



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Love 3 **Sevalaya's News Letter - May 2008** Serve 2 Price-Re.1

Dear Friends,

Everyone in India and elsewhere in the world are noticing and feeling the pinch of the increasing food price. The increase is very steep in almost all the economies and in places like Africa, people are coming out onto the streets and demonstrating asking for government action to control the sky rocketing prices. The UN calls it the global food crisis and warns of grimmer days to come. As we add 2.5 kids every second to the world population, there are more mouths to feed, and less and less food produced in all the countries, the problem will only get worse.

Countries like India and China, where the economy is booming, has a wealthy middle class growing and as this accounts for a big chunk of the world population, it has a great impact on the world as a whole. This new wealthy mass wants to consume more and there has been noticeable change in the eating habits of these people. A study by CNN shows that this new strong middle class is consuming five times more food compared to what it was 10 years ago. In countries like UK, the wealth of the top 1000 richest people has quadrupled in the last 10 years. All such factors will make the poor, poorer.

As the fuel prices go up, now more countries are investing in bio-fuel. Is this good for global warming? If we consider the fact that forests are being burnt down to get land for cultivation for bio-fuel, it may not be all that green option. Added to this, now land availability for food grain production is coming down as there are more investments in cultivation for bio-fuel. This may result in bringing down the fuel price but will push up the food price!

More and more families are pushed below the poverty line, world over, as they struggle to

get enough and proper food. This number is increasing everyday. Are the rich ready to help? A study by Philanthropy UK shows that the rich 10% of the population give 1% of their income for public good, whereas the poor 10% contribute 3%. Maybe the poor understand the problem of poor more easily and are also willing to part with their earnings 3 times more than the rich people – they are the bigger donors, in terms of percentage!

If food is a problem even for low income group, what about the 'no income' group like the orphans and the destitutes? The need of the hour is to contribute more for food programs for the affected groups. The long term solution is to see how to increase the food production, how to make more land available for this, more agricultural research, better irrigation etc. All this can be done by the Governments of the world. What can individuals do? We can reduce spending more on food and spare that money to support others.

Our desserts can wait till the rest of the world gets their simple bread or rice.

Thanks & Regards
Murali



Donors Meet at Bristol, UK

AIDS Awareness Meeting for the XI Standard Students



Events

An AIDS Awareness Meeting for the XI Std Students was held on 10/4/2008 organised by Ms. C.Vijayalakshmi, CEO, Thiruvallur and conducted by a resource person from the Department of Education.

On 12 /04/2008, Lions Club District Governor Lion S.Nagin and DCP Lion. Murugan visited Sevalaya. The District Governor distributed free spectacles to the senior citizens. This was a project of Leo Club of Thiruninravur.

Tamil New Year was celebrated on 13/04/2008 with great enthusiasm, in the presence of friends from Koyambedu Periyar vegetable market welfare association, Mr. G.D.Rajasekaran, President of Periyar vegetable market welfare association presided over the function. On his felicitation address he appreciated the organization for their undisputed service to the poor and destitute people. He expressed his desire for the organization to grow further and extend its service to more and more under privileged people in the future. He added that for the past five years Koyambedu Periyar vegetable market welfare association has been supplying vegetables to Sevalaya free of cost and has promised to continue this in the forthcoming years as well.



Students at Camp Tonakela, Avadi

Mahavir Jayanthi Celebrations



Mahavir Jayanthi was celebrated on 20/04/2008. Mr. Sugalchand Jain (President, Rajasthani Association, Tamilnadu) was the Chief guest on the occasion. Mr.Jain who spoke briefly about Mahavir's birth, childhood days, quest for truth highlighted the social reforms preached by him nearly 2600 years ago. Abolition of slavery, respect for humans and all forms of life, giving respect and status to women in society and protection of environment were some of the issues dealt with. "These are some issues which are being debated and discussed even today. But great sages and well wishers of society had the foresight to implement these ages ago", he mentioned.

The Annual 3 day camp at Sevalaya students at Camp Tonakela, Avadi was held from 22/04/2008 to 24/04/2008 in which 30 students and 2 staff participated. On 22/04/2008, there was a 45 minutes talk on Bharathi ar, His life and selected poems by Bhuvanewari Muralidharan, Hony. Correspondent of Sevalaya. On 23/04/2006, Mr. G.Chittibabu, Campus In-charge of Sevalaya spoke to the students on life of Gandhiji and on 24/04/2008, Mr. T.S.Venkataramani told the students about Life of Swami Vivekananda. Many sports events and cultural events were held on all the three days. The students had a refreshing break from the routine and enjoyed living in tents



Personality Development camp at Brahmakumari Samajam's Retreat Centre, Chunguvar Chattaram



Inauguration of free summer course on Computer education and spoken English

amidst natural surroundings. The camp was inaugurated on 22/04/2008 by Mr. Govindarajan, Secretary of Camp Tonakela. Mr. Rajendra Prasadh, Venkateswara Jewellers, Avadi was the special Guest for the valedictory function on 24/04/2008. The children shared their experiences at the camp on the last day.

Events Overseas...

