



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

May 2014

100 rural children at Free Summer Camp *45 day package to fill the gap, prepare them for higher education*



Kumaran Mani, CEO of Tenth Planet Technologies, delivering the inaugural address.



Spoken English, Basic Computers and Value Education are part of the fare offered.



For 100 Standard XII students of Kasuva and its neighboring villages, the next 45 days can well be a turning point in their life. They are all part of a free summer coaching camp jointly organized by Sevalaya and SCOPE international. Here they will be taught Spoken English, Basic Computers and Value Education, all of which will ready these rural children for a better life.

Inaugurating the camp on 15th April 2014, Kumaran Mani, CEO of Tenth Planet Technologies, the Chief Guest of the function, gave an inspiring speech to the students. His speech concentrated on Positive thinking. He shared his life experience on how he dreamt of having his office opposite to the huge LIC building and earning Rupees 1 crore before the age of 30. He said his positive thinking and hard work has made his dream come true even earlier than what he had dreamt.

He also spoke to the children about the advancement of computers in today's world and wished that all the children use this wonderful opportunity created by Sevalaya and SCOPE.

Also present in the inauguration were Sunil Sharma and Balu Jayaraman of SCOPE who explained to the children about the curriculum to be followed in the summer course.

Sunil Sharma of SCOPE who has been working in CSR projects for the last two

years feels a sense of satisfaction at being able to help and equip the next generation which in turn will help the nation to surge forward. The main aim of this summer course initiative is to equip the students who have completed Std XII with life skills, that will help them face the next stage of their life away from the secure zone of a school with confidence. The structured

classes will equip them with the necessary computer basics, spoken English and moral values. It will also help them overcome their inhibitions, making them confident to express their views in public. The students will be better equipped to take up jobs anywhere in or outside the country at the end of the course.

More important than visiting a temple



"Visiting a service organization is more important than visiting a temple", said R Raghupathy, Ex head of Personnel and Environment, Hindustan Unilever Ltd, during Sri Rama Navami celebrations on 8th April 2014. The Chief Guest in his speech wished the children all success in life and declared his resolve to associate himself with Sevalaya and support in its endeavours.

The students of the primary school presented a dance drama depicting scenes from Ramayana.

Also present in the function were K Gururaj and T R Balaraman, colleagues of R Raghupathy who also appreciated the services of Sevalaya.

Joy of Giving: *the* Way of Life

Dear Friends,

Elumalai had a polio attack when he was very young. From the time he remembers he cannot walk straight. He is from a poor family and he could study only up to 8th grade. As the family needed him to earn, he had to say good-bye to education and started learning tailoring. His father was also a tailor so he learnt the work from his father. Later he got a job in “Sri Sairam” export garment unit, a small unit run with eight tailors, in Chennai city. He had to travel every day from Thiruninravur to his work spot and return late in the night. He has a family now with two kids, and his only purpose in life is to give good education to his kids, which he missed due to poverty and his disability.

Sevalaya staff Ravi also travels from Thiruninravur to Chennai by train every day. It is almost an hour’s travel. Ravi does not waste this time and keeps talking about Sevalaya’s services to people around him. The train is already very crowded in the morning, with people rubbing against each other. There is a lot of noise that the beggars and the vendors create, so it is very hard to even listen to what Ravi is talking about. But when he mentioned



education of poor children, Elumalai got interested. He came closer to Ravi to hear the full story. Ravi kept describing all the developments in Sevalaya in the last 25 years, how people have benefitted and how donors come every day to take part in the activities etc. This set Elumalai thinking. “Can I start something like this and help others? No I can’t do, I don’t know how to do this, I don’t have the resources and with my disability moving around is very difficult. Can I donate a part of my earning? No I can’t. My earnings are not enough even for my own family. I have to educate my children first, and then only think of others. So what can I

do? Nothing? Maybe I can do what Ravi is doing just now, talk about Sevalaya to others”. He found a way how he can serve!

