



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Sevalaya's News Letter

NOVEMBER - 2003

Dear Friends,

October 24th was the Deepavali day (festival of lights) in India. This is one of the major functions in India and is celebrated throughout the country. Any celebration needs money. Deepavali traditionally means that you have to buy new cloths for all in the family, buy crackers for the children and spend lot of money on sweets. Many times such festivals become an occasion for the rich to exhibit their wealth and for the poor to somehow try to manage the expenses, beg borrow or steal. Many Government employees demand higher bonus and go on strike and some years, we have seen them going behind bars during this festive season.

If this is the case for the lower middle class and the poorer sections of the society, what can be said about the poorest of the poor groups like orphanages and old age homes? Do the homeless too have a right to celebrate festivals? Can we afford any celebration when we are struggling to make both ends meet on a day to day basis?

Yes, thanks to all of you, even the last orphan or the neglected grandpa and grandma had a terrific Deepavali this year! Most of you sent in your contributions well in advance. Some of you came to the campus a month in advance and donated clothes so that we have enough time to get them stitched. All the children and senior citizens in our home got new cloths to wear on the festival day. Many of you visited the campus one or two days in advance and brought lots of sweets and crackers for the inmates. It was very pleasing to see that many local villagers coming into the campus with whatever little gift they can bring! One of the local agriculturists coming into Sevalaya

for the first time had this comment "I own some acres of land and come from a traditionally rich family. But looking at your old age home, I feel that I am not taking care of my parents in the manner you are doing it here!". Many brought rice, sugar, oil, etc. etc. so that they have some contribution in what is getting cooked in Sevalaya on Deepavali day! Many of them were from lower middle class families themselves. In fact one group of youngsters hired a van from the city to visit Sevalaya and the van driver also pitched in his contribution! A group of van drivers from Avadi visited Sevalaya and were not sure if they will be able to contribute anything at all. Looking at the food sponsorship rates of Sevalaya they were discussing among themselves but were unable to decide what they can do. When they were told that we value the time they are contributing - not necessary to contribute only in terms of money - they were visibly moved and spent lot of time with the children and senior citizens and promised to come again.

Surprisingly, cracker busting brought more joy to the senior citizens than the children! Couple of grandmas were seen holding their hands and dancing, when the cracker they lighted busted! May be they are happy because whatever they missed in their younger age, they are getting it now.

It was nice to see that Deepavali has evoked such a grand response and many people, including the villagers, wanted to share whatever they have with the orphans and the destitute. Yes, the 'selfishness' Narakasura was killed on that day.

Thanks & Regards
Murali

GANDHI JAYANTHI CELEBRATIONS

It was a great privilege for us that our children were allotted a half an hour slot to conduct Bhajans near the Gandhi Statue on the Marina Beach, at the time of Homage to the Father of the Nation organized by the Tamil Nadu Government on Oct 2nd. On 2nd, 3rd and 4th October Sevalaya stall was also set up in the exhibition organized at Gandhi Mandapam, Guindy, Chennai in connection with Gandhi Jayanthi Celebrations.



At Sevalaya campus also Gandhi Jayanthi was celebrated with the usual enthusiasm. Ten schools from Thiruvallur District and nearby places participated in the essay writing, poetry and oratorical competitions conducted by us on the life and teachings of Gandhiji. There were as many as 150 participants and 27 prizes distributed in all, besides participation certificates and books as mementos to all.

In a function organized on 10th October for the distribution of prizes, Mr. Muthia Kalaivanan, IAS, Commissioner for Maternal, Child Health & Welfare and Child Health Project was the Chief Guest. He lauded the efforts of Sevalaya in spreading the message of the Mahatma and the principles adapted in Sevalaya- banning of corporal punishment and rendering service to the needy without any discrimination on the basis of caste/colour/religion/language/ gender etc.

Prize Winners from Sevalaya in the Gandhi Jayanthi Competition

Oratorical Contests:

6th Std - 8th Std

U.Radha 7th Std II Prize

Poetry Contest:

6th Std - 8th Std

R.Yamuna Rani 8th Std I Prize

R.Bharathi dasan 7th Std II Prize

9th & 10th Std

R.Shanmugavathi 10th Std I Prize

P.Srinivasan 9th Std II Prize

11th & 12th Std

P.Varalakshmi 11th Std I Prize

Essay Writing Contest:

6th Std - 8th Std

Krishnamurthy 8th Std I Prize

11th & 12th Std

R.Vinodh 11th Std II Prize

A.Nithya 11th Std III Prize

STUDY CIRCLE MEETINGS

Yes; It is a part of our HRD exercise. Every week one staff member reads a book and discusses it in a weekend meeting. This year the exercise has been extended to our Administrative Office too. With this practice each staff member has an opportunity to study few books and learn about almost 100 books in a year. The books relate to a wide range of subjects. Particularly the interest of youthful staff members has been on self - improvement.

