



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Sevalaya's News Letter

FEBRUARY - 2004

Dear Friends,

What do we basically need to help others? First of all, we must have enough money for ourselves. Only after we satisfy all our needs first, we can even think of helping others. There may be several conditions we think of, before we can help others. We have to be grown-ups, able to take our own decision, we must have enough education to know how to help, we must be from cities, as villages are always poor and need of help all the time, we must be from 'upper' caste, if we are 'untouchables' ourselves, no one will even accept our help. These are conditions from our side. We will also apply many conditions on the person receiving help from us. He or she should be of our own caste or community or religion or at least should be our own countrymen. We should know the person; we should communicate directly with them to make sure that the person receiving help is really in need of help.

We always believe that charity begins at home. Well, when we apply so many conditions, most likely the charity will end at home too!

When there was a massive earthquake in Iran, it not only shook the buildings in Iran but also all the conditions listed above for helping others! The set of people whom I am talking about were Children in the age group of five to ten. They are poor themselves. They belong to a caste group called 'Dalits'. They are from a remote village from South India. They don't have enough food themselves, not even

proper dress! None of them have footwears, as it is considered to be a luxury! When they came to know about the plight of the people in the city of Bam, spontaneously they responded by saying that they will send their 'idlies' and 'curd rice' to Iran. The teacher Ms. K. Rathi had to explain to them that Iran is too far and we can only send money. They immediately started contributing whatever they had in their pocket, 25 paise or 50 paise each. (Equal to half a cent or a cent in US currency). The total collection from the school was Rs 313.50. (Around 7 US dollars) This money was then sent to the Chief Minister of Tamil nadu by money order. All the children had to sacrifice two days of their daily snack, like the piece of mango or the candy they eat during lunchtime!

This was from the Narayankulam Oththapatti Panchayat Union Primary School, located in a remote part of Virudhunagar district, south Tamil Nadu.

These children didn't ask if the people of the Bam city are black or white, what caste or creed or religion. They didn't even know which part of the globe Iran is in. Added to this they didn't have extra money after taking care of their needs, but only had a large heart.

There is nothing wrong with the proverb 'charity begins at home'. We only have to be clear about what is 'Home'.

Thanks & Regards
Murali

For a copy of Gandhian Experiment on Education (Tamil) priced at Rs. 30/- Please contact Administrative Office.

Study Circle Meetings

Date	: 02/01/2004
Speaker	: Mr. T.S. Thanigaivasan
Book	: Peace Education
Author	: Mr.S. Kuzhandaisamy
Venue	: Administrative Office
Date	: 03/01/2004
Speaker	: Ms.S.Kavitha
Book	: Gandhian Life Style
Published by	: Gandhi Peace Foundation
Venue	: Service Centre
Date	: 09/01/2004
Speaker	: Mr. E.Sendhil Kumar
Book	: Mind - Key to Success
Author	: Mr. P.C.Ganesan
Venue	: Administrative Office
Date	: 10/01/2004
Speaker	: Mr. T.Nagarajan
Book	: Gold of Ettayapuram
Author	: Ms. Ponnammal
Venue	: Service Centre
Date	: 23/01/2004
Speaker	: Mr.A.Annamalai
Book	: Gandhi :The traditional roots of Charisma
Authors	: Susanne Hoerber Rudolph Lloyd Rudolph
Venue	: Administrative Office
Date	: 24/01/2004
Speaker	: Mr.V.Muralidharan
Book	: The Alchemist
Author	: Mr. Paul Coelho
Venue	: Service Centre

Events:

Vivekananda Jayanthi was celebrated on 10/01/2004. Mr. R. Lakshminpathy, Dist. Elementary Educational Officer (in charge) was the Chief Guest and distributed prizes to winners of the competitions on Swami Vivekananda in poetry, essay and oratory. There were 27 prize winners. The number of participants were over 100 from different schools in Thiruvallur District. Ms. Bhuvanewari, Assistant Elementary Educational Officer, and Mr. Vaiyali, President, Puliur Panchayat also spoke on the occasion.



Balu Expo Mr. Jayachandran distributes Gift during Pongal

Republic Day was celebrated with the usual gusto. Chief Guest of this year's function was Mr. P.Suresh Kumar, Manager, Canara Bank, Vengal. In his simple but inspiring speech, he stressed on the importance of children imbibing good values. He also administered the pledge, chalked out by the President, His excellency Dr. A.P.J.Abdul Kalam to the children.

