



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Love 3 **Sevalaya's News Letter - November 2008** Serve 8 Price-Re.1

Dear Friends,

This year Diwali in India was a 'less colourful' festival, as many were struggling to accept the losses in the share market. The global economic melt down had its impact on the festive mood of the people. Many known friends in USA and Europe had lost jobs or were worried about losing their jobs. Many in Indian IT sector were also worried about loss of jobs or about the cut in their pay packets. All this added to the gloomy picture and Diwali was not what it was in the previous years.

True to this impact of global economic melt down, Sevalaya also faced problems. Donations were hard to come and it was a big struggle to get all that was required to celebrate Diwali for a big family of 1060 people. It was hard work for all our staff members who worked round the clock for the past two months to mobilize all the support needed and finally we made it – in spite of the problems outside, all the 1000 children got new dresses and the 60 grand pas and grand mas got their saris and dhotis. As usual there were many visitors during the Diwali weekend and they brought some sweets and crackers with them. We thank all the donors, who, in spite of so many uncertainties and upheavals in the market place, still managed to contribute their mite for the benefit of orphan and destitute children and senior citizens.

To keep in line with all the global warming campaign we did during the year, we had told our children that we will reduce on firing crackers this year. So we reduced our expense on crackers. We have also started using the dead wood available around the campus as fuel for at least two days in a week to reduce expenses on the fuel cost. Also we are trying to grow more vegetables in-house, to reduce

purchases. Only more production is going to help us tide over this crisis.

It is understandable that people, when they want to cut down on expenses, will first cut down the donations they give. On the other hand inflation in India has made the cost of living very high, to organizations as well. So our expenses have gone up and income has come down. The 'think tank' in Sevalaya is working on cost reduction and increasing income generation.

We get news from all over the globe that people are losing money and because of that losing heart and some of them are killing themselves. In the final analysis, what is required for all of us is food, shelter and clothing. I am sure that many, who have lost hope, are very much above this level. It is just that we are not able to accept the inevitable change in life style, which monetary loss will bring in. The good old Indian concept of 'Simple living and high thinking' and Gandhiji's principle of 'Voluntary poverty' should guide us.

Thanks & Regards

Murali

**Presentation of outstanding couple award
in the field of Social Service to
Mr. & Mrs. Muralidharan by PR Syndicate.**





Thiruvallur District Collector
Mr. Rajendrakumar distributing prizes
at World Elders Day at Thiruvallur

Awards

Mr. V.Muralidharan and Mrs. Bhuvaneshwari Muralidharan were among the outstanding couples from various fields honoured by PR Syndicate in a function at the Russian Cultural Academy on 11/10/2008. They were honoured for their contributions in the field of social service, for bringing about a transformation in Kasuva and nearby villages by eradicating child labour and for the ambitious dream and efforts to create a free rural University for the benefit of meritorious poor students.

Club Activities

The English Club conducted training on Spoken English on 16/10/2008.

In the Science Club meet on 15/10/2008 Ms. Vijaya spoke on diseases caused by Tobacco. She also gave a demonstration of experiments on passing mild electric current through plants.

As a part of the Social Science Club activities Mr. Thandapani, Govt. Hr. Sec. Shool, Pandeshwaram visited Sevalaya and spoke to the club members on Relevance of studying History, on 15/10/2008. On 16/10/2008 Mr. P.Narayanamoorthi, explained to the members about the Nuclear Pact between India & USA.

Events

Gandhi Jayanthi was celebrated on 02/10/2008. Mr. M. Muralidharan Chairman & Managing Director Techsol Pvt. Ltd. Delhi and Advisor, Sevalaya in his presidential address applauded Sevalaya for the perseverant way in which they are striving to spread the message of Gandhiji not only among their own students but also among the youth throughout the state. The Chief Guest Mr.G.Ramachandran, IPS, Member of Police Commission in his address expressed his happiness over the yeoman service rendered by Sevalaya for the benefit of the poor and underprivileged. Such service should attract

support from the entire community he said and assured his support for this noble cause. Prizes were distributed on this occasion to the toppers in the state level open book examination on Gandhiji conducted by Sevalaya.

Vidhushini Srimathi Lakshmi Sriraman & Group from Chennai presented a carnatic Music concert as a part of Navarathri Celebrations on 02/10/2008.

The Chief Guest at the Ramzan function held on 04/10/08 at Sevalaya Campus was Mr.Jalaluddin – Joint Secretary, Islamic Foundation Trust, Chennai. He spoke about the important tenets of Islamic religion, the philosophy behind the month long Ramzan fasting, the principles to be followed, its benefits etc. He also pointed out the unity among different religions. He also praised the management for celebrating all festivals ensuring that students were fully aware about the noble aspects of different faiths.

