



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Sevalaya's News Letter

NOVEMBER - 2004

Dear Friends,

Chennai Auto-rickshaws (the three wheelers) are well known all over the world for the wrong reasons. Once I saw in a tourist guidebook published from USA, which mentions all the important spots to visit in India and also gives useful tips to the visitors, mentioning that visitors to Chennai should be very careful with the auto drivers. The book clearly mentions that the autos of Chennai will take people, who don't know the local language, for a ride (not the one they are meant to do!), over charge them, cheat tourists etc. I don't think any person living in Chennai will have any objection to this. Most of us are victims to the doctored meters and also the abusive language used by the drivers.

Well, all this perception about auto drivers will change if you happen to visit Pattabiram, Anna Nagar auto stand, which is around 25 kilo meters west of Chennai. These auto drivers, every year, invite Sevalaya children for their 'Ayuda pooja' and 'Iyappan pooja'. They do Pada pooja to each child, as the child arrives (the kind of welcome given only to spiritual leaders) and take them to the dining area, where a very well prepared lunch is served. The drivers and their families compete with each other in serving the children all the nice dishes.

This year, on the occasion of Ayudha Pooja, during the course of the lunch, I was introduced to a small boy, who, I was told was lost in the railway station – his parents were not traceable – and one of the auto drivers is bring up the child as his own son.

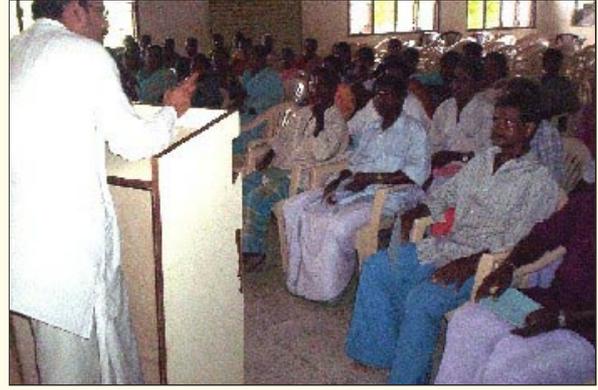
After the lunch, in the evening, all the autos lined up for the pooja. A decorated stage was set for the Sevalaya kids to give an hour's dance and music program. The entire auto community gathered around the stage and they cheered the children. At the end of the program, many gifts were given to the children. The auto drivers had collected rice and other provision items from people in that area and all such items were handed over on the stage.

The head of the auto drivers association was very keen to make sure that the program ends in time so that children will not get delayed to go back. He also made sure that enough food was loaded into our van for the night. Thus the entire days food expenses was taken care of by the auto drivers, in addition to donating rice and other provisions and other gifts. They do this two times a year, every year, for the past eight years.

I am sure they would have spent a major portion of their savings on this, year after year. Apart from this, spending the whole day with the kids of Sevalaya, with their family members, is amazing.

At the end of the day, when we were about to leave, the head of the auto drivers association told me 'next year, we want to do more'. So it is not only asking 'more than the meter', they want to do more in charity also!

Thanks & Regards
Murali



Study Circle Meetings

Date: 09/10/2004
 Book: Personality Development
 Author: Swami Vivekananda
 Speaker: S.Kavitha
 Venue: Service Centre

Date: 16/10/2004
 Book: Jagadguru Adi Shankara
 Author: Rishabananda
 Speaker: R.Vijayaraghavan
 Venue: Service Centre

Date: 20/10/2004
 Book: Bharathiyar Kavithaigal – Uyir Petra
 Thamizhar Pattu
 Author: Mahakavi Bharathiyar
 Speaker: V.Muralidharan
 Venue: Service Centre

Date: 20/10/2004
 Book: Thought Leaders – Chapter on
 Varghese Kurien
 Author: Shrinivas Pandit
 Speaker: T.S.Venkataramani
 Venue: Service Centre

Students Study Circle Meetings at Service Centre

Date: 16/10/2004
 Book: Mahakavi Bharathiyarin Kathaigal
 Author: Mahakavi Bharathiyar
 Speaker: D.Manikandan

Date: 23/10/2004
 Book: Kural Kattum Nanneri Kathaigal
 Author: Nallasivam
 Speaker: R. Shanmugavathy

Date: 30/10/2004
 Book: Select your Goals (Tamil)
 Author: Gopi Sarabhoji
 Speaker: B.Poongodi

Events/ Competitions/Programmes at Sevalaya

09/10/2004 -Mr. Chindai Jayaraman, Principal, Angel Matriculation Higher Secondary School conducted a training programme for the teaching staff on teaching methodology and handling children with emotional & behavioral problems.

16/10/2004 -A parents Meeting for the parents of Classes X & XII. Managing Trustee V.Muralidharan interacted with the parents, emphasized the need for their children to concentrate on studies as they are in a crucial stage taking up their Board Exams.

16/10/2004 - Dr. Malavika Vinodkumar, Research scientist attached to the M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation addressed a meeting of the parents and villagers and spoke to them about the importance of iodine in our body and emphasized the need to use iodised salt.

16/10/2004 - Col. Krishanswamy – retired army officer spoke to our children of classes VIII to XII about career opportunities in the Indian Army.





17/10/2004 - Mr. K.R.Shankar conducted a one – day Personality Development Programme for students.

7/10/2004 – The Monthly Unit Leaders Meeting was held and the financial accounts for the month was reviewed and cost cutting measures were discussed.
21/10/2004 - One of Sevalaya’s aims is to spread the message of our mentors, Mahakavi Bharathiyar, Mahatma Gandhiji and Swami Vivekananda among the students – an effort to lay a strong foundation for building a better society. With this in view, an examination on Bharathiar for the school students was conducted for schools all over TamilNadu.