The highlight of the programme was a cultural event conducted by our children. It was the inaugural staging of the play "Harischandra" by our Kottumurasu Cultural troupe. It is significant that it is "Harischandra" play that influenced the child Mohandas who ultimately became the Mahatma.

26th January 2004 became eventful to us in other ways too. Bhoomi Pooja (the ground breaking ceremony) was performed for the proposed Guest House and Library in our campus. It was at dawn-5:30 AM and all the inmates including the senior citizens had assembled at the venue and had enthusiastically participated in the rituals by carrying the holy water, sprinkling nava- dhanyams and handing out the first bricks.

There was an interesting "Patti Manram" (debate) on that day with Mr. Krishnan, Mr. Rajagopalan (old age home inmates), Mr. T.Nagaraj, Mr. R. Vijayaragavan and Mr. A.A.Kingston (teachers) participating. The topic was Whether Males or Females are best at benevolence? The judgement was by Mr. V.Muralidharan. In his characteristic way, he proclaimed, "It is not important whether males or females are good at benevolence. The essential point is benevolence itself is good!"

The fourth event of the day was a session conducted by Mr. Muthiah Ramanathan, a noted psychologist and trainer on "How to score more marks in the examinations?" for the children of 9th, 10th and 11th Standards. His approach was pragmatic and down to earth and at the same time was gripping. It was a timely intervention for our children, particularly those who will be taking the X Std Public Exam shortly.

There was yet another event of significance. Mr. V.Muralidharan was the special invitee for the training programme conducted by Mr. M. K. Chandra Sekar, Development Officer, LIC of India,



Mattu Pongal - 2004

Anna Nagar Branch for the agents of his unit. The participants were emotionally moved to hear some of the human interest stories truthfully depicted and assured to render all possible support for the cause.

Monthly Leaders Meeting:

Conducted on 04/01/2004 the meeting considered the inputs given by the inmates and the workers for drafting the annual plan 2004-05, fine tuned and consolidated them. It was decided to call for the suggestions of well wishers and donors in a proforma devised for the purpose.

Senior Citizens on a Temple Visit Spree

On 30/12/2003 the inmates of the Old Age Home were taken to Adyar and Thiruvanniyur where they visited the Anantha Padmanabha Swamy, Varasiddhi Vinayagar, Ashta Lakshmi and Marundeeswarar temples. They spared some time to say "Hello" to their counter-parts of Kakkum Karangal, Old Age Home at Thiruvanniyur.



Boomi Pooja For Library

On 14/01/2004 they visited the historic Veera Raghava Perumal Temple at Thiruvallur with Mr. V.Muralidharan.

School Events

On 03/01/2004 Mr. V.Muralidharan met the parents/guardians of 10th Std (day scholars) and had individual interaction with them updating the progress of their wards aptly assisted by the respective teachers.

On 10/01/2004 and 11/01/2004 Ms. Ranjani Parthasarathy of Anna University and her team conducted a programme on "Vedic Mathematics" for the students of 8th and 9th standards.

On 22/01/2004 the Abdul Kalam Science Club of our school met. There was a demonstration on expansion of solid material due to heat.



Republic Day Celebration

Sportsfolio

Our students participated in the Volley ball tournament conducted by G.K.Shetty Vivekananda Vidyalaya Junior College on 21/01/2004 and 22/01/2004.

Competitions

On 24/01/2004 our children participated in poetry, elocution and recitation competition conducted by Chinmaya Yuva Kendra and received certificates.

Sound Mind in a Sound Body

On 24th and 25th a Vipassana Meditation Camp was conducted for students of 9th, 10th and 11th std students at our campus. The programme included silent retreat, meditation, creative activity, counselling and question and answer session.

Training & Development

Mr. R. Vijayaraghavan and Mr. C.Saravanamoorthy, our teachers participated in a Teachers motivational cum orientation programme conducted by "Yuva Shakthi" at Chennai on 24/01/2004.

