



# LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Love 3 **Sevalaya's News Letter - March 2009** Serve 12 Price-Re.1

## Dear Friends,

One more financial year is coming to an end. In India, April-March is the financial year. By the end of March this year, we will be submitting our 21<sup>st</sup> annual accounts for audit. Looking back at all the years and the financial figures gives us immense satisfaction. Whatever was the total annual income in the very first year is our daily income today. That is about 365 times increase in revenue in 21 years. But the growth in our activities have shown much more increase and this growth in income has been rendered insufficient. From supporting 5 children in the first year to support 1000 children now, is a straight 200 times increase. In addition, we have an old age home with 60 inmates, craft centre, library, small medical centre, cultural activities etc., and all put together account for more than 365 times increase in expenses. Added to this, there is the all important inflation factor too!

But this is a good problem to have! We are able to continuously expand our activities and keep us under financial pressure all the time! The benefit reaches more and more people; we see more and more smiling faces, more and more families coming out of poverty, what more do we need as a return on investment?

Do we stop here and relax? Can we take a break? Yes, we would like to, but there are more and more kids knocking at our doors, waiting to get the benefit of free quality education. The phones keep ringing asking us if we can take one more old lady or an old man lying on the city streets. So where do we draw the line and say this is enough? And we also have grand plans to start our own free university very soon, increase the capacity of the existing school and try and replicate Sevalaya in other parts of India. All this, no doubt, needs more funds, but more important, we need committed service minded workers to take this forward.

Personally I have been riding on "two horses", running at top speed, one Sevalaya and the other my profession. It is a personal mile stone that this year I am completing 25 years in my profession. I have read somewhere that one should be a student for the initial 20-22 years of one's life, be engaged in a profession for the next 25 years and then spend the rest of life in doing free service to society. Now I am entering the third phase.

There has been requests from different forums of voluntary organizations asking me to spend more time on helping many other like minded organizations to grow, taking my experience in running Sevalaya. I feel the time is nearing for me to dismount from one horse, and may be increase the time I am spending in the public activities; spend more time with many other voluntary organisations who need help in management; fund raising; problem solving; etc. I am contemplating on this line for quite some time.

And very soon I may have to become a full timer in directly serving the society.

Thanks & Regards  
**Murali**



**National Knowledge Commission's  
"out reach" program at Sevalaya**

**One day workshop on "Volunteering in Social Service Organisations" at Sevalaya**



**Events**

On 07/02/2009, Mr.Muthiah Ramanathan, Director, Mind Dynamics centre, popular psychologist & Counselling Specialist conducted a one day workshop for college students on "Volunteering in Social Service Organisations". Inaugurating the programme, Ms. C.Vijayalakshmi, Chief Educational Officer of Thiruvallur District said that they alone live who live for others and one can enjoy true unalloyed happiness when one serves others. She told the college students to fully utilize the golden opportunity being provided by Sevalaya. Nearly 100 students from various colleges participated in this programme.

85 school students from Bala Vidya Mandir Senior Secondary School, Adyar visited Sevalaya on 14/02/2009.

National Knowledge Commission, an advisory body to the Prime Minister of India, is organising an "out reach" program to meet the heads of the schools in each district and explain the commission's recommendations in the area of reforms in School Education. In this connection, Sevalaya took the lead to organize the first of such program in India, for the schools in Thiruvallur District, on 27/02/2009 at Sevalaya service centre. Mr. M.Kutralingam (Secretary, Education Department), Ms. C.Vijayalakshmi (Chief Educational officer, Thiruvallur) and Ms. Tisca Chopra, Hindi Film Artiste) were the Chief guests on the occasion. Dr. Sujatha Ramadorai (Member, National Knowledge Commission made a presentation on the Commission's recommendations. 150 Headmasters and Others from Thiruvallur District participated on the programme.

