



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

June 2014

100% Results in Std XII and X

Top marks go up; more score above 90%



The Headmistress along with the rank holders and (right) hugging the topper.

Sevalaya's outgoing Std X and Std XII batches have done everyone proud by scoring centum results at the public exams. What is more, the top rankers have notched up record marks, with M. Manigandan of Std XII scoring 1130 out of 1200. He was closely followed by S. Prithviraj (1108/1200) and G.Ajith Kumar(1103/1200). Not just that, 135 out of the 139 students scored in excess of 60% - a new watermark.

In Std X, S. Priya is Sevalaya's topper with 483/500. The second rank has gone to L. Nandhini with 480/500, with M. Haripriya(477/500) third.

The track record of regular centum results has been the result of an uphill struggle, over the years, by the underprivileged children of Sevalaya and their motivated teachers. The first batch of first generation learners from this school appeared for their X exam in 2001 and secured an overall pass percentage of 27%. The first batch of XII did much better in 2005 and 80% cleared it. Since then each year has seen a steady improvement and from 2003 the X Std students started getting 100% pass percentage which is being maintained till date. The 2006 batch of Std XII too brought laurels by securing 100% pass percentage and each successive year has seen a steady rise in the marks of the students. More and more students are securing marks above 80% and marks secured by toppers has also been increasing steadily. The topper in 2005 got 1028/1200, while this year's



topper scored 1130/1200. The same is the case of the Std X where the topper in 2001 got 360/500 while the topper of 2013 secured 482/500. The number of students scoring less than 60% has also been gradually decreasing to single digit number.

Fruits of dedicated work

Dedicated hard work by the teaching staff of Sevalaya has produced such sterling results. Staff handling X and XII are fully aware of the practical problems their students face at home. The children have to pitch in to augment their family income by working before or after school hours. Girls have to do their share of house hold work as their mothers will be away working in the field to earn enough to keep the fire burning at home. At times the dinner may be the only decent meal they have. So the teachers pitch in to help in whatever way they can. They gear themselves to start classes from 8 a.m in the morning and come on Sundays and all the other holidays to complete portions ahead of time and give ample practice by testing of students.

Results at a glance

	Std X	Std XII
Pass%	100 (100)	100(99)
90% plus	15 (11)	7 (0)
80% plus	22 (25)	49 (12)
60% plus	56 (45)	79 (82)

(Last year's data in brackets)

During the board exams, many of them stay on the campus, making themselves available 24 hours to help and guide the students. They keep a careful watch on their wards ensuring that they are eating properly and have no health problems etc. Regular Parent Teachers meetings are held to ensure parent's cooperation in all aspects. Parents, in spite of being illiterate understand the gravity of these needs and do their best to help their children. This result is an overall improvement of the performance of the children.

English is one of the most difficult subjects for most of the students especially those in the Commerce and Agricultural groups. English teacher D. Jayabharathi would sit with the children individually teaching them word by word. At times she would fall sick due to sheer exhaustion and hard work, but she continued to coach the children till the day prior to exams and was full of smiles the day the results were declared.

When K. Manigandan passed X, his teachers told him that he might find it difficult to tackle Science and Maths in XII. Sure enough, he found Maths very difficult, but the extra care taken by P. J. Bruno, the Maths teacher and the special night classes helped him clear the XII exam with first division marks.

Some of the students who faced health or other personal issues were full of praise for their teachers who helped them study and make up for the classes they missed. The teachers counseled them through trying times and were always there for them.

G. Ajith Kumar one of the toppers of this year's XII has been studying in Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiyar Higher Secondary School for the past 10 years and is very happy that he could score more in the exams. He did not spend a single paisa for his education nor did he go for any tuitions. "I did what my teachers told me, not only in academics but participating in various programmes on self – development organized by the school which boosted my self – confidence. I am sure I will become a successful Software Engineer", he says.

