



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Love 1 **Sevalaya's News Letter-February 2007** Serve 11 Price-Re.1

Dear Friends,

The Tamil Nadu Government has to be congratulated for scrapping the law which allowed school teachers to administer corporal punishment in class rooms. In fact it is very hard to believe that such a law existed till today! There were many reports in the paper about children getting beaten up by their teachers and there were also some reports about girl students getting sexually harassed by some teachers.

Many child right groups were protesting against such behavior in the class room. The move by TamilNadu Government is seen as a great victory for such protests organized by these groups. Also many educationists were conducting public meetings and issuing press reports, generating public opinion in this matter.

We feel that the scrapping of corporal punishment law in isolation is not going to solve the problem. In fact this law was not permitting 'heavy beating' or sexual harassment! We also read news items about sixth grade students murdering their class-mate for gain. Also there was a news item that ex-students from a school entered the school building and beat up the teacher. Where did the children learn to commit murder and also the technique to cover up the same?

The bigger issue is the exposure the children have to violence today. There is a lot of violence on TV and movies. Every Indian film hero is seen beating up a huge mob single handedly! The society is used to seeing this as great heroic act. In fact in all the films, the police will

arrive when the hero has already beaten up the bad guy and his gang! So the law enforcing authority is shown in very poor light, in fact, as jokers in many movies, and the individual who takes law into his own hands, is the big hero. The heroine will be hiding behind some tree watching the hero beat up the bad guy and she will fall in love with the hero, a big reward the hero gets for being so violent! This is the story line in many movies.

Today the movies show violence in more vivid fashion, the knife piercing through the neck or heart and the blood splashing out, etc. The cover up of murder is also shown in detail, as if they are giving a video based training to whoever wants to kill and escape. All such violent behavior is applauded in the movie halls. If these heroes decide to contest the elections, they become a big hit, as the public think that they will deal with trouble makers in the society in the same way as the do in the movies.

With hundreds of TV channels, most of them showing only film based programs, children watch violence day in and day out, right inside their houses. Added to this, now-a-days, there are many violent cartoons, etc.

While removing the law allowing corporal punishment is a step in the right direction, will the government act on regulating films and TV channels from showing violent scenes? Will there be any positive step taken to tell children that Non-violent behavior is the real heroism?

Thanks & Regards
Murali



Vivekanandha Exam. - Prize Winners



'Mini Marathan' - Prize Distribution

Events

New Year was celebrated at Sevalaya on 01/01/2007. Members of the Sathya Seva Sai Samithi group visited the campus. There was a Bhajan session. They conducted Sports Competitions for the children.

Vivekananda Jayanthi (Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, one of the inspirers of Sevalaya) was celebrated on 07/01/2007. Shri. M.V. Muthuramalingam, Chairman, Velammal Group of Institutions was our Chief Guest. He spoke to the children about the need to build up self confidence and to work hard with focus to achieve whatever one aims for irrespective of the situation in which one was born. "Focussed hard work coupled with Self Confidence is the only way to overcome poverty and rise up to higher levels in life" he asserted. He distributed prizes to the winners of the State Level Swami Vivekananda Examination conducted by Sevalaya in which 20000 students from 225 schools participated.

Pongal the harvest festival is celebrated on the 1st day of the Tamil Month "Thai" every year. It is an occasion when the farmers express gratitude to the Sun God for a good harvest. It is a 3 day function with the first day (i.e the last day of the Previous

Tamil month, Margazhi) being celebrated as Bhogi. Traditionally in villages, the people clean up their houses, dispose off unwanted items, whitewash their houses and will decorate it for the next day festival. "Getting rid of the Old and Welcoming the New" is said to be the concept behind this. But in recent days this has taken a unhealthy turn. People started burning old tyres, plastics and other rubbish there by polluting the air. A heavy mass of thick smoke will hang in the sky on the morning of Bhogi every year. To desist people from this hazardous practice and to spread awareness about "A Smokeless Bhogi" a 12 Kms mini Marathon was organised by Sevalaya on 14/01/2007. Mr. V.S.Shanmugam, District Chairman, Thiruvallur and Mr. R.S.Rajaraman, District Councillor, Thiruvallur flagged off the race. Nearly 250 students from 20 schools participated in the Mini Marathon.

The main festival "Pongal" was celebrated in traditional village style. New earthen pots were placed on a brick stove and firewood was lit. "Pongal" was cooked in the pots and offered to Sun God. Landlord Mr. Venkatesa Mudaliyar of Pakkam Village and Mr. M.Muthulingam, proprietor of Manikandan Traders, Thiruninravur were the chief Guests.



Pongal Celebration at Sevalaya



Volley ball Tournament - Prize Distribution



"Sarvodaya Day" Celebration

The third day is celebrated as "Mattu Pongal" a thanksgiving day for the friends of the farmer, the cattle. Traditionally during this day a sport "Jallikkattu" where youth of the village will compete to overpower a strong bull will be organised. It would be a real terrible sight to see the bull all decked up and agitated because of the crowd and drum beats and the youth pouncing on it to overpower it. Many youth get injured, some of them even fatal. As a substitute for this cruel game, Sevalaya organises a District level Volley ball Tournament every year. This year also 22 teams participated. The winners were Melapedu team and Velliur team were the runners up.