**National Knowledge Commission's "out reach" program at TAFVA**



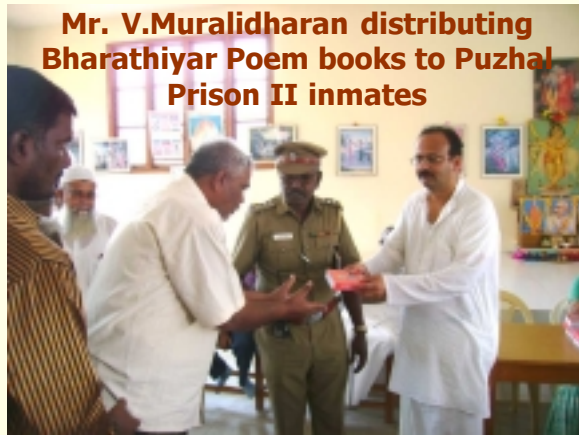
**External Events**

On 07/01/2009, Ms. Bhuvanewari Muralidharan, Hony. Correspondent Sevalaya was a special invitee at the function organized by Lioness Club of Temple Bay to celebrate National Youth Day at the Govt. Girls High School, Usman road, T. Nagar, Chennai and spoke on Vivekananda and the youth.

In the weekly programme on Bharathi, Gandhi, Vivekananda at Puzhal prison II, Mr. T.S.Venkataramani, Hony. Coordinator spoke on "Vivekanandar's Life History" on 07/02/2009. Ms. Bhuvanewari Muralidharan, Hony. Correspondent spoke on "Bharathiyar Life History" on 14/02/2009, Mr. A. Annamalai, Advisory Committee Member, Sevalaya spoke on Gandhiji's "Truth and Non-violence" on 21/02/2009 and Vetri Vidiyal Srinivasan spoke on "Vivekananda's guru Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsar", on 28/02/2009.

The 30 session course on Bharathi, Gandhi and Vivekananda coordinated by Sevalaya was inaugurated on 21/02/2009 at the Vellore Central Jail at 11.00 am by Mr. R.Duraisamy M.A., DIG Prisons, Chennai Range and Mr. N.Sekar, Superintendent, Vellore Central Jail. Mr. G.Ram Mohan, Retd. Railway Safety Commissioner and a Gandhian Scholar presented a one hour slide show on the Life of Mahatma Gandhi which was well received by the audience.

On 21/02/2009, V.Muralidharan, Founder & Managing Trustee, Sevalaya was a guest speaker at the function, organised by Jamat-E-Islamic Hind, on Quran for world peace.



Sevalaya put up a Stall at the MoP Bazaar at MoP Vaishnav College, Chennai on 21 & 22/02/2009.

On 27/02/2009, V.Muralidharan, Founder & Managing Trustee participated in the National Knowledge Commission's Outreach Programme for NGO's working in the field of education, organised by TAFVA.

#### **In the Air...**

An interview with Mr. T.S.Venkataramani, Hony. Coordinator was broadcast at MoP Vaishnav's Community FM, on 21/02/2009.

#### **Medical Checkup**

On 06/02/2009, eye checkup for the senior citizens at Sevalaya's old age home was done by Agarwal eye hospital, Chennai.

On 14/02/2009, Thiruniravur Leo Club organised an eye checkup by Aravind Sai Eye Hospital for the residents of old age home and school students of Sevalaya.

#### **NSS Activities**

On 06/02/2009, Sevalaya NSS students went to Lord Shiva temple at Puliur for cleaning the temple premises.

#### **Staff Book Review**

On 07/02/2009, Mr.J.Rajaraman spoke on "Bharathi A World Poet" (Tamil) by Prof. Vanangamudi. "Bharathiyar Essays" by Bharathiyar was taken up for discussion by Ms. Sumathi on 14/02/2009. On 21/02/2009, Ms. Meenakshi shared her views on "Lessons from Bharathiyar Essays" and on 28/02/2009, Ms. Latha spoke on "Wealth of Ettayapuram" by Ponnammal.

#### **Students Study Circle**

On 14/02/2009, E.Govindaraj shared his views



on "Advices to children" (Tamil) by Mr. Umapathi. On 21/02/2009, S.Shanthi shared her thoughts on "Jawaharlal Nehru" by Mr. Sarathi.

#### **Tour & Picnic**

On 04/02/2009, students from 9<sup>th</sup> std. were taken to Poondi Reservoir and Thiruvallur Sri Veeraraghava Perumal temple.

#### **Temple Visit**

On 06/02/2009, Hostel boys went to Ramanathapuram Vinayagar Temple and the hostel girls went to Pakkam Shiva and Anchaneya Temple. On 13/02/2009 hostel boys went to Ramanathapuram Vinayagar temple and on 20/02/2009, hostel girls went to Ramanathapuram Vinayagar temple. On 24/02/2009, the 12<sup>th</sup> Std. Students went to Pakkam Shiva and Anchaneya Temple and offered Prayers for success in Public examination.