More on the toppers on page 2

Joy of Giving: *the* Way of Life

Dear Friends,

For quite a few months we have been discussing in our management meetings that we need a car to transport sick elderly people to hospitals. We have a doctor in the morning, but many times in the middle of the night if the seniors develop some medical problems, we have to rush them to a hospital which is 20 KMs away. The only vehicle available in the campus is the school bus and we use it under emergency situations, most of the time, to transport just one patient. Such a trip is very uncomfortable, even to make the patient board the bus! If only we had a car in the campus, it could have been used for such hospital trips and the ride would have been more comfortable for a person who is already in extreme pain. But who will sponsor a car? In India, car is seen as a luxury, but in a village like Kasuva where public transport is 2 KMs away and where there is some emergency every day at Sevalaya with 60 elderly residents - car is a basic requirement! We tried to convince some donors, but this didn't interest them. Couple of days ago one D Lakshmi Narayanan called me and said he wanted



to come and meet me in the campus. I confirmed the date and time when I will be available there and the family arrived at the appointed time. This was their first visit. As soon as Lakshmi Narayanan walked into the office, he pulled out a bag and said "Sir, these are my car's documents. Everything is up to date. Here is the key. I am donating the car to Sevalaya". He didn't wait for us to say anything, the family was ready to walk the distance to the main road, catch a bus and go back home. We insisted that they should take a walk around the campus first, have some breakfast and offered to drop them back at their residence in their own car which they had just donated. But they were firm that it was enough if we

drop them in the nearest bus stop and they will go back by public transport.

Lakshmi Narayanan's father is a friend of T.S.Venkataramani, our Hon. Coordinator and hence a long time donor. So they get our newsletter "Love all Serve all" regularly. Lakshmi Narayanan got a chance to notice and read the newsletter just last month. Till then he didn't know about Sevalaya, even though his father was a donor. His mother was a cancer patient and he had bought a car just to take her for regular treatment. This went on for 3 years. Unfortunately, she passed away some time ago. Once he saw the Sevalaya newsletter and understood that many people are in need of help and many are helping Sevalaya, he decided that he should donate his car. He picked up the phone, landed in Sevalaya the very next day. A major decision was taken and implemented just in 2 days time!

"Many mothers will use it now" says Lakshmi Narayanan. Any better ideas to celebrate Mothers' day?

Thanks & Regards
Murali

Std XII

School Rank 1



M. Manigandan
1130/1200

School Rank 2



S. Prithviraj
1108/1200

School Rank 3



G. Ajith Kumar
1103/1200

Std X

School Rank 1



S. Priya
483/500

School Rank 2



L. Nandhini
480/500

School Rank 3



M. Haripriya
477/500

M. Manigandan joined Sevalaya only in Std XI. Son of daily wage earners he could score only 83% in his std X exams, but the good coaching helped him top the XII board exams with 94% marks. "The coaching given by this school compared to the earlier school gave me the confidence. I will always be thankful to my teachers who helped me to achieve this", said Manigandan.

S Prithviraj, studying in Sevalaya since Std I, scored well in Maths, Chemistry and Biology due to the extra efforts of the teachers. S. Prithviraj dedicated his success to all teachers who had helped him throughout his schooling. "I am proud to study in this school, since the dedication of the teachers and the coaching during the night classes helped me to achieve this".

G Ajith Kumar did not go for any tuitions. "I did what my teachers told me, not only in academics but participating in various programmes on self-development organized by the school which boosted my self - confidence. He has imbibed leadership qualities and comes forward to lead the class in the teacher's absence. "The teachers have shaped me into what I am today", he says with pride. "I am sure I will become a successful Software Engineer", he says.

S. Priya who is from Ramanathapuram has been a student of the school since Kinder Garden. Her father is an agriculture daily wage earner and her mother supplements the income through tailoring at home. A quite hard working girl she is very creative and has won several prizes in extracurricular activities. She dreams of becoming an Engineer. She dedicates her success to her family members and the teachers who had supported her to get the first mark.

L. Nandhini is a hardworking girl whose father maintains accounts in the local brick kiln. She wants to become a teacher and serve others. She is from Melappedu and has been studying in Sevalaya since Kinder Garden. She felt very happy for her marks and the continuous effort that she had put for her exams and her night studies has helped her to achieve this.

M. Haripriya said: "I aimed to get more than 490 but could not do so. I will work hard in my XI and XII and will get more than 1180 in my Std XII exams". Securing 99/100 in all the main subjects, she aimed to get first rank but got the third rank and could not control her disappointment. Friendly and with a thirst for knowledge, she also excels in drawing and dance and wants to become an Engineer.

Solarisation project completed, daily generation capacity 48K units

Sevalaya becomes green energy campus

The current summer is already proving to be the coolest in many years in Sevalaya. On 14th May 2014, a dream finally came true when the Kasuva campus became green energy campus and will be powered entirely by renewable energy, through solar panels with a total system capacity is 33 KW, to generate 48,250 units a day.