This month three of the presentations have been inward searching. "Stray thoughts on Gnana Marga" of A.Pitchandi by Mr. A.Arockiaraj Kingston and "Spiritual Luminary Ramanar" authored by N.A.Saravana Kumar by Ms. K.R.Vijaya. Ms. Annapoorna Narayanaswami discusses "Excellence at Work" by Carl M Osborne. While this was spiritual cum motivational, S.M.Mohan took the success theme. He reviewed the book "Success in Your Hands" by Mr. Lena Tamilvanan. Ms. B. Nirmala chose biographies and reviewed the book "Famous Personalities" by Rasam.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Arockiaraj Kingston and Mr. R.Vijayaraghavan attended a training programme ASPIRE by Yuva Shakthi at Chennai on 18/10/03.

NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME

Punjab Association's Gill Adarsh Matriculation Higher Secondary School have come for a 10 day NSS camp commencing on 29th October.

REACHING OUT

Mr. T.Nagaraj, our staff member spoke about Bharathiyar to the students of Pandeswaram Govt. Higher Secondary School on 17th October 2003 and Karlapkkam Panchayat Middle School on 22nd October 2003.

'Arise Awake' a pictorial exhibition on Swami Vivekananda was organized by Sevalaya on 22nd Oct at Pandeswaram Govt. Higher Secondary School.

FESTIVALS AND FESTIVITIES

Sarswathi Pooja, Ayudha Pooja and Deepavali were celebrated at our campus with grandeur. On 21st October 2003 our children participated in a grand gala cracker show organized by



the Lions Clubs at Arumbakkam, Vaishnava College Grounds.

On 11th October 2003 Yoga Master Mr. A.Meyyappan conducted an introductory lecture on "Yoga" at our administrative office premises.

OUR VISITORS

We had a lot of visitors during the month especially during Deepavali. Navabharat Students Trust conducted Quiz contest for our children on 5th October 2003. 1 Prize was bagged by Manikandan and P.Srinivasan.

Senior Divisional Manager of LIC , Mr. T.Siddharthan and members of LIC of India Division II Sports and recreation Club visited us and offered moral and financial support to us.

Ilankuil Manitha Neya Sangam visited us on Deepavali Day and entertained the children with a cultural Programme.

VERMICULTURE

In tune with our Gandhian principle of "Living in Tune with Nature" we have started vermiculture - an attempt to produce organic fertilizer and dispense with chemical fertilizers - a small but sure step towards self-sufficiency.



WORSHIPPING MOTHER INDIA

Among the many prayer songs that we teach our children at Sevalaya some are in worship of Mother India. The concept that the land of one's birth is as worthy of one's love and worship as one's own mother is an Indian tradition that we wish to inculcate in our children. Such tradition goes back to the Ramayana. There is a verse in Valmiki's Ramayana that says that the lap of the mother and the soil of the motherland are greater places to be than even God's heaven. Our three guiding lights of Sevalaya — Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Mahakavi Subramania Bharati – believed in this concept.

Swami Vivekananda taught Indians to love their Motherland and to feel proud of her rich spiritual heritage. He made stirring calls to the youth of the nation in this regard. In an address he delivered in January, 1897 at Ramanathapuram near the southern tip of India he said: "Arise and awake, and see Her seated here, on Her eternal throne, rejuvenated, more glorious than She ever was – this Mother India of ours!". Swamiji's such calls went a long way in spreading the practice of worship of Mother India.

When Mahatma Gandhi took over the leadership of India's freedom movement in the early 1920s the worship of Mother India was already well established in the psyche of Indian masses. In the year 1881 the famous Bengali novelist and poet Bankim Chandra Chatterjee published his novel 'Anand Math' in which he included a song in Sanskrit in worship of Mother India. That song roused the feelings of patriotism in the hearts of Indians to a level of intensity that had not been felt before. The song was titled 'Vande Mataram'. As every Indian knows, that means "I worship my Mother", the Mother being of course Mother India or Bharat Mata.

Gandhiji approved of the concept of Mother India and the adoption of the song Vande Mataram, as India's 'national song'. He loved to hear it, particularly when it was sung in the beautiful tune set by the poet Rabindranath Tagore. Gandhiji also approved of the use of the slogan "Vande Mataram" as a shout to be raised in unison at political rallies and processions.

To Mahakavi Subramania Bharati the worship of Motherland in the form of a Mother would appear to have come naturally. A deeply religious person, he saw divinity manifest in the form of a Mother Goddess – Goddess of 'pure energy' or 'Sakti'. He wrote many immortal lyrics in worship of Her:

*"Renouncing fraud, deceit and hate,
O people of the world, in Her
Find sanctuary, in Her whose name
Is Sakti, Aum Sakti, Aum Sakti, Aum!"*

To such a worshipper of the Mother image Bankim Chandra's song must have sounded as an echo of his own voice from within. It obviously stirred the fierce patriotic instincts in him. He rendered the song in beautiful Tamil lyric that was much more than a simple translation. He did the rendering first in the year 1905 and then did it afresh a second time in 1908. The outpouring of devotion in the second rendering would appear to rival that of even Bankim Chandra's original.

Then he went on to write his own songs in Tamil titled 'Vande Mataram'. He sang:

*"Vande Mataram. Worship the Motherland
For caste or creed we will not care,
Birth in this land is the highest birth.
Living together is true life
Falling apart brings ruin to all.
Well we must learn this lesson
No other wisdom do we need".*

For Free Circulation :

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