



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Sevalaya's News Letter

JANUARY - 2004

Dear Friends,

Wish you all a very happy and prosperous new year.

What a nice feeling it is, if one has to go around the world, keep meeting children in each village, town and city and endlessly distributing gifts! Yes, that is what Santa Claus does, each year, during the time of Christmas. In every nook and corner of the world the children believe that Santa is going to come sometime during the night before Christmas and place their gifts in the hanging socks. The parents play the role of Santa and when the children wake-up, the gifts are there, as expected, and there is joy overflowing from the eyes of each child.

When parents can ensure this for their own children, what happens to the millions of orphan, homeless and destitute children? Is Santa just a story for them? When the whole world celebrates the birth of 'a wonder child' can we afford to have even one child disappointed?

There are some good souls working on this problem every year. In United States, many chain shops, many restaurants and many other organizations and establishments put up posters inviting their customers to donate at least one toy, for the benefit of a poor child. Mountains of toys are created. All these toys are then transported to a central big warehouse in each city. Many volunteer to spend their evenings, after a busy day at work, to contribute their time and sort all toys

toys for different age groups, toys for boys, toys for girls etc. and help to pack them in big boxes. For these volunteers, many business houses organize free dinner. At the end of all such operations, involving the effort of many individuals and business houses, such collected toys are shipped to nearly 70 poor countries. At the other end of the shores, these toys are received and distributed to many poor children. I am sure such generosity is expressed from many developed countries. Santa Claus in different forms!

We have many occasions like Diwali, Christmas, Ramzan, Pongal etc. to show our love for destitute children and old people. Let us not waste even a single occasion. Or why even wait for an occasion? Can we not make it a continuous flow of love? It need not be a material gift always; we need not spend money for this all the time. Just a word of affection, just a warm hug, just few minutes of our time playing with these children, one post card, one phone call, one good wish from wherever you are, etc. will make all the difference.

Can this be our New Year resolution? Can we all spend just five minutes every day either praying for the welfare of such children, or if you are a non-believer, just one supportive thought for these children every day?

Yes. I would like to see Santa Claus all 365 days in a year.

Thanks & Regards
Murali

Sevalaya accepts contribution through Citibank Cards.

S.Semmalai
Education Minister

Secretariat,
Chennai-600009

20 November,2003

Dear Sir,

I have immense pleasure to learn that all the students sent up by your School for the Secondary School Level Public Examination, March/April, 2003 have come out successful. This great achievement can be mainly attributed to your dedication to the School, hard work and the co-operation of the teachers working under your leadership. I heartily congratulate you and your colleague teachers on your noble work.

I earnestly wish that the teachers of your School and yourself continue the good work and contribute greatly for improving the standard of education and the betterment of our nation.

Yours,

S.Semmalai

To

The Headmaster,
Mahakavi Bharathiar High School,
Kasuva, Tiruvallur Dist.

Study Circle Meetings

Date : 5.12.2003
Speaker : Mr. S.Vedagiri
Book : Stories on Discrimination (Viveka)
Author : Swami Vivekananda
Venue : Admin.Office

Date : 6.12.2003
Speaker : Ms. N. Annapoorna
Book : Teaching Thinking
Author : Edward Debono
Venue : Service Centre.

Date : 12.12.2003
Speaker : Mr.R.Kesavan
Book : Art of Prosperous living
Author : Swami
Venue : Admin. Office

Date : 19.12.2003
Speaker : Mr.T.S.Venkataramani



Book : Personality Development.
(Edited by Sri RamaKrishna Ashram, Yadhavagiri, Mysore from the works of Swami Vivekananda)
Venue : Admin.Office
Date : 20.12.2003
Speaker : Mr.P.Balasubramanyam
Book : Scientific facts about the Sun
Author : Mr.Sivalai Ilamathi

Reaching Out:

Mobile Library

Our mobile library unit visited Puliur, Pandeswaram and Ernakuppam villages respectively on 6th, 13th and 20th December, 2003.

Slide Shows on Gandhi were conducted by our Trustee Mr. A. Annamalai at Raja National Matriculation School, Veppampattu, and Government High School, Mitnamallee on 3rd and 4th December respectively.