The Kasuva campus of Sevalaya, consisting of the School, the children's and Elders Homes, the Medical Centre, the Community College, the residential quarters and supporting facilities have been at the receiving end of power shortage. Located in a remote rural area, the Kasuva campus has been facing power cuts nearly 16 hours a day. As a result, the students' performance was getting affected. Sleepless nights added to the stress of the hostelites. The Medical Center had its own challenges in treating the sick people specially the seniors, and in preserving medicines by storing them in refrigerators.

Institutions such as Sevalaya have to pay much higher tariff than domestic users. Compounding costs, the power tariff has gone up many fold in recent years.

It was against such circumstances that Page Pierre, who has been a continuous supporter to Sevalaya, stepped in to sponsor the Rs 60 lac project. K. E. Raghunathan of Solkar Industries (Pvt) limited, yet another well wisher of Sevalaya, executed the planning and implementation of the project in a shortest possible time. A team of 15 people had worked day and night to complete this project.

Green journey

For Sevalaya, 100% solarisation is the natural progression in its green journey. Sevalaya has the distinction of being selected as the "Best NGO working for Environment", by Tamilnadu Government in 2013 and awarded "The best Green Campus", by the District Collector in 2012. Sevalaya has always taken steps to ensure that its campus is a green zone. Already, the Dining hall & kitchen are solar powered, thanks to BHEL and the old age home, with HCL support. The gobar gas plant meets 20% of the energy needs of the kitchen where 800 meals are prepared every day.



The pre-primary school annexe block with 12 classrooms, 2 halls and 300 students requires 30 KW hours a day, the primary school with 16 classrooms and 600 students requires 30KW hours a day, the higher secondary block with 28 classrooms and 800 students requires 50 KW hours a day, while the auditorium where different functions and programmes are held, clocks 15KW hours a day. The laboratories and the video conference lab consume nearly 1.6KW hours a day.

The 12-bedded Medical Centre which caters to the urgent medical needs of nearly 25 students, 20 elders and 25 villagers a day requires 15 KW hours a day.



The RoI formula

Per annum 48,250 units will be generated, with 965,000 units to be generated in the life cycle of 20 years. The project cost is around Rs 70 lacs, taking into account the replacement needs for 20 years.

So the cost per unit is around Rs 7.20 per unit of solar power.

The present cost of electricity from EB is Rs. 6.70/unit: this has been on the rise and this trend is expected to continue. Power from diesel genset costs a much higher Rs. 22 per unit.

Generally the pay back will be about 7 – 8 years with EB cost and 3 – 4 years with genset power generation.

At the current electricity consumption rates, solarisation would save an estimated **1,080 tonnes of Carbon emission** in one year, which would have taken **980 trees** to absorb and neutralise – and save another **200 trees** that would have been cut, to generate that power.

Challenges and rewards

Raghunathan's challenge was "to make the system easy to understand, easy to use and easy to maintain". His rewards were the professional satisfaction and more. "All have been very co-operative, including very fast and efficient support from the plumbers and electricians and the professional manner in which the Managers supported project implementation", he says. "I had a great feeling of serving society. We are always passionate about in what we do. Serving at Sevalaya doubled our happiness and we are happy to see the smiles of the residents. Thank God for this great blessing to us", he signs off.

Dance performance in London



Sisters Mahima Chandrasekhar and Shivangi Chandrasekhar, who have been Bharatanatyam students at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, London, for the last several years, gave a performance at the Mountbatten Auditorium on April 26th 2014. The event was organized by Vani Fine Arts in aid of Sevalaya.

Under the able guidance of their Bharatanatyam Guru Shree Prakash Yadagudde,

the sisters exhibited bhava, raga and tala, the core aspects of Bharatanatyam, perfectly. Their selection of song for the Varnam deserves special mention since it required intricate movements and footwork as well as great stamina. What stunned the audience was the great coordination between them. The dancers thrilled everyone with the depiction of different emotions and feelings during their individual performances on Lord Muruga and Lord Krishna.