General Managers Mr. Ganesh & Mr. Magesh of Catterpillar company visited Sevalaya with their staff members on 06/10/2008. They interacted with the residents and donated mats, plastic cups, dresses, bed sheets, plastic buckets, bathing and washing soaps, hair oil etc. to the hostel students and Old Age Home residents.

Saraswathi Pooja was celebrated with great jubilation at Sevalaya on 08/10/2008. There was a cultural event with singing of soul-stirring Bharathiyar songs. Mr.A.N.Nagabushana Raju–Thasildar, Thiruvallur was the Chief Guest on the occasion. He mentioned that Sevalaya was celebrating Saraswathi Pooja not on a single day but throughout the year by providing life-coping and character building education to 1000 children free of any charges without discrimination of caste, creed or religion. Mr.Krishnan - Village Administrative Officer participated in the function.

'Pasam' Train Friends from Thiruninravur conducted sports and quiz programmes and distributed prizes, lunch to our hostel students on 19/10/2008.

Diwali, the festival of lights, signifying the triumph of good over evil was celebrated at Sevalaya on 25/10/08.The Chief guests on the occasion were Lion.D.Thulasingam-President, Federation of Tamil Nadu Rice Mill Owners and Paddy Rice Dealers Association, Redhills, Chennai & Mr. R. Mohan, K.G.R.Apparels Export, Ambattur. New Clothes, sweets and crackers were distributed to 1000 underprivileged children and the senior citizens of Sevalaya's Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Old Age Home. The chief guest Mr.D.Thulasingam expressed

his happiness at being present on this occasion and offered his best wishes and support to the management and donated 10 bags of rice to the institution. Mr. R.Mohan, K.G.R. Apparels felicitated the institution. The celebrations commenced with the lighting of crackers.

On 25/10/2008, Swamiji and members of Divya Jyoti Jagrati Sansthan visited Sevalaya and distributed sweets, biscuits to the children for Diwali.

External Events

On 03/10/2008, the residents of the Old Age Home participated in World Elders Day at Thiruvallur arranged by Ms. Ruth Vennila, District Social Welfare Officer, Dept. of Social Welfare, Thiruvallur. Thiruvallur District Collector Mr. Rajendrakumar was the chief guest. Our residents participated in various competitions, and won prizes.

Mr. V.Muralidharan, Managing Trustee was the chief Guest on the occasion of the 56th Annual Day Celebrations of Mahathma Gandhi library at Saidapet on 05/10/2008. He presented Awards to various achievers in different fields such as social service, Literature, Journalism etc.

On 11/10/2008, Sevalaya children participated in the Ayutha Pooja Celebrations by Pattabiram Anna Nagar Auto Association. The Association provided lunch and dinner and donated various items like mats, rice, notebooks and pens to the students.

Mr. V.Muralidharan, Managing Trustee was a special invitee for the Ramzan Celebrations by Islamic Foundation Trust on 15/10/2008.

At the invitation of Inner Wheel Club of Madras North 20 students and 2 staff participated in 'Diwali Celebrations' at MGR Janaki College, R.A. Puram, Chennai organised by Inner Wheel District 323 on 18/10/2008.

Tamil Ilakkiaa Kazhagam, Sri Nikethan Matric. School, Thiruvallur conducted elocution, essay writing, drawing, singing, drama and dance competitions on 22/10/2008. 31 students participated. Our students won prizes in Song competition, drama competition, Thirukkural recitation competition, essay writing and oratorical competitions. In all, 13 prizes were won by our students in these competitions.

On 24/10/2008, Hostel students and residential staff participated in 'Diwali Celebrations' at DRBCCC Vaishnava College, Arumpakkam, Chennai arranged by Lions club of International – Dist 324 A1, Chennai.

Medical Camps

Sevalaya and Singhvi Trust jointly organized a free Eye and Dental camp on 05/10/2008. The camp covered thirteen Villages in Thiruvallur district. A team of specialists from Sri Ramachandra Medical College screened 552 people of sixteen villages. 6 Patients who were diagnosed with cataracts were immediately sent for surgical treatment. Singhvi Trust also distributed spectacles to 50 people.

Sports

The Boys Junior Volley Ball team were the Runners in Thiruvallur District Level event at Melnallathur on 15/10/2008 and the Girls Super Senior Kho-Kho team were Winners in the Thiruvallur District Level event at Ramapuram, Porur on 16/10/2008. The events were conducted by Sports Authority of Thiruvallur Educational District.