On Bharati, Mr.T.Nagaraj, our Staff member, spoke at Panchayat Middle School, Veppampattu.

On Sevalaya's goal, aims, objectives and activities, our Kottu Murasu Kalaikuzhu staged a skit on 18th December at Palavedu Village.

Events :

Bharathi Day

Bharathi Day was celebrated at our Campus on 11th December 2003. Mr.N.C.Gnanaprakasam of All India Radio, Chennai was the Chief Guest. He distributed prizes to about 30 children who were successful in the competitions held by us in essay writing, Oratorical and Poetry competitions on topics relating to Bharathiar. Participation prizes were also distributed to over 150 children drawn from different schools in Chennai and Tiruvallur Districts. The speaker in his speech interspersed with hilarious anecdotes lauded Sevalaya for bringing Education, absolutely free of cost, to the rural poor children thereby fulfilling Bharathiar's wishes. Mr. Shanmugham, President, Pakkam Panchayat Union, Some of the Prize winning students and a volunteer from Anna University N.S.S. camp spoke on Bharathiar on the occasion.

Christmas Celebrations

Christmas was celebrated with the usual merriment and joy at our Campus on 26th December. Gifts from Santa



Christmas Celebrations

Claus and a specially made big size Cake were the attractions of the celebrations. Rev.Fr.M.Singarayar C.M.F., Parish Priest was the chief-guest on the occasion. He lucidly explained the significance of Christmas, and appreciated the catholicity of outlook of Sevalaya.

Monthly Leaders' Meeting

A mid term review of the Annual Plan 2003-2004 and performance was undertaken at the meeting of the group leaders held on 30/11/2003.

Camps & Tours

Half of the working year 2003-2004 for Sevalaya is over (June- November). It is time to reflect and recreate. The staffs were taken on a tour to the calm & quiet hill resort Yelagiri near Tirupattur in North Arcot District.



NSS Camps

57 students of Anna University National Service Scheme Unit V were on a 10 day camp from 21/12/2003 under the leadership of Dr. K.Sivakumar, Project Officer. The team consisted of students of B E courses of various disciplines.

The students undertook the manual work of sprucing up the garden, planting saplings, garbage clearing, etc., The indoor work included assistance in the library, taking classes in Mathematics and English and special coaching to Higher Secondary students in Computer Science.

They conducted, essay, oratorical poetry writing and quiz contests and sports events for our children and



distributed prizes.

To cap it all, they organised a cultural programme by Mr. Kalaiarasan and his troupe belonging to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting.

School Clubs

There was a special meeting of the Bharathi Tamil Ilakkiya Manram on 13/12 2003. Mr. Meyyamozhi delivered a special lecture.

Our Visitors

They were special visitors. A team of 150 members from Scope International Limited, Chennai trooped in to our campus on 13/12/2003, fanned in to the different areas and undertook physical labour extensive gardening, painting of all black boards in the school etc., They entertained our senior citizens with a delightful cultural programme, conducted computer classes for our Higher Secondary students besides providing sumptuous lunch for all the inmates.

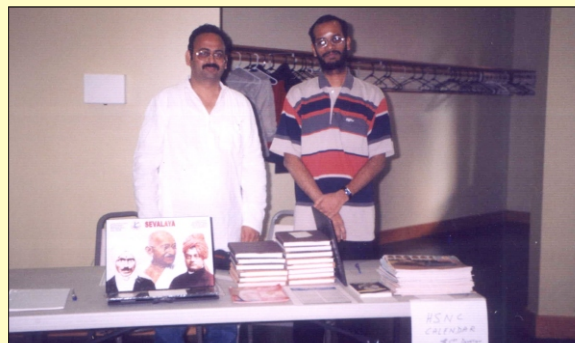
Health Care

Mr. A.Meyyappan conducted a refresher course on Yoga on 29th, 30th and 31st December for our children at the campus as in the previous year.

Our Managing Trustee interacts...