The Thillana was another enjoyable piece and when the Mangalam concluded the programme, the audience continued to sit, rooted to their seat, which amply demonstrates how mesmerized they were. Padmashree Dr. John Marr, famous Indologist spoke on the occasion, in his own inimitable style, enthralled everyone. Dr. Nandakumara, Director, Bhavans and Mrs. Sarah Labram, Dy. Headmistress, St. James Senior Girls School, also spoke, praising the dancers and encouraging them to achieve more laurels. Mr. Manu Kapila, Trustee of Sevalaya, also spoke, giving a glimpse of all Sevalaya activities.

Annapurna is now a Trustee

N. Annapurna, retiring Head Mistress, has been inducted as a Trustee on Sevalaya's Board.

She has been working as teacher for the past 27 years in schools in different parts of India, of which the last 12 years in Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiyar Higher Secondary School.

She completed her graduation in Chemistry from Calcutta University and then acquired B.Ed and Masters through the years. Travelling across India has given exposure to learn different languages and gain knowledge of different teaching methodologies across the country.

Lakshmi Murali on Advisory Board



Lakshmi Murali has joined Sevalaya Advisory Board. She is a graduate

in Electronics and Communication Engineering from the College of Engineering, Guindy, Chennai, and holds an M.S in Software Systems.

She joined Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) in 1989. She worked in software

projects mainly in the Insurance and Banking domains, in both technical and managerial roles. She joined the Quality and Process Group in 1996, and was head of the group in three of the delivery centers in Chennai. She then worked as a business process consultant focusing on Strategy Deployment and HR processes. She facilitated the adoption of TBEM across a number of TCS centers and functional groups.

She has executed a number of process consulting assignments for TCS internal

M. R. Jambunaathan to head Donor Relations



M.R. Jambunaathan has taken charge as the Head, Donor Relations. He brings with him three decades of Cross Functional experience in Banking industry,

including a two year international stint, covering IT operations, Auditing (General and IT), credit management and software development. Starting with two decades in Indian Bank, Jambunaathan served as Regional Audit Manager, ICICI Bank, and as Regional Service Director, Equitorial Trust Bank, Lagos, Nigeria. Switching to IT Security, he was consultant to many companies, the last assignment being with CapGemini Business Services, for four years.

An M Com from Madras University, Jambunaathan followed it up with CGEIT, CRISC, CISM, ITIL-v3-Foundation, CIA, ISO27001-Lead Auditor, CISA and CAIIB.

Jambunaathan was inducted into the Board of Governors representing Banking industry in Institute of Internal Auditors, Chennai Chapter. Currently, he is Vice President, ISACA, Chennai.

Jambunaathan's wife is a home maker. They have two daughters, both settled overseas.

Jambunaathan's initial attraction to Sevalaya came on reading its founder Murali's book 'Vaiya Talamai Kol' and on knowing that Sevalaya draws inspiration from the Bharati-Gandhi-Vivekananda trio. "I am impressed and motivated by Murali's simplicity and dedication. One visit to the campus during the Silver jubilee function was enough for me to decide immediately", he sums up.

and external clients, and has presented TCS practices in international forums like the PMI congress and the SEPG conference.

Lakshmi is a certified CMMi assessor, an internal ISO auditor, a TBEM External assessor and a Global Professional in Human Resources. She has been a Certified Quality Analyst and a Project Management Professional.

Her professional interests include process and project management training. She has designed and conducted programs for Tier 1 post-graduate institutes.

Ground breaking for basketball court



The bhoomi pooja of the proposed Basketball court was held on 11th May 2014.

The donors, Chairperson of Madras Metro Ladies Club 70, Namitha Siyani, Chairman Madras Metro Round Table 95, Sachin Chhabria, Project Convenor, Kajal Chhabria and Vimal Dharam were present during the function.

Sevalaya children receive first copy



The children of Sevalaya were thrilled when they received the first copy of the Audio release of the film "Angali Pangali"

SCOPE sponsorship for 10 training toppers

100 rural children who completed Std XII attended a 30 day summer training on Computers, Spoken English and Value Education jointly conducted by Sevalaya and SCOPE International. Students who completed the course received their certificates at a function on 16th May 2014. SCOPE has offered sponsorship at Computer Software College(CSC) to 10 toppers among the 100 participants .



Summer training



22 teachers of Sevalaya and 3 student of Sevalaya's Community College attended a 18 days training conducted by Edubridge Technologies through National Skill Development Corporation. The teachers were taught Computers and Spoken English.

A. Devika, teacher of the primary school felt that the training had given her a lot of confidence. Earlier she had trouble in her English communication, but now she feels her language skills have improved.

