



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Sevalaya's News Letter

FEBRUARY - 2006

Dear Friends,

I am an alumna of Indian Institute of Science. The campus was so beautiful and we used to enjoy the long walks inside the campus. We used to go to the computer centre in late nights and return to hostel in the early hours. No one had any fear of moving around inside the campus, at any time during day or night. Popular Tamil writer 'Sujatha' once wrote that students will not mind failing in their exams, if that will enable them stay one more year inside the campus!

This institute was originally known as Tata institute, as Tatas built this as the first scientific and technological education centre for Indians, under advice from Swami Vivekananda. In such a beautiful and peaceful campus, there was firing by militants and one scientist was killed recently. There was no reason for that shooting to happen in that campus; there is no logic in that loss of life. This is a blind and meaningless terrorist attack.

Everyday when we open newspapers, it is full of suicide bombing, car bomb attacks, land mines, kidnapping, rape, shooting, threats, and counter-threats etc. Was the world this violent always? May be yes, but thanks to the kind of communications we have, we are now able to know all such events happening throughout the world. The recorded history is full of wars. Violence has been glorified in history, even in today's movies.

What can individuals like us do to fight this violence? Let us try to be non-violent in our thought, words and action to start with. Many

of us think negatively about others, use very harsh words, and there is lot of beating of children going on in many houses. There is still some amount of wife beating and may be in some houses husband beating also.

In the fast paced corporate world there is lot of hatred generated due to competition and jealousy and rat race. We crib about others most of the time. We intentionally or unintentionally hurt others every day, we can't tolerate a different opinion, and we form our own groups of loyalists and enemies. Are we not adding to the negative energy in the world?

Many of us come to know of good things about others, about some positive events happening around us. Such things won't appear in newspapers. We can talk about such good things, especially anything to add strength to non-violent approach. Now a days we get lot of chain e-mails about many things, why not some positive news? If some of us have influence, may be we can get them published in local papers. We have lot of opportunity to add to the positive energy in the world.

Will this change the violent scenario in the world? Will this reduce the explosions and killings and blood shed? Will our actions change the world? Why not? The world is made up of people like us only.

To quote Mahatma Gandhi: 'Let us be the change we wish to see in the world'.

Thanks & Regards
Murali



Events at the Campus

Swami Vivekananda had faith in the youth of this country and his writings and lectures were forceful and inspired them to become aware of the glorious heritage of our motherland and dedicate them to her service and take her to greater heights. It is imperative that every young man/woman should study Swamiji's writings. To provide an opportunity to the rural students to know more about Swami Vivekananda and his works Sevalaya conducts a unique open book examination on the Life and Works of Swamiji for the schools in Thiruvallur District. The toppers in this examination were felicitated in the **Swami Vivekananda Day** celebrated on **07/01/2006**. **Ms. N.Latha**, Chief Educational Officer, Thiruvallur District was the Chief Guest and distributed prizes.

There is an ever-increasing competition to secure admissions in prestigious institutions for higher studies and mounting pressure on the students to excel academically. The sole aim of education is now perceived as a passport to the paradise (read America) for many of the students and they are turning out to be bridled horses. In this scenario, concepts like "social awareness and paying back to the society" etc. are becoming extinct. Sevalaya is determined to play a small but significant role in creating a sense of social responsibility among the youth. As a step towards this, a **one-day seminar on "Volunteering in Social Service"** conducted by **Mr. Muthiah Ramanathan**, Director, Mind Dynamics Centre was organised on **07/01/2006**. Nearly 110 students from nearest colleges participated in the seminar. The session was very lively and interactive. The speaker quoted many interesting incidents from the lives of great achievers and impressed upon the youngsters that fulfilment can be achieved only when one extends a helping hand to the less fortunate and underprivileged brethren and not by amassing materialistic possessions. He concluded by urging



the students to play their part by spending some time to volunteering in the activities of any of the many NGO's serving the cause of the needy in various fields.

Pongal is the harvest festival of Tamilnadu. It marks the onset of harvest season and the occasion is celebrated as a thanksgiving function for the friends of the farmers- The Sun God and the cattle. It is celebrated for 3 days. The first day is Bhogi – when people clean up their houses, dispose off old and unwanted items. The second Day (The first day of Tamil month "Thai") is celebrated as Pongal. People worship Sun God. They cook Pongal (rice cooked with milk and jaggery) in new earthen pots in open space and offer it to the God. The Third Day is celebrated as "Mattu Pongal" – when cows and buffaloes are decorated – horns painted and vermilion and kumkum paste applied to their foreheads and garlands round their neck. They are then worshipped and taken as procession round the village. Traditionally, on Mattu Pongal Day, "Jallikattu" – a game where village youth try to overpower a bull is organised. Bulls are specially reared for this purpose.

Sevalaya celebrated the function in a traditional manner for 3 days – **13/01/2006 to 15/01/2006**. On the first Day Bhogi a mini marathon was organised. The students of Sevalaya and many village youth ran through the surrounding villages carrying placards about a "**Smokeless Bhogi**"- urging people to stop the practice of incinerating the waste materials and rubber tyres etc as a symbol of disposing off the unwanted items, thus creating air pollution. The **marathon** was flagged off by the Chief Guest, Advocate **Mr. Andharidoss**. **Mr. Venkatesa Mudaliyar** of Puliur, an agriculturist and **Mr. Raveendran**, President, Palavedu Panchayat were the chief guests for **Pongal**. The third day **Mattu Pongal** was celebrated with Veterinary **Dr. Govardhanaraj** being our Chief Guest. Instead of the traditional



Mini Marathon

"Jallikattu"-most of the times this turns out to be a gory game when many youngsters and onlookers are severely injured / lose their lives; not to mention about the trauma for the poor bull when men rush to control it accompanied by drumbeats and loud cheering of the onlookers – Sevalaya organised a **Volleyball Tournament for the village Youth**. 15 teams from the surrounding villages participated in the tournament. The team from Velliyur were the winners and Vengal team were the runners up.

Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi, Kilpauk on **08/01/2006**, conducted a free **Siddha Medical camp** for the villagers. Doctors from Arignar Anna Siddha Medical College and Hospital conducted check ups for the villagers and distributed free medicines.

Sevalaya celebrated **Republic day** at its service Centre on **26/01/2006**. **Mr. P.Andavan**, Manager -Indian Bank, Thiruniravur the Chief guest hoisted the flag and addressed the gathering.

Humour Club, Mylapore Chapter visited Sevalaya Campus on **29/01/2006** and entertained the children with jokes and humorous anecdotes. The children had a hearty laugh.

Sports Events

The Sports Authority of Tamilnadu conducted District Level Athletes Meet at TI School Ground on 06/01/2006. Among the girls Sevalaya's S.Baby won the



Siddha Medical Camp



Republic Day Celebration

II Place in 200 mts. running race and V.Bhanu priya won III place in the 600 mts. running race. Boys Junior team from Sevalaya won the IV place in Volley ball.

Our students also participated in the District Level Sports Meet conducted by Velammal Matriculation Hr. Sec School on 27 and 28/01/2006.

Study Circle

A book on Women Achievers by Swami Vivekananda was Ms. P. Sundari's selection for discussion on 07/01/2006. Ms. M. Vatchala shared her views on the book about Achievers who overcame their Physical Disabilities by Mr. S.Shanmugam on 21/01/2006. The book discussed by Mr. Madhavan on 28/01/2006 was Honey and five herbs – a book by Muthulingam.

Temple Visits

15 residents off the Old Age Home were taken to Pandeswaram Temple on Pongal Day i.e. 14/01/2006. Boys of Sevalaya hostel went to the Mariyamman Temple at Puliur Village on 01/01/2006. Girls of Sevalaya hostel went to the Vinayaka Temple at Ramanathapuram Village on 01/01/2006. Boys of Sevalaya hostel went to the Vinayaka Temple at Ramanathapuram Village on 20/01/2006. 10th and 12th standard students went to Anchaneya Temple at Pakkam on 28/01/2006.



Pongal Celebration

The pledged word

We know that Gandhiji was an apostle of Truth. Holding steadfast to the pledged word is an essential part of Truth. The story of Harischandra had a very great influence on Gandhi, right from his childhood. King Harischandra stood firmly on his word to gift his kingdom. He had to undergo untold sufferings on this account. He was made to sell his wife and child, and was driven to the stage of working as an undertaker. Just a twist of tongue, and going back on his word would have ensured him the restoration of his kingdom and all the past glory. But he did not flinch. The other influence on Gandhiji was his mother who would take hardest vows and observe them unflinchingly. Even illness was not allowed to interrupt the observance of vows.

It is also well known that Gandhiji could get permission from his mother to go to England only on making a promise that he would not "touch wine, women and meat". He had to overcome many a peer-pressure, practical difficulties and his own temptations to strictly adhere to these injunctions.

He had almost given up, putting convenient interpretations to the promise. However, he was quick to evolve his own golden rule for interpretation of vows. "Accept the interpretation honestly put on it by the party administering it. Another way is to accept the interpretation of the weaker party if there are two interpretations possible."

The most crucial of Gandhiji's vows was the vow taken by him in 1906 to observe brahmacharya. Let us hear Gandhiji. "The importance of vows grew clearly on me more than ever before. I realized that a vow, far from closing the door to real freedom, opened it. Up to this time, I had not met with success. Because, the will had been lacking, I had no faith in myself, no faith in the grace of God, and therefore my mind had been tossed on the boisterous sea of doubt. I realized that in refusing to take a vow, man was drawn

into temptation and that to be bound by a vow was like a passage from libertinism to monogamous marriage. "I believe in the effort, I do not want to bind myself with vows" is the mentality of weakness and betrays a subtle desire to the thing to be avoided. "But, supposing, my views are changed in the future, how can I bind myself by a vow?"—Such a doubt often deters us. But the doubt also betrays a lack of clear perception that a particular thing must be renounced. That is why Nishkulanandhas sung, "Renunciation without aversion is not lasting." Where therefore a desire is gone, a vow of renunciation is the natural and inevitable fruit."

On September, 11, 1906, in a gathering at Empire Theatre at Transvaal, South Africa, where the Indian community had assembled in thousands, to register their protest against a black Ordinance, one Haji Habeeb, pledged in the name of God that he would disobey the Act, and asked those assembled also to take such a pledge. Gandhiji explained to the people about the sanctity of a vow taken in the name of God. It was not to be taken lightly as any other resolution passed at meetings just to be forgotten. He insisted that only those who had the courage and will power to stick to the pledge against all adversities should take such a pledge.

He spoke: "To pledge our self or to take an oath in the name of God or with Him as witness is not something to be trifled with. If having taken such an oath, we violate our pledge, we are guilty before God and man. Personally I hold that a man who deliberately and intelligently takes a pledge and then breaks it, forfeits his manhood ...becomes a man of straw and fits himself for punishment here as well as hereafter." After listening to him intently, the entire gathering rose as one man, and took the pledge in the name of God.

Gandhiji's life holds many lessons on right conduct. Standing steadfast on the pledged word is one such thing.

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