Elumalai got all details from Ravi and started talking about Sevalaya to all the people he knew. He went to the tailoring unit and told all the tailors who are working with him. He spoke to his boss. The boss got interested by the enthusiasm shown by his employee and wanted to come and see Sevalaya. One day he came with his family and sponsored that day’s food. Elumalai could not join, as he could not take the day off. But his boss got very impressed and he says he will now talk about to Sevalaya to people he knew.

Elumalai is very happy now that he has got one success. You can see him talking about Sevalaya in the train along with Ravi. He gets tremendous satisfaction now that he is also contributing to a good cause. This is Bharathi’s “வாய்ச்சொல் அடூளிர்” – “Donate your words in support of noble activities”.

Thanks & Regards

Murali

Their family, their father...

The children of Sevalaya who wrote their board exams in April were very happy that their father V. Muralidharan accompanied them to their examination centre on their first day of their exams. S. Shalini a student of Std X says, “When Murali Sir came with us to our exam

center, I felt my father had accompanied me. I didn’t feel that I was away from my family, I have got a big family in Sevalaya”. The students were also very happy that they were taken to the Shiva Temple in Pakkam and their hall tickets placed at the feet of God. S. Haripriya a Std X girl

said, “We felt very happy when we were taken to temple and I felt my family was praying for my wellbeing when all the teachers were around me”

Santhosh’s mother



One of the Std X students is G Santhosh Kumar, who joined Sevalaya as a resident and student only a few months back.

“I now stay in a place where there are so many persons to care for me”, he says. Initially, he could not keep up with his class, because of the poor standard in the school he had studied till then, but later under the continuous guidance of all the teachers he could write the exams well.

“Even though my mother is not with me now I see my teacher S. Sumathi as my mother. She cares for me like my mother and helps me in my studies”, says Santhosh, in an emotion-filled voice.



230 Montessori children showcase their work

For the 230 children of 3 to 6 years who are studying in Sevalaya's Montessori classes, 10th April 2014 was a very proud day - they were the stars at the Montessori Exhibition, seen by other children and their parents.

Montessori exhibition is the culmination of year-long activities of the children in the Montessori Environment. The children express their creativity by doing lot of activities in sand, saw dust, pencil shavings, cereals, sponge, cotton, clay and the like. They work with crayons and water colors to create various drawings/ paintings of their pet subjects.

The Chief Guest was K. E. Raghunathan, Managing Director, Solkar Solar Industry. He said that he was very much impressed by the children who were energetic and full of smiles." In today's situation where children are made to learn only subjects, Sevalaya has inculcated value system among them and the exhibition has proved that the children are given



The Chief Guest looking at the children's work

freedom to prove their talents", he observed. Parents present shared their

happiness and said they were proud that their children were studying in Sevalaya.

Homage to the martyrs of Jallianwala Bagh massacre



On 13th April 2014, 300 children from Std VIII to XI paid homage to the martyrs of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. This historical event is a permanent blot in the history of the British Raj and a turning point of India's freedom struggle.

The Chief Guest G Ram Mohan, Rtd. Railway Safety Commissioner, spoke to the children about India's freedom struggle, the sacrifices of various leaders and the committed involvement of the ordinary folk. He made a presentation on the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, explaining in detail the background of the incident, the various political events and the mood

of the rulers then, which culminated in the tragedy. He then narrated the events of the day.

On April 13, the holiday of Baisakhi, thousands of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims gathered in the Jallianwala Bagh (garden) near the Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar which had only one narrow entrance. Most of the people who had gathered from various rural parts around Amritsar were unaware of the martial law proclaimed at the city during that period by the Government. The British troops, under the command of Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer, surrounded the technically

"illegal" gathering and opened fire on the crowd. Apart from the many deaths directly from the shooting, a number of people died in stampede at the narrow gates or by jumping into the well on the compound to escape the shooting.

A film on the Jallianwala Bagh incident was screened which the children saw with deep involvement. G. Santhosh, a student of Std X said that he was moved to tears after watching the film and understood the enormous hardships our countrymen faced to gain freedom for our country.