A TV editor recalls

Parthiban Kumar is Chief Bulletin Editor, Thanthi TV. He is all praise for Sevalaya's emphasis on extra curricular activities and sites his own case in support. He has the courage to conduct interviews without any fear, only because he participated in Sevalaya's oratorical competitions when he was a student.

He prays God that Sevalaya should encourage more people like him. He studied in Angel school in Thiruninravur and has taken part in many competitions in Sevalaya.

Free ride to Sevalaya

Latha, one of our volunteers, came to attend the farewell of Head Mistress Annapoorna. She hired an auto from Thiruninravur telling the auto driver that her destination was Sevalaya, to attend HM's farewell function. He refused to take any money, "You are coming to my school to attend my HM's farewell – So I will give you a free ride", said the auto driver, who was an alumni of Sevalaya!

quarters has to be received; particularly financial support from new persons, organizations and institutions are required. They should respond to the needs of Sevalaya.

On Sevalaya's new initiatives

Sevalaya's initiatives are nothing but transforming Gandhian thoughts and his ideals into action. His dreams are coming true in Sevalaya's services to the poor and downtrodden. Particularly village development was his well cherished philosophy for all round development of the country. This is what exactly Sevalaya accomplishes vigorously but silently.

On Sevalaya's recently started Community College

The products made in the Community College should find a market. The proceeds should be used for running expenses. It should aim to generate funds. Given the employment problem that persists in our country, particularly in rural areas, this initiative is laudable.

Interview with Pa.Lakshmanan



Pa. Lakshmanan, a septuagenarian Entrepreneur-Philanthropist, has been associated with Sevalaya for a decade. A true patriot and social thinker, he has great concern for the poor, and wishes that the underprivileged, poor and marginalized are to be given opportunities to prosper in their lives.

How he came to know Sevalaya?

In the year 2005, I was invited by Sevalaya to deliver a speech on Gandhi, Vivekananda and Bharathi. It was a time I was immersed in the deep sorrow of losing my son. I was hesitant to go to Kasuva in that state of mind. However, my second thought told me that by worrying on an inevitable tragedy, what are we going to gain and decided to visit. One person from Adyar's Sevalaya Office was assigned to accompany me. As I inquired about her who may be around 28 years of age at that time, I found her to be more dedicated to Sevalaya, in the midst of her own personal problems. This propelled me to associate with Sevalaya.

On Sevalaya's projects and activities

It is a striking example of how one individual's thinking and sacrifice has brought up what Sevalaya is today. All that I am desirous to see is that Sevalaya should become a very big institution and I am sure it will be a numero uno among all the service organizations and serve the poor and the needy.

On Sevalaya's services for the poor, needy and elders

Sevalaya has been rendering yeoman services to the society. Every improvement it is desirous to bring, depends upon the financial wherewithal available. For that, support from several

Annual Planning at Sevalaya

A template for inclusive governance

How many schools will change the students' uniform, just because the students made a different choice? Sevalaya has that rare - if not unique - distinction. In 2013-14 academic year, the School jettisoned the creme shirt/blouse and dark green trouser/skirt, to replace it with sky blue shirt/blouse and dark blue trousers/skirts.

The change in uniform is not just an isolated instance of democracy. It is just yet another spin off from an inclusive process of governance that has been institutionalized.

The process of seeking the stakeholders opinion as the starting point in developing the Sevalaya annual plan dates back more than a decade. It was a simple, open ended feedback sheet simply asking everybody what they wanted to Sevalaya to do. "People started giving me their crib list", recalls Murali. The majority of the respondents could not distinguish between their individual problems and their plan for the organisation. It took a lot of education before the responses yielded the desired results. As should be expected, some seemed to master the game, at least



temporarily. When children in the class uniformly praise the class teacher and recommend a huge pay hike, it does not take much to recognize whose song they are singing and on whose behalf.

Soon the process got refined, with different questionnaires administered on different segments, with a focused set of questions, which yielded improved and more insightful responses. Many leads that guided management actions emanated from this exercise. The idea of the Community College started last year, catering to those who missed formal education and employability, came from this bottom up feedback mechanism.

There is yet another important benefit inherent in the process. That learning came to Sevalaya's Founder Trustee, V

Muralidharan, during his working days with TCS.