#### **Visits to other schools**

On 06/02/2009, 13/02/2009 and 20/02/2009 our school teaching staff went to Navadisha Montessori School, Velachery, Chennai for Observation.

#### **The 30 session course on Bharathi, Gandhi and Vivekananda coordinated by Sevalaya at the Vellore Central Jail**



## He who treaded with Gandhiji

We had the fortune of coming across a "vintage" book on Gandhiji. It was written by T.S.Avinasilingam Chettiar and was published in 1951 by Tamil Pannai. The title is "The Mahatma I saw". The 220 odd paged book was priced Rs.4/-. The book, needless to say, must be out of print now. We had to carefully thumb through the yellowish worn out pages lest they should crumble.

Avinasilingam Chettiar, a scholar, educationist and Finance Minister in the erstwhile Madras Presidency has been influenced in his life and thoughts by Mahatma Gandhi and Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He claims that out of Crores of people who had been influenced by Gandhiji, he is among a few thousands, who had been benefited by close proximity and personal experiences with Gandhiji.

We have several biographies to know about major events in Gandhiji's life. Chettiar also shares with us such events. But what we thought we should share with our readers is smaller events of life which Chettiar had been privileged to experience with Gandhiji.

He saw Mahatma in 1919 when the latter was addressing a Public Meeting in Marina beach. There was no loud speaker and Gandhiji was addressing a crowd of 50 to 60 thousand people who were listening to him with rapt attention in pin-drop silence. Gandhiji was talking about Khadi. The intellectuals in the meeting were skeptic about wearing a sack-cloth bringing freedom to India. But the common men were impressed and were willing to implicitly obey Gandhiji. Avinasilingam Chettiar, as a student, from that very day switched over to Khadi.

Gandhiji was having a strategic meeting with Rajaji, Patel and other workers about organizing the salt Satyagraha. Dandi was roughly 250 miles from Sabarmathi. How to reach that place? Suggestions came that they could go by train, or Motor. Pros and Cons were being discussed. Gandhiji suddenly, to the surprise of all, announced that he would walk the whole distance.

This stand of 64 year old Gandhiji was puzzling, and people asked why he should walk. Gandhiji's confident reply was, "Every speck of dust I tread on will produce countless warriors of freedom." "Yes; it did happen." avers Chettiar.

During the Dandi March Gandhiji used to apply paste of clay on his pate to ward off heat. One daily, inimical to Gandhiji commented, "Gandhiji has clay both on and inside his head." Gandhiji seemed to enjoy this as a joke.

Chettiar had traveled widely with Gandhiji, and has marveled his ways with women who were only too eager to part with all their jewels at the call of Gandhiji for the Harijan Fund. It looked as if they had been hypnotized. Chettiar had jokingly called Gandhiji as Jewel Thief!

It was at Coonoor. Mr. Malkani, Dr. T. S. S. Rajan, Dr.G.Ramachandran, Mr.Chettiar and a host of others were dining. After the dinner, servants had thrown the used leaves carelessly, and they were found strewn about over the whole passage. Gandhiji on seeing this suddenly bent down and started cleaning the place. Others including the VIPs and servants were shocked and ashamed, and took over the chore from him.

A small incident, when a cheque issued by Chettiar had to be deferred for payment by bank, brought Chettiar the disapproval of Gandhiji. "I know it is your contribution, and the sum is small for you. Yet you had no funds in the Bank at the moment of writing the cheque. As a public servant, you should be above board and set an example for others" Gandhiji admonished.

Gandhiji was staying in a small village Segan, renamed Sevagram due to Gandhiji's association. It is a few miles off from Wardha Station. Chettiar landed at Wardha station, and was taken by Ariyanayagam to his residence at Wardha. It was pouring cats and dogs, and there was no way of reaching Sevagram. Ariyanayagam and Chettiar were looking from the window, and they spotted two persons sheltered by a single umbrella walking towards Wardha. Was one of them Gandhiji? "Yes" said Ariyanayagam; "He is coming to meet a sick person at Maganwadi who had expressed his desire to see Gandhiji."

Any comment on this incident will be only an understatement.

A new edition of this book will be worthwhile for our generation.

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