Tamil New Year's Day

On 14th April 2014, Tamil New Year was celebrated in the children's home and the old age home. V. Muralidharan, Founder and Managing Trustee addressed the children about the importance of Tamil year celebration.



Memoirs of a Headmistress

After a stint of 10 years with Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiyar Higher Secondary School, of which the last two as Head Mistress, N Annapurna is due to retire shortly. Multilingual, with a encyclopaedic knowledge on various topics, she endeared herself to the staff and students alike with her affectionate and easy going personality.

"You are what your thoughts are" is the quintessence of most religious alignment. Even new age books like The Secret advocates similar ideas and many of the life skills workshops of the modern age encourage this practice. I can surely

totally different dimension altogether.

The customary greeting of the students here, "Chapittengala?" (Have you eaten?) sounded strange to the ears accustomed to Good Morning till I realized that the 3 meals a day taken for granted in the city environment was a luxury here. There were many who came to school on an empty stomach as the fires in the homes would be lit only in the evening after the parent came home with the day's earning. Sometimes there would not be enough to cook rice, only a thin gruel could be made. Yet the children were ready with a smile, happy with small gifts and blessings,

results at the end of the year, the whole organization celebrated. A barrier had been broken. Given the right guidance these children could reach the heights others in the city scaled effortlessly. I felt as if I was soaring in the sky. This achievement brought more joy than I had ever experienced in my life. I truly realized the potency of Vivekananda's words which said that the Giver is blessed to have been given an opportunity to serve.

Since then the years have flown by, each year with its new challenges, new opportunities to learn and discover and

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vouch for this belief as I have been living my dream for the last 12 years.

Years ago we (my husband & myself) would talk of leading a meaningful part of our life working with the less privileged, sharing/teaching whatever we knew. How or where we would be able to do this we had no idea but when the time came, when we had decided to take the plunge, we stumbled across information about Sevalaya while browsing on the net. We gathered information and went to the city office. I had thought I would spend weekends & holidays teaching the children. Having grown up in the eastern part of India my knowledge of Tamil was limited and so I thought I would not be able to teach science in a Tamil medium school.

But life had a different plan for me. The school needed an English teacher and I had the right degrees for the same and thus I joined Sevalaya as an English teacher. I had worked in English medium schools in different places and schools in different cities had different methods of functioning but life here at Sevalaya was a



willing to share the little they had with others. It was a new outlook towards life and I felt blessed to get a chance to be a part of this effort to improve their lot. It was really a pleasure teaching them. They were eager to learn. The incidents, anecdotes I told were listened to with great interest and they were ready to implement suggestions, ideas given to them. Their creativity was amazing. When we had school projects they came up with astounding ideas and the models they created were attractive & life like. English was their weakest link and we had to slog for hours to help them understand and study. The hours of long work were well rewarded when we got 100%

each and every moment has taught many a lesson of life. I have grown with each passing year acquiring new skills and knowledge, got many chances to attend wonderful training programmes, got a chance to go to England through British Council's GSP programme the list is long. More than anything else working with Sevalaya has been the complete fulfillment of my old dream. I have been able to see youngsters passing out of school, completing their college life and becoming responsible youngsters. My eyes fill with tears of joy as I recollect the years that have passed by so fruitfully and happily realizing truly the Joy of Giving.

"Amma is such a lovely person – too dear to my heart! All through my career in Sevalaya, she has been my mother"

Mrs. Selvi, Cleaning staff

From the heart

Emotions pour out at farewell

70 alumni gathered on 20th April 2014 to bid farewell to Annapurna. For some of them, she was an excellent English Teacher who took great pains to popularise English among the rural kids. Most of them poured out their emotions through poems composed by them. A slide show of archival pictures showed her as a slim young lady in 'Churidar'. At the end of the presentation, the auditorium bore more than a tinge of sadness.



Annapurna was greatly moved by these gestures and words from her 'children'. After extracting a promise that she would always be available to them, the alumni gave an emotional farewell to their wonderful teacher and loving mother who reigned in the hearts of students and guided the teachers with inspiration; yet simple - and friendly with everyone.