Trained as an assessor of the PCMM capability model, Murali became a believer in the efficacy of participatory culture and of employee teams sharing the organizational vision. "It is human nature", explains Murali, "that when an employee is simply asked to do a task, there is no internal motivation. but if that employee owns the task, then there is a much greater probability of better effort". By being both participants and conduits of the feedback exercise and the subsequent planning process, the employees became co-owners of the plan and put their heart and soul into execution.

This system also gives a confidence to the grass roots that, without filtration or reprisal by the immediate superiors or levels above that, their voices can reach the top. This is a huge source of confidence.

Listening to a thousand voices

This February, the survey covered 600 students of standards IX to XII, all the 150 resident children and 60 elders, the



staff team of 150 as also 20 trustees and advisory committee members. Mails are sent to a donor list in excess of 15,000, which yields around 40 responses. "I read each of these nearly 1,000 responses word by word", says Murali. His by-now-practiced-eyes scan the sheets for new ideas, important improvements suggestions, as also recurring themes.

Listening to the customer

Survey with different questionnaires for Students of Std IX to XII, Resident children and elders, Staff, Trustees and Advisors, Donors



Study nearly 1,000 responses and identify 266 suggestions/ ideas for action



Consider them in annual plan preparation of respective Units



Evaluation of Units's plans jointly with Trustees and Advisors



Finalisation of Unit plans and allocation of tasks to individuals



Daily, weekly, monthly evaluation



Employee performance evaluation

He picked 266 thoughts, which were distributed among the internal teams called Units. At the Unit-wise strategy meetings where the status of last years idea is evaluated, the fresh set of suggestions are incorporated in the annual plan. These meetings are followed by strategy sessions in May, attended by Trustees and Advisors.

Organisation - Unit - Individual goal disaggregation

The Unit-wise goals are then distributed among the team members as individual goals for one year starting 1st June. Come 1st July, it is stocktaking time, starting with self appraisal in the form of marks assigned by each employee for around 20 parameters covering the individual's role, organizational growth and self-improvement areas. This forms the basis for meetings, first with the supervisor and then jointly with a reviewer. The outcome becomes the basis for implementing the reward system based on as objective as an assessment possible, of the employee performance.

Meanwhile, when the School opens in June, the children will spend less time to wash their hands: already, more water taps are being fitted in the school wash area, fast-tracking action in response to a recurring theme in the feedback forms.

Sevalaya Campus Programme

With 26 children in first batch (23rd April to 8th May) and 25 children in the second batch (10th May to 25th May), this camp had an early start daily, at 5.30 a.m. with days filled with various activities. With physical exercises, yoga and meditation activities and sessions on life-skills and etiquettes, the scope of this camp was wide.

The core agenda being value addition to the children, resource persons were invited to deliberate on various developmental and social topics. Quiz, basic English grammar, etiquettes and manners were part of the fare. Doll making and flower designing was another exciting Craft training experience for the children; each child was had a one flower bunch to show. A talk on leadership qualities by V. Muralidharan, Managing Trustee and storytelling sessions by J. Moses Raj, who is our regular donor, were part of the camp.

The orphaned resident children who do not have homes to go to during the summer holidays, were much delighted by this camp.

Service Camp at Puttaparthi

Initiated by N. Rangaswamy, Head of the Sri Sai Seva Samithi, Besant Nagar, 20 children (10 boys and 10 girls), accompanied by two care takers, participated in the 10 days Service camp at Sai Prasanti Nilayam at Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh during 29th April to 8th May 2014. Children enjoyed the service activities, which gave them a practical lesson in moral values, manners, etiquettes and self confidence. So enjoyable was this camp that all of them were eager for such an opportunity in the next summer too.

Tonakela Camp

This has been an annual feature for our children, hosted by Camp Tonakela Association, Avadi - a social & developmental camp site for children. This year also Sevalaya children were invited for a 3- day camp during 6th – 8th



Delightful summer camps



May 2014. 26 children, accompanied by A. Subburaj and P.J.Bruno, Care takers, were exposed to various activities like Life skill sessions, sports, games and swimming. V. Muralidharan, Managing Trustee and Heads of Bharthi Unit and Vivekananda units, joined the camp to deliberate on the life history and messages of Vivekananda, Gandhi and Bharthiyar. Various competitions were conducted and prizes were given to the winners.

