



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Sevalaya's News Letter

MAY - 2004

Dear Friends,

Few years back people in India were worried about the 'brain drain'. Many intelligent youth from India, after completing their studies in IIT or IISc, will get their passport and Visa and their next stop will be America. When millions in India were struggling to get their ration card, these selected few will get their green card! And then, we will have to forget them, as they will never have plans to return to India, except on vacation, carrying even water and baby food from USA!

Atleast some of these well settled, Indian-Americans, have decided that they have to give something back to India. It was very interesting to read in newspapers about a few of them who have given up their jobs in America to come back and serve the poor in India. Dr.Haren Joshi, a surgeon in Philadelphia, has come back to India and is running a free hospital for the poor in a remote place near Sabarkantha in Gujarat. Ganpatbhai Patel, a California based electronic parts businessman, has set up Ganpat Vidyalaya and he is closing down his lucrative business to come back and run the school. There are many people, a Florida based doctor, a Chicago based businessman and many more such successful people have left their 'money earning' life and returned to service oriented life in their home towns.

Sevalaya has also had its share of such volunteers from abroad. We had a German staying in Sevalaya for nearly a year, helping our children to learn the use of computers and also some spoken German. We had couple of people from USA, helping us to organize our library and medical center. One

person also thought our children dance. We had some volunteers from Denmark, staying in our campus for three months and playing with our class zero children. And also teaching them music and dance. We had student visitors from U.K who helped children to learn spoken English. These are basically foreigners, willing to give up some time from their work life and spend it for the benefit of Indian children and old people. The cases mentioned in the previous para are Indians, giving up their job and returning to India to serve. We need both types of volunteers to help us.

Sevalaya also gets a stream of visitors on all weekends, most of them are college students and school students. Many colleges and schools come to Sevalaya on a 10-day National Service Scheme (NSS) camp. Even if we get 10 such camps in a year, that means 100 days in a year, we have around 50 students camping at Sevalaya, year after year! All such students don't stop with this 10-day camp. They keep visiting our campus on many occasions after that, offering to help us in all possible ways. More than just visits, they also offer to buy items, which are in need for Sevalaya. Kannika Parameswari college has offered to buy the entire furniture required for our new library block; Gill Adrash School has bought storage cub-boards for the campus, etc. Sevalaya Trustees also get invited to such schools and colleges on various occasions to address the children on volunteerism.

Entire population in the village is required to pull the temple car!

Thanks & Regards

Murali



Mr. William Hefley of
Pinnacle Global Management,
USA

Study Circle Meetings

Date : 03/04/04
Book : Geniuses of Tamil Nadu
Author : Tamlarasana
Speaker : Mr. S.Vedagiri
Venue : Sevalaya Campus

Date : 10/04/04
Book : Vinobha
Author : T.D.Thirumalai
Speaker : Mr. S.Saravana Babu
Venue : Sevalaya Campus

Date : 16/04/04
Book : How to set goals
Author : Vimalnath
Speaker : Mr. T.R.Sarathy
Venue : Sevalaya Administrative Office

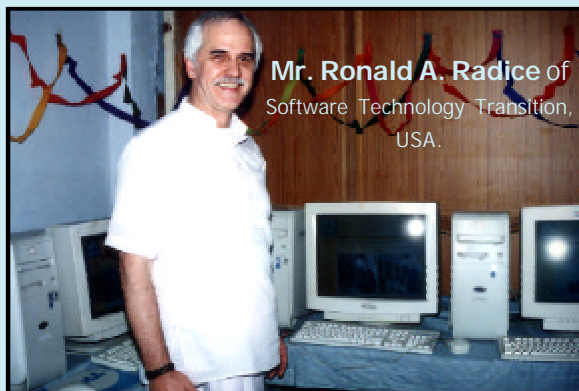
Date : 17/04/04
Book : Success of self - confidence
Author : P.C.Ganesan
Speaker : Mr. Thanigaivasan
Venue : Sevalaya Campus

Mahavir Jayanthi at Sevalaya:

On 3rd April 2004, Mahavir Jayanthi was celebrated. Dr. Ln. MJF. Shantilal Nahar was the Chief Guest and he spoke to the children about life and message of Mahavir.