The members of the "Kottu Murasu" cultural Troupe of Sevalaya organised a cultural programme in the Thottikkalai Village on 20/01/2007. The children enacted the awarness about literacy. Mr. G.Ezhumalai, Thottikkalai Village Councillor and Mr. E.Srinivasan, President, Thottikkalai Village graced



Republic Day Celebration



"Kottu Murasu" Cultural Troupe's Programme at Thottikkalai Village

the occasion by their presence and encouraged the children.

Republic Day was celebrated at Sevalaya on 26/01/2007. Mr. K.Raghavan, Manager, Indian Bank, Dr. R.K.Salai Branch was our Honourable Chief Guest and hoisted the National Flag. A blood donation camp was organised by the Old Students Association of Sevalaya and the Indian Red Cross Society, Thiruvallur.

Events/Programmes where Sevalaya Participated...

20 children from Sevalaya participated in the Sarvodaya Day Celebrations near Gandhiji Statue at Marina Beach on 30/01/2007. The children sang Bhajan Songs.

Sports

6 students from Sevalaya participated in the District Level Chess Tournament on 18/01/2007 and 19/01/2007 at Jaya Matriculation Higher Secondary School.

Study Circle

Mr. V. Maheshwaran reviewed the X Volume of Swami Vivekananda's "Gnana Deepam" in the Study circle meet on 06/01/2007. VIII volume of Swami Vivekananda was discussed by Ms. Shanthini on 13/01/2007.

While Mr. A. Sankarapandiyan spoke on Gandhiji's thoughts on Religion and Development on 20/01/2007. Mr. J.Lakshmanan shared his thoughts on Gandhiji's ideas on Social Reform on 27/01/2007.

Students Study circle

S.Kumar of XI Std spoke to the children about Panchatantra Tales on 13/01/2007.

Where do we go after we die?

Where do we go after we die? This is an intriguing question. Religions have their own answers. Researchers have exercised themselves on this question and recorded several near-death experiences. But the fact is that those who crossed the twilight zone cannot express themselves, and those who recount have not crossed the border. It is surmised that good deeds take us to Heaven and the bad ones to Hell. However, Mahakavi Subramania Bharathiyar derides that, those who hold that one reaches the abode of Siva, or vaikunda, the abode of Vishnu, only after death, are madmen. Wise know that we can attain Bliss here and Now in this instant. For Bharathiyar every day we are born anew. Our origin or end is not willed by us. God's Will takes us, and it is for us to act in the spirit of Karma Yoga, surrendering ourselves to God. For him, toiling for the world is Yoga. For yogis, Heaven is here and now.

This essence of Gita could be found in many of Bharathiyar's poems. For Swami Vivekananda, Heaven is near at hand for those who cultivate physical strength than for those who study the Gita. They can understand the Upanishads better. Gandhiji's personal goal was to attain Moksha. For him also, Moksha was not a far off abode where we can have the company of a personal God. For him, Moksha, or, liberation, is seeing his God, face to face. For God, read Truth. Simply put, this means adhering unflinchingly to Truth, according to one's conscience, in every thing trivial, or lofty, and in any sphere of activity whether spiritual, social or political.

We spoke of Heaven. Then what is Hell? If for Swami Vivekananda, weakness is death, for Bharathiyar, losing ourselves in worry is veritable hell.

But the question all of us should be pondering about is "what should we leave when we die?" rather than "Where do we go after we die?" Thiruvalluvar says that the quality of a person can be determined by what he leaves behind. In the 22nd page corner of the national daily, we see the list of persons the deceased leaves behind. A further inquiry may reveal the property if any one left behind. But the real question is whether he left behind him a smile more than when he entered the planet.

One person had the fortune of reading his own obituary. That was Alfred Nobel- the inventor of dynamite. The obituary note was published by an oversight, while he was alive and kicking. The editor published an apology in the next issue, but what was contained in the obituary note brought Nobel his moment of Truth. He was described in it as the King of Doom. At that very moment, he decided to rewrite his script, and endowed all his wealth for instituting a Foundation to reward outstanding achievements year after year. Thus we have the Nobel Prizes now.

Bharathiyar considered his physique as a noble instrument to produce melodious music. He cried out to God not to make him a dead weight in this world, to be ultimately thrown in to dust. All his prayers to God were to make him serve the world and make it a better place.

It is incontrovertible that in a very short span of 39 years, he has left behind a much better and nobler legacy than those with Sathayus (100 years of life) could have done. If any one has a doubt, the transformation that could be wrought in a small hamlet, Kasuva, in the lives of hundreds of villagers, by a single poem of his, stands as a monument.

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