"When I met with an accident, my jaws were wired and I could not eat anything except sipping some liquid. My parents were far away. It was Mrs. Annapurna Madam who made vegetable soup for me. She is like a mother to everybody"

A A Kingston , Head, Kasuva Campus

B Nirmala takes over as Head Mistress

"My life has totally changed after joining Sevalaya", says B Nirmala, the new Head Mistress of Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiyar Higher Secondary School and the new Bharathi Unit Head. After joining Sevalaya in 1996 as a teacher after her Std XII, with an year's experience in teaching, Sevalaya has sponsored her for M. A. in Gandhian Thought through the Distance education Programme offered by Madurai Kamaraj University. Initially she was handling Day Care Centre and later Std VI and VII. She completed M.A in 1999. She mostly handled the elementary school children in the earlier years. Nirmala recalls those years when there were only 250 children in the school with one to three children in a class in the high school. She says, "In addition to teaching the elementary school children, I also doubled up as tailoring and craft teacher.

Later she finished her B. Litt in Tamil in the year 2006, M. A. Tamil and Tamil Pandit Training in 2008. When the high school got Government recognition in the year 2001 she became the Tamil Teacher for classes up to Std XII.



In 2011 she was promoted as Assistant Headmistress and now has been elevated to the position of heading the Bharathi Unit of Sevalaya which focuses on education. She proudly says, "Sevalaya has changed from those times. From a strength to 1 to 3 children in a class, to almost 40 children in a class, the school has grown a lot. The teaching methodology, teaching aids, labs for subjects have all brought a good change in the students' approach to academics."

Annam & Senthil: Sevalaya's food Santas

"Sevalaya is something special to us", Annamalai (Annam) and AV Senthil say, recalling their long association since the 1990's. Senthil met Sevalaya Founder V Muralidharan when he was in TCS in 1992. Impressed by the selfless services of Murali, they started supporting Sevalaya. "Sevalaya has grown far and wide, reaching several thousands of needy now. It is mind boggling to see Murali addressing the needs of the people of 39 villages at a 15 kms radius of Kasuva. Starting with a meager amount of support, we have collected and contributed about Rs.15 lakhs so far to Sevalaya and our journey continues".

The brothers cannot forget their childhood when "our dad Mr. Alagappan experienced a lot of difficulties for his basic needs". But both have done well for themselves in life. Annamalai and his friends are regular supporters of Sevalaya. One of the anchor supporters for Sevalaya is Mr. Charles from Philippines.

Senthil visits Sevalaya frequently and spends his time interacting with the children. "I never tell my children about my support to Sevalaya. They observe what we do". Annamalai recalls: " During



Senthil and Annam

my last visit, I brought my kids and they were amidst the children. When they headed back to Singapore, they organized a box, to collect all things necessary for children of Sevalaya".

Annam, Senthil and their friends are the largest supporters of Sevalaya Kitchen, donating Navadhanyams, (the nine kinds of cereals), Turmeric Powder, Cashews, Dry Grapes and ghee. The first of every month features sweets and special dishes for children and senior citizens, thanks to the donors.

"We celebrate our family's special occasions meaningfully at Sevalaya, by making contributions. On April 18th, we celebrated our father's 70th birthday at Sevalaya", recalls Senthil who also conducted a motivating session on "Secret of Success" with 60 children.

In tandem with the rest of Sevalaya, the Sevalaya Kitchen has also changed over time and how! Started in 1988 as a small facility with firewood oven at Sivanvoyal Village in Thiruvallur district, it used to cater to a small family of 5 destitute children. Today, the Dining Complex is a center of great prominence in Sevalaya, with a 9600 sq.ft hall built in 2012 thanks to support from Foundation Page Pierre and entirely powered by solar energy thanks to BHEL. With 300 persons taking breakfast, 550 their lunch and 250 having dinner – it is a large and vibrant kitchen now. Every day menu consists of variety of items for breakfast and variety of vegetable dishes for lunch and special dinner – all pure vegetarian food.

