



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Sevalaya's News Letter

JULY - 2003

Dear Friends,

The month of June is the academic year beginning in India. And in what a style Sevalaya has begun this year! First time in the history of Sevalaya, we got 100% pass in 10th standard, school final examination. Five out of 23 children got more than 80% marks. (The first rank holder got 91%) When we look at the background of these children, we feel proud that we have really done something worthwhile. Many of them are from broken families, from very poor background, children of poorly paid agricultural labourers etc. But for Sevalaya functioning in that area, these children would have also treaded the known path of ending up as poor coolies. Only because we have offered a 100% free education, these children stepped into the school. This was made possible because of many of you – Mr.Rajagoplan, Mr.Yan and friends from Germany, who sponsored many class room construction and also donated us the school van and also furnished the school, ILP who sponsored teachers salary for 3 years, ASHA sponsoring one class room, Mr. Ron Radice sponsoring class rooms and generously donating for the corpus fund, Mr.Jack Harding, TKS from Swiss, many TCS projects and friends, TCS donating 20 computers, Wisdom trust sponsoring the first class room, CTS friends, EDS friends, CGmaersk friends, HCL friends, many others enthusiastically responding to the appeals sent by Sevalaya asking for help to buy books, note books etc., everyone of you can feel that you have got multiple time return on investment! (If I have missed your name here, it is purely due to want of space) A big thank you to all of you.

Closely following on this achievement, the Tamil Nadu Government gave us permission to start the (unaided) higher secondary classes (class 11 & 12). As discussed with most of you during our annual plan preparation, we have started two groups, Computer science and Agriculture. The classes were started on 26th June. Nearly 60 children have joined in this class. As usual, it will be a 100% free education for the poor. So now the reach of the poor in that area has been extended till 12th Standard. We have many brilliant poor students who have joined the 11th standard. Again, but for Sevalaya, they would have given up studies after 10th Standard, especially the village girls.

It is one more step towards our vision of creating a free rural based university for the benefit of poor, orphan and destitute children. We hope to start free college by the time these children complete the two year junior college course, provided we are able to generate enough funds.

Now the total strength of the school is nearing the 500 mark. Also we had to employ six new teachers as higher secondary needs post graduate teachers, as per government rules. Needless to point here, that the expenses of Sevalaya will go up due to this, as there will be more salary payments and more children to support. We are sure we have your continued support.

We have miles to go, and we know you are with us in the long journey.

Thanks & Regards

Murali

Study Circle Meetings

Date : 6.6.2003
Speaker : S.Kavitha
Book : Unakkul unnai thedu
(search within yourself)
Author : Walter Doyel Stables- English
Tamil Tr. : C.R.Ravindran
Venue : Administrative Office.

Date : 7.6.2003
Speaker : G.Chittibabu
Book : Ignited Minds
Author : A.P.J.Abdul Kalam
Venue : Service Centre

Date : 13.6.2003
Speaker : R.Vijaya
Book : Amaidhi, Aatral Abarimidham
(Peace, Power and Plenty)
Author : Harrison Swet Morton
In Tamil : Jude Sox
Venue : Administrative Office.

Date : 14.6.2003
Speaker : A.Annamalai
Book : Rasikamani T.K.C.
(T.K.C., the jewel among
connoisseurs)
Author : L.Shanmuga sundaram
Venue : Service Centre.

Date : 20.6.2003.
Speaker : N.Ravichandran
Book : Vazkkayai amaikkum ennangal
(As a man thinketh)
Author : James Allen
Tamil Translation
by : M.S.Udaya Murthy
Venue : Administrative Office

Date : 27.6.2003
Speaker : M.Bhuvaneshwari
Book : Sevaikku oru Sahodari
(biography of Sister
Subbulakshmi)
Author : Anutthama
Venue : Administrative office

Date : 28.6.2003
Speaker : S. Mariammal
Book : Meditation and Methods
Author : Swami vivekananda
Venue : Service Centre

We spread our wings..

Sevalaya's Swami Vivekananda Library has started its mobile unit. By turn, our mobile library goes to the different villages adjoining Sevalaya every week end. There is overwhelming response from the village folk, particularly the youth.

Our Trustee, G. Rammohan, a veteran Gandhian, conducted a slide show on the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi at Pakkam Government Elementary School on 19th June 2003. In the Government High School, Pakkam the programme was conducted on 25th June.

A Sweet News for all of us..

The Tamilnadu State Board of Secondary Education has accorded us permission to upgrade our Mahakavi Bharathiyar High School as a Higher Secondary School. The classes have started functioning on 27th June 2003. Formal inauguration will be performed soon in the presence of a V.I.P. We are offering two streams , one is: Computer Science, Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry. The other is Agriculture, Theory, Practical and Biology. The admissions are based on the criteria of merit and poverty alone. Needless to mention that for these students also, the education including text books, notebooks, uniform etc., are offered totally free.

