



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Sevalaya's News Letter

NOVEMBER - 2002

Dear Friends,

Last few days in Tamil Nadu, many activities have come to a stand still. The government employees and government school teachers have gone on an indefinite strike. Added to this the minority institutions, closed their schools for a day protesting against the Tamil nadu governments' act against forcible religious conversions. The telecom staff also are on strike, with the result many phones, internet connections are not working. The news papers and TV channels opposed to the government are very happy to announce that nearly one million government employees didn't report to work and more than 27,000 schools were closed etc. I think this is a matter we should feel ashamed off, not feel proud. In our experience, if some work gets done at government departments, then it has some news value, not the other way around. That has been the work culture in these departments.

Let us see the work culture in Sevalaya. When the entire state is agitating, when nearly 27,000 schools are closed, as happily claimed by TV channels, Sevalaya's 'Mahakavi Bharathiar high school' was working 7 days week ! Yes, we have special classes conducted on all Sundays, for higher class students and slow learners in lower classes. Teachers take turn to handle the Sunday classes. Volunteers from city come and conduct English and Maths (two most difficult subjects for the village children) classes on Sundays. Even on other days, the early morning and late evening study hours in the hostel are handled by the teachers. Some of our teachers stay in

the hostel, along with the children, like the olden day 'Gurukul' system. They are available 24 hours, all 7 days to clarify any doubts for the children. Apart from the teachers, there are the hostel staff, who live with the children and senior citizens, all 365 days and take care of them.

What do we pay them in return ? When compared to the salaries the government employees earn, what we pay is nothing. (Compared to many private commercial schools in that area, our pay scales are better) Still what makes them work like this ? What is the motivation ? The brightness we see in the eyes of a child - when a doubt is clarified, the smile on the face of a poor child when the answer paper is received, when we know that children passed out of our institution have settled in their lives with a decent job, will motivate our staff and all others connected with the institution to carry on the work. Here is one place where we have proved that money is not the only motivator.

'Work is worship', said Swami Vivekananda. If we understand that we are helping children to grow, to learn, and we are shaping their future, we will consider work as worship. But if we are limited in our thought to think of our work as only a money making opportunity, we will go on endless strikes, lock-outs, etc.

Even if the entire state comes to a stand still, Sevalaya will go on – working for the benefit of the poor, orphan & destitute children and the senior citizens.

Thanks & Regards
Murali

Five Great Sons

Sevalaya, along with four other like minded organisations based at Chennai is organising a series of lectures on 'Five Great Sons of India'. The associates are Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya, Gandhi Study Centre, Yuva Shakthi and Bharatha Matha Sangham. The Organising Committee has this to say on their objective: "As we pass through tumultuous times, recounting the lives of these great souls will give us courage and hope and enable us to work for a better to-morrow"

The first in the series was on V.O. Chidambaram Pillai. (A life sketch of this patriot was featured in our last issue.) The Programme was held on 5th September 2002 at Vinobha Hall, T. Nagar, Chennai. Sri V. Rajanarayanan, a public figure and lawyer delivered the Key-note Address. A play depicting the sacrifices of V.O.C was staged on the occasion by Sevalaya children. The meeting was presided over by Sri. G. Ram Mohan, Trustee, Sevalaya.

On 2nd October Gandhi Jayanthi Day, Mr. K. Mohan, Trustee, Sevalaya along with children of Sevalaya conducted lively programme, "A Day With Gandhi". The Programme highlighted the fact that the entire message of Gandhi was nothing but his life. The special address was by Sri B.S. Raghavan retired IAS official.

The other three lives to be covered in the following months are Subramania Bharathiyar, Swami Vivekananda and Bala Gangadhara Tilak.

Gandhi Jayanthi and Elder's Day was celebrated at sevalaya on 6th October 2002. Rtn. SV. RM. Ramanathan was the chief guest. In his address he emphasised on the importance of education and exhorted the children to concentrate on studies without falling a prey to any other distraction. He also distributed prizes to the winners of the Gandhi Jayanthi competitions held at the inter-school level at Tiruvallur district. Children from our Mahakavi Bharathiyar High School also shared some prizes along with children of other schools. Winners

from our school are R. Shanmugavathi and R. Yamuna Rani—I Prizes. P. Srinivas – II prize. Smt. Nallammai Ramanathan and Smt. Renuka Srinivasan of inner wheel club addressed the children and distributed new cloths to Senior Citizens. The cultural events staged by the senior citizens included a play very well acted by them. The title: what unifies us, what divides us. The theme was the right attitude of seniors living at the homes to their environment and life in general.



Pancha Sheel prescribed by Smt. Nallammai to our children

To resolve every morning and evening

- 1. I will not worry**
- 2. I will not speak falsehood.**
- 3. I will not be angry.**
- 4. I will love all.**
- 5. I will say, thank you.**

Our children on a sponsored tour to Hyderabad (Courtesy: TCSers)

12 boys and 13 girls accompanied by our Staff members Chitti babu and Kavitha started off on a exposure trip to Hyderabad by Charminar Express on 17.10.2002. In Hyderabad they enjoyed the affection and hospitality of TCSers. During their stay covered places of educative and entertainment values, like Birla Science Exhibition, Birla Planetarium, Lumbini Park, Hussain Sagar Lake (not to mention boating) NTR Park, Golkonda Park, Fort, Jawaharlal Nehru Zoological Park, Salarjung Museum, Hi-tech City, etc.

As a fitting finale, there was a get-together in which Mr. Rajesh Nambiar, Regional Manager, TCS, participated. There were competitions in Drawing, Dance, and Music and prizes were distributed. The memorable occasion will linger in their memories for a long time to come.