S. Srinivasan, Head cook, steers the kitchen with his personal involvement in breakfast and lunch preparations. Experienced in catering for events like marriages for many years, he beams with joy when senior citizens and children demand for more and more side dishes, especially Sambar and Chutney, saying “Wow! Very tasty!” He is assisted by competent and skillful cook B. Kausalya and G. Satya, who are equally good in making tasty food. M. Nadihya, K. Dhakshyani and M. Bhuvaneshwari are day time cooking assistants. They also wash the large vessels and 300 food plates and tumblers three times a day. Though everyone including the youngest diner rinses his/her plate, deep washing is done by these kitchen assistants.

Ensuring hygiene

Sevalaya dining hall is outstanding in maintaining hygiene as the kitchen floor is washed thrice a day. S. Krishnaveni proudly points out the clean dining hall to every onlooker/visitor and says, “It is my dining hall. See how clean it is! It is this committed and passionate team that makes the homely feeling complete for the residents of Sevalaya. The smiling faces of the children and senior citizens visibly brighten up the entire atmosphere. V. Muralidharan, Founder and Managing Trustee sits with the Sevalaya family and



takes food whenever he is in the campus. It adds to the great pride of the kitchen staff.

The kitchen staff employ time saving devices such as Chapati mixing machine, steam boiler, which facilitates preparation of dishes for large numbers within the stipulated time.

Challenging numbers

Yet, the numbers are challenging. Kausalya says, “We make 1200 Chapatis for dinner but we can manually make only 700 Dosas, just for the elders. If Dosa and Chapati makers are installed, we can serve all and on time.

“Yes, Dosa machine will be a wonderful thing! I will be able to serve hot and crisp Dosas for all children too”, says Srinivasan.

Given the limited staff and minimal automation, the support from resident senior citizens is crucial. They have a happy time chatting and simultaneously cutting vegetables. Dowlath, popularly nick-named as ‘Bul-Bul’ Granny, does not speak the local language ‘Tamil’. None in Sevalaya understands her ‘Bhojpuri-like dialect’; but she enjoys cutting bagfuls of onion, without shedding even a drop of tear. She enjoys doing this and walks off with great pride without uttering a word.

“Is it the same food, served to children and senior citizens?” S. Nambi Varadarajan, Head – Vivekananda Unit answers, “Yes, lunch together and same food! Children get special porridge made of cereals and pulses early in the morning after yoga/physical exercises and an



The Sevalaya Kitchen Story

Activities and the actors behind the 650 meals day after day

addition of dry fruits – ‘dates’ with their breakfast. During exam times, children get special late night snacks to keep up the energy. Senior citizens get special soft snacks made of wheat and butter milk for their dinner. For those with chronic health problems, special diet made of protein fibre is provided”.

Kitchen garden

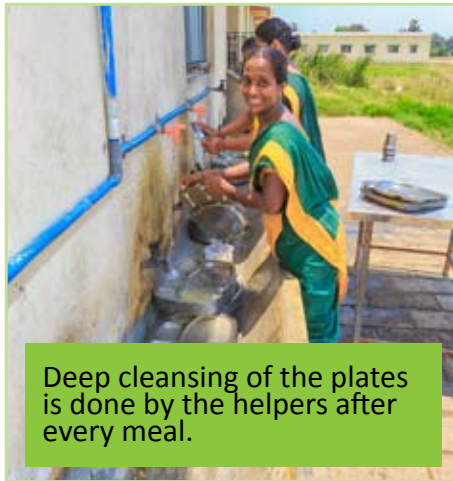
In the land around Sevalaya Homes, stretches of land are cultivated for growing paddy, fodder for cows of ‘Gosala’ in the campus - and vegetables.





The sweeping and mopping of the 4600 sq.ft dining hall is done thrice a day.

L. Loganathan, Gandhi Unit Head of Sevalaya proudly states, "In this season, ranging from 2 months to 3 months, our Sevalaya farm yield has been Brinjal – 10 kgs a week, ladies finger – 12 kgs a week,



Deep cleansing of the plates is done by the helpers after every meal.



green leaves vegetables – 20 bunches a week and bottle gourds - 25 kgs a week. All these were grown with bio-manures from cow waste and green leaves. We were able to produce paddy which catered to 3 months' needs of the kitchen".