Mr.
K.Padmanabhan
Vice President
of Tata
Consultancy
Services.



Mr. Ronald A. Radice of
Software Technology Transition,
USA.

4th April 2004 witnessed 3 functions at Sevalaya.

1. Gandhian Experiment on Education, the English edition of the book written by Mr. R.Thandapani based on his research on Sevalaya for his M.Phil degree at Madurai Kamaraj University was released by Mr. Ronald A. Radice of Software Technology Transition, USA. Mr. William Hefley of Pinnacle Global Management, USA received the first copy.

2. Tata Consultancy Services donated a Tata Indica V2 car to Sevalaya on that day. The keys of the car was handed over by Mr. Ravi Shah, Head of Chennai Operations of Tata Consultancy Services

3. A classroom sponsored by TCS Project team at San Antonio, Texas, USA, was inaugurated by, Mr. K.Padmanabhan, Vice President of Tata Consultancy Services.

Many senior officials of Tata Consultancy services visited Sevalaya on that day.

Tamil New Year Day

The Tamil New Year dawned with festivities and fun for Sevalaya. Mr. G.D.Rajendran, President of the working committee of Koyambedu Vegetable, Fruit and Flower Merchants Association was our honourable Chief Guest for Tamil New Year day on April



Mr. Ravi Shah, Head of
Chennai Operations of
Tata Consultancy Services



Mr. Ravi Shah, Head of Chennai Operations of Tata Consultancy Services

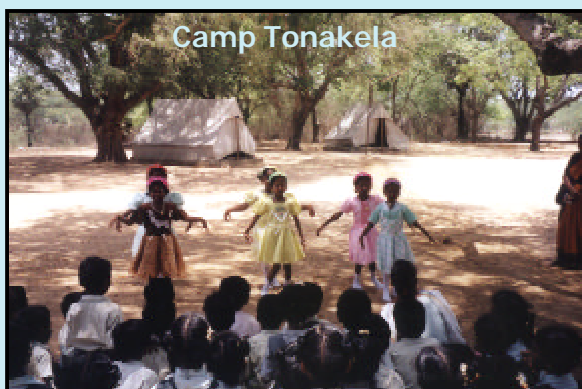
13th 2004. Mr. Bhakthavatsulu, General Secretary of the Association and many members and friends participated in the celebrations making the occasion a joyous one for our inmates. The guests distributed sweet Pongal, sundal and fruits to the inmates. Mr. G.D.Rajendran assured that the association would continue to supply free vegetables for Sevalaya and also extend any support required.

Free summer course at Sevalaya for the poor rural youth

A one-month free computer-training course commenced at Sevalaya on April 19th 2004 for the poor rural youth. The Course was inaugurated by Mr. A.Srinivasan, Delivery Centre Head of TCS Sholingnallur who appreciated Sevalaya for making the best use of the 50 odd computers in their computer laboratory during summer holidays for the benefit of the rural poor. 32 people have enrolled themselves of which more than 20 are women.

Children go camping...

It is camping time again. At the end of every academic year 60 children of Sevalaya are taken for a 3-day camp at Camp Tonakela at Avadi. Children of classes I to V went camping this year. Every year, The Camp Tonakela association sponsors the camp. The 3 days were celebrated as Mahatma Gandhiji Day,



Camp Tonakela



Mr. A.Srinivasan, Delivery Centre Head of TCS Sholingnallur

Mahakavi Bharathiyar Day and Swami Vivekananda Day. Mr. A.Annamalai, trustee, told the children interesting anecdotes from Gandhiji's life on April 19th 2004. On April 20th 2004, Ms. Bhuvaneswari Muralidharan, Hon Correspondent of Sevalaya spoke to the children about life of Mahakavi Bharathiyar. On 21st April 2004, Mr. T.S.Venkataramani, Hon. Coordinator, spoke on the life and message Swami Vivekananda to the children.