Special Inter-School Sports camp

At the invitation of District Sports Officer of Thiruvallur District, 11 children (6 boys and 5 girls) accompanied by one care taker, participated in the camp on 10th May 2014. These 11 children were selected on the basis of merit in sports activities. This camp started as early as 5.00 a.m. and lasted till 7.00 p.m. Special trainers in sports and games guided the children and gave rigorous practice in various games and sports. The children who excel in sports, will get an opportunity to participate in the residential programme organised by 'Sports Authority of India' residential program.

Disha Agri Camp

Sevalaya hosted the 6 day Disha Agri Camp from 29th April to 4th May 2014. The camp was organised by Ma Foi, a Chennai based NGO supporting underprivileged school children in their academics, sports, life skill development etc. 175 students from various schools in Chennai participated in the camp.

This year the concept was 'Agriculture & Agrarian activities'. The students of urban



background hailing from city schools, had wonderful exposure in Sevalaya campus, especially in the agriculture fields and Gosala during 29th April to 4th May 2014. All the students stayed in the Children's homes and Sevalaya provided food and accommodation to all the children. Supported by L. Loganathan and C.Felix Raja, the students had rich field experience of working in the vegetable and fodder grass fields and banana plantations and also with cattle of 'Gosala'. Students cleaned the Sevalaya campus. The Ma Foi volunteers headed by Pranav, demonstrated farming practices and appreciated Sevalaya's bio- farming without chemical mixed fertilizers and pesticides. It was a highly enriching experience for students who participated.

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When preaching religion becomes a blasphemy...

“God comes to the poor in the form of Roti,” asserted Swami Vivekananda. He went to the extent of saying that it was blasphemy to preach religion to the starving and the deprived. This was empathy. He could empathize because he suffered poverty and hunger in his own life; and had the experience of somebody talking metaphysical niceties when he was under the grueling pangs of starvation.

Narendra’s father suddenly died leaving huge debts. Those relatives who were living exploiting the generosity of Viswanatha Dutta (Narendra’s father) turned inimical and even the house they lived became a subject of dispute,, and the family had to leave. The responsibility of feeding six or seven persons without any

income fell on the shoulders of Narendra, and his efforts at securing a job proved futile. Many a day he had to go without any food. Vivekananda says, “One day, at that time, when I was going from place to place, in the sun, my sole, I remember, got blistered. Extremely fatigued, I had to sit down in the shade of the Ochterloney Monument in the Maidan. A friend or two were with me that day or met me by chance. One of them, I remember distinctly, sang by way of consoling me:

“Here blows the wind, the breath of Brahman, His Grace palpable....”

When I heard the song as if I felt as if he was inflicting severe blows on my head. Remembering the sheer helplessness of my mother and brothers, I burst out

in resentment, despair and disappointment, “Shut up. Those who are in the lap of luxury and do not know what the pinch of hunger means and those whose nearest and dearest ones are not starving and going naked-to such people, in the midst of the fullest enjoyment of life, such flights of imagination, appear sweet and pleasing. I also had such days and felt similarly, but now, confronted with stern reality, all these sentiments seem to be a terrible mockery,”

“May be, the friend was highly offended to hear those words of mine. But how could he understand what a severe grinding poverty it was that had drawn those words out of my mouth?”



School children asking for 'lift' from two-wheeler riders is a common sight in the mornings, on all the roads leading to the Sevalaya School.

“It would be nice to get a cycle”, says Lavanya a student studying in Std XII in Mahakavi Bharathiyar Higher Secondary School. “I have to walk fast or nearly run to catch the bus to be in time for the class”, she explains.

Uday Kumar who has to walk 6 Kms from Sengalamman Kandigai to Vengal bus stop has to start at 6.30 a.m to catch the 7.30 a.m bus. He asks the head mistress eagerly if he can get a cycle. “Once the morning special classes start it will be such a great boon”, he says wistfully.

There are many such Lavanyas and Udays from villages such as Athivakkam, Karlappakkam and Kilambakkam. They have to walk 2 to 6 Kms daily both in the morning and evening to reach Sevalaya.

“I want to get good marks and do well in life. Sevalaya gives good coaching and I don’t have to spend any money”, is the typical answer when asked why they didn’t join a nearer school. “If I study well I will get a good job, but if I get a cycle life will be surely easier”.

Can their dreams come true? Sevalaya hopes so, with the support of generous souls.

So that they do not need to ask strangers for a 'lift'.

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