After coming to know about Sevalaya, Koyambedu market merchants association provides vegetables to our kitchen. This is supplemented by some local purchase. Chennai Food Bank also

supplies rice and dal every month. To add further to the nutrient requirement, children are provided with 'Nutritious porridge' made of various cereals and pulses, which is donated by members of Besant Nagar Sai Samithi. A.V. Senthil and his friends, in the name "Children of God", meet a part of the kitchen provision requirements every month.

Please visit!

Any guest at the Dining Complex gets a pleasant hospitality call from the staff: "Please stay on to join our children for food".

The food is served with a great joy after the prayer, while means:

The greatest human act is to share what we have or what we eat with the deserving people!

And this food we take now is by the benevolence of God"

Yes, there is a spell of divine music in the dining hall, while everybody have their share.

Please visit Sevalaya Kitchen!



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Gandhiji and the Railways

On the 7th August 1947 the third class coach compartment in which the Mahatma and his party were on their way from Lahore to Patna sprung several roof-leaks, and steady trickles from above created expanding pools on the floors. Passengers in their seats had to make squirming adjustments in the available space to stay out of way of water's range.

At a wayside station, a member of Bapu's

entourage contacted the train's guard, who came running. Reverentially, he approached the Mahatma and apologized for the inconvenience caused by the indoor rain. He offered to shift all of the party to another compartment even if it meant halting the train a little longer.

"What will happen to this compartment after we move?", Gandhiji asked the apologetic guard. He said, "We will make

it available to other passengers". "Bapu told him, "if this leaky compartment is good enough for them, it is so for us too. How can I think of being comfortable at others' expense? We will stay here, thank you very much." The astounded official nodded. He sought the blessings of Bapu, who told him, "Do not harass poor passengers. Don't take bribes. That will be the greatest service you can render."

Free Hepatitis screening for 200 villagers

Free Hepatitis screening was done and vaccination administered to 200 people at a camp held at Sevalaya's Mahatma Gandhi Medical Centre on 12th April 2014 to commemorate Lord Mahaveer's 2613th Birthday.

Dr. R. P. Shanmugam, GastroEnterologist of Chennai Liver Foundation and his team screened the villagers and staff of Sevalaya.



K. Shanthi, a beneficiary from the nearby village said that the camp was really useful to her, since she could not spend her money for screening.

Parallel to the camp, Mahaveer Jayanthi was celebrated in the school. The Chief Guest for the function was D. B. Prakash Chandji, Chairman, Terapanth Educational and Medical Trust. In his speech he said that the students should learn discipline from the life of Lord Mahaveer and shine in their life.

The Chief Guest distributed prizes for the toppers in all the class.

Jesus comes alive at Sevalaya...



Easter, the festival that spreads the message of hope, was celebrated with joy and merriment at Sevalaya on 22nd April 2014 with the little primary kids enacting Jesus Christ's resurrection.



Rev Fr Dr S Peter, Director, Loyola Institute of Business Administration, shared the message of hope through a small story. He wanted all the children to understand the importance of their birth and cultivate the habit of giving.

He appreciated Sevalaya's efforts to expose the children to various religions, thereby enabling them to develop a healthy respect for all religions and truly understand the philosophy behind the different rituals associated with each celebration.

Guest lectures in Community College

Preethy Menon, a specialist in celebrity make-up, of Naturals visited Sevalaya on 15th April 2014. She reviewed the beautician syllabus and gave her inputs. She spoke to the beautician students about the job opportunities available in the sector.

Raja M Sriraam, Sukanya Sriram and Muthu Mani Pandian from ISHRAE, (Indian Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-conditioning Engineers), Chennai Chapter, visited the Community College and talked to the AC and refrigeration students. This session was organized by

R. Shankar, trustee of Sevalaya. They explained the basic concepts on the working of AC. They also spent time in the AC & Refrigeration lab and explained the various part of window and split AC.



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