2 Meetings were held with Village Self Help Group Women, explaining to them about the products of our craft center and seeking their cooperation in marketing the products.

23/10/2004 & 31/10/2004 – As an attempt to attain self - sufficiency, active marketing of our craft center products have to be promoted. A marketing committee was formed and ways to improve the market for our products, deciding production levels depending on the market and type of products that could be produced were explored.

27/10/2004 – 29/10/2004 - Sevalaya’s long - term goal is to create a rural University providing free education to the poor & needy for whom opportunities are denied just because they cannot afford to pay for it. With a view to create a clear idea among our staff about rural university and motivate them, they were taken trip to Gandhigram University and Gandhigram Trust.

Taking part in external events/ programmes

02/10/2004 - Our children sang Bhajans in the Prayer Meeting held near Gandhi Statue at Marina Beach on the morning in connection with Gandhi Jayanthi Celebrations. Sevalaya also put up a stall in the 3 - day exhibition at Gandhi Mantapam, Adyar – from 02/10/04 to 04/10/04.

15/10/2004 - Headmaster Mr. G.Chittibabu and staff Ms. L.Anasuya and Ms. B.Nirmala attended the exhibition on Montessori Teaching methods organized by Abyasha Montessori Trust.

16/10/2004 - Children presented a cultural programme at Tata Consultancy Services, Vadapalani Office during their Ayudha Pooja Celebrations.



2/10/2004 - Children presented a 1/2 an hour cultural programme at Indo Japan Lighting Company.24/10/2004 - Participated in the Ayudha Pooja celebrations of Anna Nagar Auto Drivers Association at Pattabhiram and presented a cultural programme .

30/10/2004 - Sevalaya children got the opportunity to perform in the TCS Annual Cultural fete – Ripples 2004. The folk dances performed by the children were well appreciated and they received a standing ovation from the audience. It was a very thrilling experience for the children.

31/10/2004 – TCS Maitree sponsored a trip for 50 children to the Childrens Park and Snake Park in Guindy.

Competitions and Sports

Essay competition conducted by Nandini – Voice for the Deprived on the theme of relevance of Mahatma Gandhiji to the modern Age. It was an inter school competition in which many city schools also participated. Our children bagged the 3rd, 4th & 5th Prize.

16/10/2004 - Examination on Thirukkural conducted by Chinmaya Mission and District Level essay competition held in connection with the Library week.

24/10/2004 - Sloka recital competition conducted by Village Welfare Association, Pakkam at Sivan Temple at Pakkam Village.

NSS and other Camps

Students from Gill Adarsh Matriculation Higher Secondary School camped at Sevalaya from 29/09/2004 to 08/10/2004.

Members of the Rotaract Club of Akash had a 2 – day camp – 30/10/2004 and 31/10/2004. They interacted with the children well, organized a Magic Show and an eye camp for the children and senior citizens.

New additions in infrastructure

The Gobar Gas plant at Sevalaya sponsored by Ms. Nalini Mahadevan of USA became functional, taking care of 90% of gas requirement of the old age home.

Two new Classrooms were constructed - one sponsored by Ms. Nalini Mahadevan and one by NGT Team of TCS in UK.

Courage of Conviction

It was the Mysore Palace. In the presence of his high officials, Maharaja asked Swami Vivekananda what he thought of his courtiers. Pat came the reply, " I think Your Highness has a good heart, but you are unfortunately surrounded by courtiers who are generally flatterers." Maharaja protested and said that his Prime Minister was intelligent and trustworthy. Vivekananda's reply was:" But, Your Highness, the Prime Minister is one who robs the Maharaja and pays the Political Agent." " What, do you think an honest Sannyasin is afraid of speaking the truth even though it may cost him his life?" was the outburst when it was suggested to him that he should be more discreet.

When Lady Curzon died, " Amrita Bazaar Patrika " commented that by losing his wife at such a young age Lord Curzon had received the just punishment from God for having caused so much hardship to the common people. Bharathiyar thought it fit to condemn the Patrika editorially for its indiscretion and call it undignified. " To feel happy over the enemy's tragedy is cowardice. Punish Lord Curzon by all means for his misdeeds. But to say childishly, "You caused me trouble. That's why you lost your wife. " is very unbecoming. A true journalist would sympathise with the enemy when the latter is struck by a tragedy, and not gloat over it. "



It was the height of the struggle in 1922. The entire country was caught with the nationalistic fervour. But when news reached Gandhi that 21 Policemen were killed and set ablaze in Chauri Chaura, he immediately ordered a halt to the struggle. The nation was dumbfounded. Criticism and abuse came from all sides. Gandhi's characteristic response was: "Let the opponent glory in our humiliation or so called defeat. It is better to be charged with cowardice and weakness than to be guilty of denial of oath and sin against God. It is million times better to appear untrue before the world than to be untrue to ourselves. "

The above narratives illustrate the value systems of our great leaders- playing fair – even if it is to one's discomfort or detrimental to self interest or the cause one has taken up. We try our best to imbibe these values ourselves, and inculcate them in our young workers and children. There is a well laid out curriculum in our school for teaching the messages of Gandhi, Bharathi and Swami Vivekananda. Our Workers meet every week to discuss books presenting our culture and values.

These are the very little ways in which we try to light a lantern, which we believe, will dispel the darkness around.



For Free Circulation :

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