An interactive donor meet of Sevalaya was organized in Lytham, UK on 24/04/2008. Nearly 60 donors participated in the meet. There was a presentation on the activities of Sevalaya and Sevalaya in 20 Years followed by a discussion on ways of helping Sevalaya, challenges faced by the organization and the future plans of starting a free Rural University. The support from the participants was overwhelming.

Another similar meet was organized in Bristol, UK on 28/04/2008. Nearly 40 members participated.

Mr. V.Muralidharan, Managing Trustee visited the 'Fosbrooke house', the paid old age home in Lytham, United Kingdom.

Events in which Sevalaya participated

Residents of Sevalaya's Children's Home participated in the Mahavir Jayanthi Celebrations at Avadi, arranged by Jain Association, Avadi on 18/04/2008.



Leo Club of Thiruninravur distributed free spectacles to the senior citizens



Tamil New Year Celebrations

Training Programmes

Mr. Lakshmanan, staff of Sevalaya conducted a workshop on "Teaching elementary school students" on 19/04/2008 in which he shared with the teachers his experience in handling the elementary classes and the methodology he has adopted based on his experience in dealing with the children.

80 students and 5 staff members participated in the personality development camp at Brahmakumari Samajam's Retreat Centre, "Happy Village", Podavur Village, Chunguvar Chattaram, from 25/04/2008 to 27/04/2008.

Mr. D.Samuvel Chelladurai, DEO, Thiruvallur inaugurated a one month free summer course on Computer education and spoken English for the rural youth. 60 students have enrolled for the Computer course & 30 students have enrolled for the Spoken English class.

Study Circle

On 05/04/2008, G.Jothi spoke on 1 & 2 Peter from The Holy Bible. Mr. P.Dhamodharan shared what he read in the 11th Chapter of The Bhagvad Gita on 12/04/2008. The 44th to 50th Chapters from The Holy Quran was Ms. Romansa Mary's choice for the study circle meet on 19/04/2008 while Mr. I.Anand shared with others what he read in 51st to 60th Chapters of The Holy Quran.



Mahavir Jayanthi Celebrations at Avadi

We are not "rightists".

This may rightly be called the age of rights." We, the people," have given to ourselves the fundamental rights under a written Constitution. There are the all embracing Human rights, and there are several sectional rights. Women's rights, children rights, senior citizen rights; labour rights and industrialists rights; consumer rights and traders and service providers rights; rights of the oppressed, suppressed, of the minorities, of the transgender and the physically and mentally challenged. In addition there are the freedom of the media, freedom of expression of artists and writers, privileges of the legislators and of the judiciary. But what do we find at the end of the day?

In spite of more and more stringent legislations being passed day in and day out and despite seminars and workshops being conducted in air conditioned delight and reams and reams of papers being presented, what do we find? Children rummaging garbage piles for something that would fetch them a few bucks to get their next morsel of food; (Their version of 'wealth from waste' perhaps.) great walls being built around Dalit colonies with impunity; Women being gang raped; transgender and the handicapped being made subjects of comedy in films; innocents wallowing in prisons without trial for decades together and criminals in positions of power; honor of honest and straightforward individuals being subjected to trial by media, and creative writers and artists being hounded out. The list is endless.

What has gone wrong? As usual we have to look up to Gandhiji. Here is an extract of a cable sent by Gandhiji to H.G.Wells, English Novelist, sociological writer and historian in April 1940. This was in response to a Charter of Rights drafted by him and sent to Gandhiji for his comments. Gandhiji writes:

"RECEIVED YOUR CABLE. HAVE CAREFULLY READ YOUR FIVE ARTICLES. YOU WILL PERMIT ME TO SAY YOU ARE ON THE WRONG TRACK. I FEEL SURE THAT I CAN DRAW UP A BETTER CHARTER OF RIGHTS THAN YOU HAVE DRAWN UP. BUT OF WHAT GOOD WILL IT BE? WHO WILL BECOME ITS GUARDIAN? IF YOU MEAN PROPAGANDA OR POPULAR EDUCATION YOU HAVE BEGUN AT THE WRONG END. I SUGGEST THE RIGHT WAY. BEGIN

WITH A CHARTER OF DUTIES OF MAN.(BOTH D AND M IN CAPITALS) AND I PROMISE THE RIGHTS WILL FOLLOW AS SPRING FOLLOWS THE WINTER."

No truer word has ever been said. Your right is my duty, and vice versa. I have no means to ensure that you perform your duties, but MY performing my duties is entirely in my hands. If every one starts with himself and performs his duties diligently, everything will fall in place, there will be perfect balance, and "the Welfare of All" will ensue "as spring follows winter." Mahakavi Bharathiyar emphasizes one's performance of one's duties and defines duties as "self control; wishing the welfare of all and running to the succor of the distressed." Swami Vivekananda would call him a traitor who shirks his responsibility to repay his debt to the society.

Yes. Activism and legislation must be in place. No quarrel over that. But what would ultimately deliver the goods will be that every one should conscientiously discharge his duties. In a slightly altered context "responsibility" would seem to be a more appropriate word as "duty" implies an element of compulsion. In Sevalaya, our team members do not think in terms of Children Home duties, Old Age home duties, School duties or Goshala (cow-centre) duties. They have only responsibility of welfare of children, responsibility of welfare of senior citizens, responsibility of welfare of animals, and the responsibility of providing value education. There has never been any clash over rights here.



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