We do relax....

" Respite from duty is also a part of duty" said Tagore in one of his plays. Yes, we do take time to relax and refresh.



On 1st of June our staff members and trustees were on a pleasure trip to Mahabalipuram, "Mahabs " as the modern trend is to call it. On the previous day, they had an enjoyable time at Blue Lagoon Beach resort at Neelangarai.



On 8th June, there was a light music programme for our inmates and staff by Kannan Chozhan Light music troupe of Avadi.

National Social Service Camp.

N.S.S. Volunteers of Anna University were on a service camp at our campus for 10 days from 19th June to 28th June. Apart from interacting with the children they spent time with the old age home inmates. They also engaged themselves in creating a good ambience at the Home by developing gardens around the Home. They also laid play grounds and made provision for planting coconut saplings around the campus. Their services

extended to the nearby villages. Screen printing and Book binding training was conducted for the village youth as well as



for Sevalaya children. It may be mentioned that a couple of years ago, N.S.S. team of Anna University assisted the women of Ramanathapuram village near our campus to form a self-help group.

Talents Promotion.

Special coaching classes on hindi, Spoken English, Dance, Music and Yoga have started for the academic year for children identified on the basis of their natural inclinations and talents.

Real constructive Programme, it is..

We have mentioned this in one of our earlier issues. Real rural reconstruction means the people's participation in the development activities. Even in the previous year, we had motivated people of the villages, particularly parents of our school students to contribute something by way of physical labour to our development activities. This has been systematised this year with more villagers willingly and enthusiastically contributing their labour voluntarily for a few hours in our farm, campus etc.

A CORRECT UPBRINGING

At the foster-care homes we run for poor and destitute children at our Sevalaya campus, our ideal is to provide the children the best possible loving care, and at the same time to teach them the values of disciplined behaviour and good conduct. It needs a delicate balance to be struck — between showering abundant love on one side, and on the other side strictly regulating and channeling their energies in the right direction, the way an ideal father would do. In this matter also we take guidance from the way our three leading lights, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Subramaniya Bharati, were brought up in their childhood, by their fathers.

Swami Vivekananda's father Vishwanath Datta was a brilliant man who was a scholar in English, Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic, and also an accomplished musician. He practiced as an attorney-at-law in Calcutta High Court and was very successful in his profession. He played a very significant role in the upbringing of his son Narendranath (who later became Swami Vivekananda). He was Naren's first music teacher, and provided the first inspiration that made Swamiji a brilliant vocal musician later in life. As a father Vishwanath did not believe in reprimand and punishment to correct any acts of misbehaviour on the part of his children. His method was to use the children's own innate sense of goodness as the corrective. A story is told of how on one occasion young Naren behaved very rudely to his mother; and the father instead of scolding the boy, corrected him by exposing him to the ridicule of his friends. He wrote out on the door of Naren's room the exact words he had rudely spoken to his mother. His friends saw the writing, came to know what had happened, and teased and ridiculed Naren. Needless to say, Naren never again repeated such behaviour.

Mahatma Gandhi's father Karamchand Gandhi had very little formal education but had an

accumulated wealth of "rich experience of practical affairs". He was a Minister in the court of the Raja of Porbandar, and later a member in the court of the Raja of Rajkot. His worldly wisdom stood him in good stead in performing his duties in the courts. Gandhiji himself describes his father as "truthful, brave and generous but short-tempered". However the father never showed his temper on his children. "I do not recall his ever having beaten any of us", says Gandhiji in his *Autobiography*. The relationship between father and son is best illustrated in a famous incident when young Mohandas committed theft of a gold ornament in the house, and told lies in the attempt to cover it up. When he subsequently confessed the truth to his father, the young boy feared more for the mental anguish his father would suffer than for any punishment he would receive. The father only shed silent tears; but "Those pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart" says Gandhiji. Apparently, it was pure love that governed the relationship between them.

Mahakavi Bharati's father Chinnaswami Iyer was also a doting and loving father. He was the first in his family to obtain a formal Western type of education in English and completed his own education upto School Certificate level. He wanted that his son Subramaniyan should study beyond that stage and go to the university. To that end he tried to inculcate in his son love for original and imaginative thinking. When the young boy showed great interest in Tamil literature and in writing poems in Tamil, the father actively encouraged him to pursue his interest. He would take him to attend literary discourses whenever some visiting Tamil scholars held such discourses in the palace of the local *Zamindar*. Subsequently Chinnaswami Iyer faced financial ruin when his business ventures failed. But he never let up in his attempts to get his son the best of education. The seed that Chinnaswami Iyer successfully planted in his son's mind gave the world some of the best poetry written in the twentieth century.

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