In the Divisional Level Sports meet conducted by Divisional Sports Authority of Thiruvallur and Kanchipuram at Ajay Stadium, Avadi from 16/10/2008 to 24/10/2008, Girls Super Senior Kho-Kho team were the Runners.

Staff Book Review

On 04/10/2008, B.Nirmala shared with the audience anecdotes from the book "Interesting events in Bharathiyar's life" (Tamil) written by Mr. Sankararaman. Select poems of Bharathiyar were discussed by R.Ethal Priya on 11/10/2008 and A.Raj on 18/10/2008. R.Sakthivel Murugan discussed Bharathiyar's Songs of Wisdom (Gnana Padalgal) on 25/10/2008.

Students Book Review

On 04/10/2008, R.Selvi spoke on Vivekananda Stories published by Ramakrishna Mission. R.Prakash discussed the book 'Encourage to Think' (Tamil) written by Mr. Sinthai Jayaraman, on 11/10/2008. Mr.Jaya Prakash Narayanan's book in Tamil on fixing Goals for Life was discussed on 18/10/2008 by P.Mahalakshmi and on 25/10/2008 S.Karan spoke about 'Hurry towards Success' (Tamil) written Swami Vimurthanandar.

Temple Visits

The residents of the Old Age Home went to Sevapet Amman Temple on 03/10/2008. On 10/10/2008, Hostel Boys went to Thamarai Pakkam Siva Temple and Sri Yadevi Amman Temple. The Hostel Girls went to Ramanathapuram Vinayaga Temple on 17/10/2008.

Training Programmes

On 11/10/2008, 15 teachers attended a training programme on 'Child Psychology' by Ms. Vidya Shankar of Relief Foundation at Thorapakkam.

Swami and (his Muslim) friends*

Those were the days when Swami Vivekananda was wandering in the Himalayas, along with Swami Akandananda. When they were almost nearing Almora, Swamiji felt totally exhausted and sat down on the road side. There was a Muslim Cemetery opposite to this spot. The care taker of the Cemetery, a Muslim fakir by name Zulfikar Ali saw this, and he rushed to help Swamiji. He brought with him a cucumber, the only eatable thing available with him and offered it to Swamiji. Swamiji said, "Please feed it in to my mouth. I am so tired." The fakir hesitated." Swami, but I am a Muslim." Swamiji smiled and said, "How does it matter? Are not all of us brothers?" The fakir obliged and swamiji felt refreshed after partaking of the cucumber. "The man really saved my life", he later said. When he returned from America with all glory as the famous Swami Vivekananda, he was taken in procession along the streets of Almora. The fakir was in the watching crowd. He did not recognize Swamiji, but the latter spotted him, recollected the event, and exchanged pleasantries with him. He was introduced to the accompanying people.

In Alwar in Rajasthan, Swami became friends with a Moulvi who was a teacher of Persian and Arabic in a High School. He used to discuss matters relating to spirituality and religion with him for hours on end. about Kuran, Swamiji said,"there is one thing very remarkable about the Kuran.Even to this day, it exists as it was found eleven hundred years ago.It retains its pristine purity and is free from interpolations." The moulvi sahib became most devoted to the Swamiji and had a great desire to invite Swamiji to his house and feed him. He offered that he would cook the food with Brahmin cooks in their own vessels, and serve it by Brahmins only. He will be satisfied with watching him partake of food at his house from a distance. Swamiji brushed aside all the suggestions and readily agree to take dinner at his house. He ate to his heart's content, and the Moulvi was

overjoyed. This incident earned for Swamiji many more dinners at Muslim houses!

While in Mount Abu, Swamiji was staying in the bungalow of a Muslim Wakil and was enjoying his hospitality. Munshi Jaganmohan, private Secretary to the Maharaja of Kethri, visited Swamiji, and was perplexed to see the Hindu sannyasi cozily settled in a Muslim House. He point blank shot the question," Well, Swamiji, you are a Hindu monk. How is it that you are living with a Muslim? Your food may now and then be touched by a Muslim!" at this Swamiji flared up, and said," Sir, What do you mean? I am a sannyasi. I am above all your social conventions. I will even dine with a Bhangi. I am not afraid of God; for he sanctions it. I am not afraid of Shastras; for they allow it. But I am afraid of you people and your society. You know nothing about God and scriptures. I see Brahman everywhere, manifested even in the meanest creature. For me there is nothing like High and low.Shiva, Shiva!

Jag Mohan for a moment was gazing in silence. He could appreciate the spirit of this Hindu monk with a difference. It is he who brought about the meeting of the Swamiji with Kethri Maharaja which later developed in to a historic relationship.
*Apologies to R.K.Narayan for adopting his title.



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