NSS Camp

25 volunteers of National Service Scheme, Hindu Higher Secondary School, Triplicane led by teachers M/s K.S. Natarajan, S. Vaidyanathan and K.Sankar Giri were at Sevalaya on a service Camp from 18th October to 27th October. They engaged themselves in the task of cleaning, pruning the grass, setting up a garden, re-laying the play ground etc. Every Evening there were Educative Seminar and discussions. Some of the topics covered are: Water Resources Management, Role of youth in service activities, communal Harmony, Gandhi for Youth. Eminent persons and experts in the respective fields participated in the discussions. Mr. A. Annamalai Mr. G. Rammohan and local Panchayat leaders participated in the inaugural session. Mr. C.T. Chidambaram, NSS District level co-ordinator of Chennai District was the Chief Guest in the valedictory session on 26.10.2002. Special Address was delivered by Dr. Sundara Varadhan.

Training And Development

Sakthi Myndan Rajan's Training Programme came to a successful close on 6.10.2002. The module for the final session was "Hearing vs Listening" Here is the feedback from some of the participants.

" The ideas about goal setting and the ideas on HRD gave a new insight into the profession of teaching"

" I learnt to ask myself the questions; Why to do, What to do, When to do, Where to do , Which to do and how to do...— for effective time-management...."

" I have learnt the difference between love and concern.."

" I have learnt the process of SWOT Analysis"

" I have learnt that

Ambition+Action+Attitude=Success

Ambition-Action-Attitude=Day Dreaming...."

Health Care

Dr. Vijaya Sarathy and team from Teja Hospital conducted Medical check-up for our Senior Citizens during the first week of October.

Cracker Shows

25 of our children were special invitees to a Deepavali Celebration sponsored by Inner Wheel Club Chennai at MGR Janaki College, Adyar on 26.10.2002.

120 children from Sevalaya participated in a Cracker Show organised by Lions Club of Greenways at D G Vaishnava College on 27.10.2002.

School-View

2002-2003—Year of Character Education

Theme of the month - October - Saying "THANK YOU"

12.10.2002: Teachers handling Tenth Standard, the Head Master and Ms. Mohana Chandrasekaran, Trustee had a meeting with the parents of the 10th Standard children. Individual progress was discussed.

On the same day, there was a demonstration class on Mathematics teaching by Mr. A. Ganesh Kumar.

23.10.2002: There was a special meeting of teachers handling English and Mathematics. Methods of intensive teaching on these subjects were discussed.

Book-Review Meetings.

12.10.2002; "Why and How?" edited by Vallidasan and Janardhanan by Ms. R. Vijaya.

26.10.2002. "The seven spiritual laws of success' by Deepak Chopra by Ms. Annapoorana Narayanaswami

DID THEY MEET ?

Part I

The three great sons of modern India, whom we look upon as our guiding lights at Sevalaya, namely Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Mahakavi Subrahmanya Bharati, were all born during the same era in our history known as the post-Mutiny era. It was the time immediately following the end of East India Company's rule over India when India being brought under direct rule by the British government.

Swamiji was born in the beginning of that era in the year 1863, the Mahatma a little later in 1869 and the Mahakavi towards the end of the era in 1883. Swamiji died very young at the age of 39, and so there was only a short period of about 19 years between 1883 and 1902 when all the three of them were living in flesh and blood. Did they, by any chance, meet each other during that period? That is a question that is asked of us very often. Let us see what history tells us.

At the time of Swami Vivekananda's death Mahatma Gandhi was still a young barrister, and Bharati a student in Allahabad University. So there was no chance whatsoever of Swamiji having heard of them. But Swamiji himself was a world famous figure by about 1895; and when Gandhiji read his speeches and writings, he got a great desire to meet him. He got his chance in early 1902, when he was in back in India from South Africa for about a year, and had gone to Calcutta to attend the annual session of the Indian National Congress. He tried to get an interview with Swamiji in Calcutta. Geoffrey Ashe, the famous English author who wrote a well-researched biography of the Mahatma, says in his book: "Unfortunately the Swami was ill, and so a meeting which historical logic required failed to take place". Swamiji died a few months later on 4th July 1904.

Subrahmanya Bharati as a teenager was overawed by the genius of Swami Vivekananda, and read his works with great avidity. But he never got to meet the Swamiji. He however met Sister Nivedita, the main disciple of Swamiji, after Swamiji's demise. That meeting turned out to be a historic event, and took place in 1905 when Bharati was working as a sub-editor of a popular Tamil daily called Swademitran. He had gone to Benaras to cover the annual session of the Indian National Congress, and on his way back in Calcutta he met the Sister. The Swamini gave the young man a piece of advice and also made an astounding prophecy. "My child", she said, "Shed from your mind all the abominable distinctions based on caste, creed and religion. Let love for all humanity fill your heart. You are destined to play a historic and divine role". Did she see the fire in his eyes and then spoke those prophetic words? Bharati in turn was overwhelmed by the aura radiating from her divine personage. "The Sister is my Guru", he often proclaimed later. He immortalized his outpouring of devotion for her in a beautiful Tamil poem in which he says:

*Mother Nivedita ! In salutation to you I stand upright,
You are God's blessing to my dear land,
In you I see a temple of love, and divine sunlight
To dispel the darkness that clouds my mind. Like
rainfall to drying crops, like wealth to a cholar
Suffering silently in poverty's grind,
Like a fire come to destroy all evil, Mother!
In you God's offering to us we find.*

Bharati had an almost similar encounter with Mahatma Gandhi. We will see that in our next issue.

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