Our Managing Trustee Mr. V.Muralidharan addressed the staff and students of Gill Adarsh Matriculation School on 19th November 2003. In addition to detailing on the aims, objectives and activities of Sevalaya he explained how the messages of Mahatma Gandhiji, Mahakavi Bharathiyar and Swami Vivekananda inspired the formation of the institution. He exhorted the students to learn about a wider section of less fortunate and under privileged children in the society and discharge their social debt by rendering service to them in whatever way they can.

Mr. Muralidharan was in the United States recently. He had the opportunity to meet the donors and well-wishers of Sevalaya in the States. He had a tete-a-tete with the Indian Community in Columbia and Raleigh. Sevalya stall was put up to sell the dairies, calendars and other products at the India Heritage day and also in Raleigh Tamil Sangam. The NRIs evinced keen interest to learn first-hand update of the strides Sevalaya is making in its chosen field of activities.



With the Indian Community in Columbia and Raleigh.

FEARLESS AND COURAGEOUS

First time visitors to our Sevalaya campus invariably show surprise when they hear the children of our Mahakavi Bharathiar Higher Secondary School sing their morning prayer song. They find it peculiar that it is not a song in praise of the Almighty or one invoking His blessings, but one pledging our resolve to practice a great human virtue, the virtue of fearlessness. The song in Tamil is a composition of Mahakavi Bharathi, one of our guiding lights at Sevalaya. He, as well as Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi our other two preceptors, saw the greatest of virtues in fearlessness and courage, and constantly preached and practiced the virtue. It is our endeavor to inculcate such virtue in the minds of the children under our care, and the choice of our prayer song is one indication of our endeavor.

Swami Vivekananda was a man of extraordinary courage, and stories of his courage are legion. For example, once while passing alone and unarmed through a jungle in India, he was resting under a tree when suddenly a tiger came by. Swamiji continued in a reclining position, calm and motionless. It was the tiger that sulked and went away!

Swamiji himself used to narrate an early incident that led to his developing the virtue of fearlessness to such a degree. It happened at Varanasi during Swamiji's wanderings around India as a young monk. He had come out after offering prayers at a temple and was walking towards the adjoining tank. It was a narrow lane with the tank on one side and the high temple wall on the other. Suddenly he was surrounded by a group of large monkeys. They howled and shrieked at him and clutched his feet. In panic Swamiji started running; but the monkeys chased him. An old sannyasi who was a witness to the scene shouted out to him not to run. "Face the brutes", he shouted. Swamiji turned and boldly faced the monkeys. As soon as he did that they fell back and fled. "That was a lesson for all life", Swamiji said recalling the incident, "Face the terrible, face it boldly. Like the monkeys the hardships of life fall back when we cease to flee before them".

"Fearlessness is indispensable for the growth all the other noble qualities in a man", said Mahatma Gandhi, drawing his inspiration from the listing of such qualities as given in Chapter XVI of the Bhagavat Gita, "It richly deserves the first rank assigned to it [in the Gita, as the quality of 'abhaya']". Giving his own definition of abhaya, Gandhiji said: "Fearlessness connotes freedom from all external fear, fear of disease, bodily injury and death, of dispossession, of losing one's nearest and dearest, of losing reputation or giving offence, and so on".

In Gandhiji's own life he displayed the quality in ample measure and on innumerable occasions. When it was a question of standing by and defending his principles, he was absolutely fearless. He displayed no fear of bodily injury when a white racist coachman in South Africa boxed his ears and threatened to break his bones for refusing to sit on the footboard of the coach. He had no fear that he could catch the deadly pneumonic plague when he was attending to the plague-affected Indians during the epidemic in Johannesburg in 1904. He was fearless against imprisonment and beatings. He did fear for his own life when he undertook a fast to bring about unity between Hindus and Muslims in riot-torn Calcutta. Such was the abhaya he practiced.

Bharathi inspired his countrymen through his songs to be courageous. To a nation cowed down by centuries of slavery his songs were soul-stirring. And that brings us back to our prayer song at Sevalaya which runs as follows:

*We have no fear ! No fear at all!
Even if the heavens above were
To collapse on our heads
We have no fear! No fear at all!*

*Even if the rest of the world
Was to oppose us in unison
We have no fear! No fear at all!*

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 us at : www.sevalaya.org