not unlike the belief of a religious fanatic in the truth of his own religion. He wanted schools to be treated with all the reverence normally shown to temples. He declared that knowledge alone is God. Singing the praise of Saraswathi, the Goddess of learning he sang:

*In every house the light of learning,
In every street a school or two;
Throughout the land in every town
And city a multitude of schools;
Burning down a town where seekers
Of knowledge find no place of learning;
These are the ways to gain the grace
Of our Mother immortal who destroys
All evil by the nectar of knowledge.*

For Free Circulation :

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