Sarvodaya Observance

Our children had the privilege of being allotted a slot in the Bhajan Singing session on Sarvodaya Day near Gandhi Statue in Marina Beach organized by the Govt. of Tamil Nadu. The singing by our children was impressive and His Excellency the Governor of TamilNadu Mr. P.S.Ram Mohan Rao has invited the children to visit the Raj Bhavan on 10th Februaury 2004. It is an event we are eagerly looking forward to!

Book on Sevalaya released

Mr. R.Thandapani has chosen study of Sevalaya for his M.Phil with Madurai Kamaraj University. The treatise was published as a book by "Thayaram Publications" under the title "Gandhian Experiment in Education". The book was released in a well attended function at Vinobha hall in Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya campus at T.Nagar, Chennai. Dr. K.P. Aravaanan, Former Vice-Chancellor Manonmaniyam Sundaranar University, released the book and the first copy was received by Mr. B.S.Raghavan, I A S, Former Chief Secretary of West Bengal Government. Mr. V.K.Sthanunathan, Secretary, Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya felicitated the author and Mr.V.Muralidharan, the Managing Trustee of Sevalaya. The Vision and Mission, which have been well brought to light by the author Mr. R.Thandapani was well appreciated by the speakers.



Book Release Function

RUN AND PLAY, LITTLE ONE

One of the facilities for which we are still in the process of building up the infrastructure for our children's home at Sevalaya is that of a fully equipped playground. We have a plot of about two acres in area dedicated for use as a playground, and we are developing therein the facilities for games. We have at present a court for playing volleyball, ball badminton and ring tennis, and a sandpit for kabadi. We would like to add facilities for many more games including football, hockey, cricket and basketball. The idea is to make games and physical training interesting for the children so that they would enjoy the exercise. That would be in keeping with the teachings of the three guiding lights of Sevalaya -- Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Mahakavi Subramania Bharati -- who taught us that making children run and play is necessary to have them develop as adults healthy in body and mind.

Swami Vivekanda was himself a very enthusiastic allround sportsman as a school and college student. As a schoolboy, Narendra (that was Swamiji's name before he took sannyasa) was very good in cricket. As he grew into adolescence he developed an interest in bodybuilding, and started a gymnasium. He learnt boxing, and became so proficient that he won the championship prize in a local boxing tournament. He also learnt fencing, rowing, swimming, horse riding and wrestling. His greatest interest at one stage was the sport of lathi-play, known as silambu in Tamil. Once as a young boy, he attended a display of lathi-wielding by some so-called 'experts'. Finding the standard of display to be quite poor, he challenged the best of them to an immediate contest. His opponent was a much stronger person, and initially appeared to be winning. But at a critical moment Narendra manoeuvred himself into a correct position and delivered a resounding blow to the opponent's staff. The staff broke in two, and Narendra was declared the winner!

With such enthusiasm for all forms of manly sport, Swamiji was an advocate of making

games and physical training an integral part of school curriculum. He wanted Indian youth to be trained to be physically strong, bold and aggressive.

Much unlike Swamiji, Mahatma Gandhi had no love for sports and games as a schoolboy. In his school, gymnastics and cricket were compulsory for the boys in upper standards; but he, as he says in his Autobiography, "hated both". Why? Gandhiji's own assessment is that he hated such competitive games because of his shy nature at that stage in his life. But one form of physical exercise enthused him greatly, and that was walking. Even from early on in life he developed an interest in taking long walks in the open air. It became a lifetime's habit.

Gandhiji wrote at length on the positive effects of walking and other forms of physical exercise. For young students, he said, "Physical training should have as much place in the curriculum as mental training". With his special love for walking, he described it as "the king of physical exercises". Even here he advocated only very long walks. "A walk, to be worth the name, should cover ten or twelve miles," he says! That was his love for his chosen form of exercise.

Subramania Bharati was a strikingly sprightly person who walked with a remarkable spring in his gait. It is said that when he walked into a room full of people all eyes would automatically turn on him and all conversation would cease. Such was the physical energy he generated and displayed. With such bubbling energy, is it any wonder that he advised children to run and play? In what is perhaps one of the most popular and loved among his songs in Tamil, he sang:

*Run and play, little one
Laziness is not for you!
Get together and play little one
Quarreling is not for you!*

*Songs first in the morning
Then fruitful lessons to learn
And games the whole evening*

For Free Circulation :

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