Everyday a quiz programme based on the lecture was conducted. The children were divided in to 2 groups and the groups competed with each other enthusiastically to get maximum points. Many sports and games competitions were held for the children. Every day the children had a campfire and got an opportunity to present their various talents in singing/dancing etc. The main attraction of the campsite is the swimming pool where the children splashed about in the cool waters for an hour in the afternoon, a welcome escape from the merciless heat of Chennai. On the whole the 3 days were a total break from the routine and rigour of the school and the children enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

On the Valedictory Day prizes were distributed the winners of the various competitions like quiz/dance/song etc. Mr. Sheriff from Avadi sponsored the prizes.



Mr. G.D.Rajendran, President of the working committee of Koyambedu Vegetable, Fruit and Flower Merchants Association

SPARE THE CHILD

One of the cardinal principles we adopt in running both the Mahakavi Bharathiar Higher Secondary School and the children's home, at our Sevalaya campus, is that we use punitive measures very, very sparingly for correcting our children when they commit any mistakes. There is a saying in English: "Spare the rod and you spoil the child". But our principle is just the opposite. We believe that when a harsh punishment such as corporal punishment, is inflicted on a child, the child only develops a hostile attitude to authority over a period of time. No real corrective effect is achieved. A word of advice, lovingly given, goes a much longer way in correcting an erring child. Our principle is to 'spare the child', and nurture him or her for a great future. This is the truth that is revealed in our studies of the lives of the three great seers, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Mahakavi Subramania Bharati.

Swami Vivekananda, as young Narendranath, was student at a school named 'Metropolitan Institution'. Even then Naren used to exhibit at times, flashes of the greatness that was blossoming in his mind. Unfortunately such flashes only created confusion in the minds of some of his teachers. One such event took place in a geography class. The teacher asked Naren a question to which Naren gave the correct answer. But the teacher wrongly thought that Naren's answer was incorrect. He asked Naren to stretch his hand and struck him on the palm with his cane. Naren did not flinch, and insisted that he was right. The teacher struck the boy again and again but the young student would not budge. The teacher then got a doubt and checked back in the textbook. To his great shame he found that he was in error. He apologized to the boy. Naren reported the matter to his mother who consoled him saying that he had done the right thing. But the incident shows the demeaning effect of corporal punishment on tender young minds.

Mahatma Gandhi suffered a similar experience of unjust punishment as young Mohandas, in

his school days. The effect was corrosive in his young mind. There was a system of compulsory gymnastics class for the students in the school. Every Saturday, after attending regular classes in the forenoon, the students were required to return to school at four o'clock for gymnastics. Like all his classmates Mohandas had no watch of his own, and usually judged the time during daylight hours by the position of the sun. One Saturday it was cloudy and he misjudged the time. As a result, by the time he went to the school the gymnastics class was already over. The next day he was called and asked to explain. He told the truth, but the Head Master thought he was lying and asked him to pay a fine. An accusation of, and punishment for, lying hurt young Mohandas. He cried in deep anguish. Then with determination he fought back and got the fine revoked.

Bharati as a school student exhibited a precocious ability to write beautiful poetry in Tamil. When sitting in the classroom his mind would wander; and mentally he would be composing poems and songs unmindful of the happenings in the class. The teachers used to find his inattention in the class irritating, and punish him. They would have liked to impose some severe punishment, but held back on account of their regard for his father who was an upcoming businessman at that time. So the usual punishment given was to make him 'stand upon the bench'. But Bharati would merrily continue to dream, standing on the bench. He would, for example, try to find rhyming Tamil words for the Tamil equivalents of the words 'stand', 'upon' and 'bench'! "*Nil* (stand)", "*nell* (paddy)", "*vil* (bow)", "*pal* (tooth)", "*sol* (word)", "*kal* (stone)", "*vel* (win)" – such would be the string of words he would utter to himself. Who could take away poetry from such a soul?

These and such other stories have given us insight into the working of tender minds of young children. We have to nurture them with loving care, and not scar them with severe punishments.

For Free Circulation :

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