



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Sevalaya's News Letter

OCTOBER - 2005

Dear Friends,

In many families who live in villages around Sevalaya, poverty is not the only problem for them. Most of them have very little earning, if at all they get a job, and to add fuel to fire, most of the men spend all their money on alcohol. They return home under full influence of alcohol and beat up their wife and children. Many men die young, in the age group of 30 or 40, leaving the family on the streets. The mother has no education (most of the time the father is also not educated) and she also does not have any skills to earn a living. So they have no money to educate their children, children grow up in this atmosphere and when they grow up, the same story repeats.

One way to break this chain is to offer free education to these poor children, that Sevalaya has been doing for the past seventeen years. We also thought that we should train the women on some skills so that they can earn their daily bread. Thus the 'Kasturiba craft centre' was started some years ago and many women have undergone tailoring training.

Recently NABARD (National Bank for Rural Development) came forward to sponsor a two-month long tailoring and embroidery course. With this help, we enrolled many village women on this course and engaged professionals to teach this skill. We also had many invited speakers who spoke to them about how to run a business, how to keep accounts, how to do marketing, how to obtain loan from banks (and of course pay back!), and also on what many women did who have made a mark in the history. All this boosted

their self-confidence and the poor village women, who were very shy to start with, became highly confident, very well motivated and were ready to start a new life!

After the two-month course was over, five ladies from a small village called Palavedu, joined together and started their own unit. These ladies are Mrs. Chitra, Mrs. Vanishree, Mrs. Umamaneshwari, Mrs. Rajakumari and Mrs. Chengammal. They wanted to give credit to Sevalaya's Kasturiba craft centre, hence named their unit as 'Kasturi Tailoring centre'.

In a small inauguration function, they invited Sevalaya's Hon. Correspondent as their chief guest and declared their unit open. The local population is giving them business and soon they will expand and accept business from other villages also. They had taken a loan of Rs 6000 from local self-help group, as the seed money to set up the unit, and already they have repaid Rs 2000! They have got an order to stitch cloth bags for a near by store. They have their expansion plan clearly drawn – buy couple of more power stitching machines, one inter lock machine, and above all repay the loan in total!

With bright eyes they say that now they know how to earn their living and need not depend on their husbands any more monetarily. Economic freedom is something new for them. They can buy what they want for themselves and their children. For their husbands? Yes, they will buy anything but alcohol.

Thanks & Regards
Murali



Bharathi, Gandhi, Vivekananda Day

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Sevalaya conducts interschool competitions for the schools in Thiruvallur District on topics based on lives and works of Mahakavi Bharathiyar, Mahatma Gandhiji, and Swami Vivekananda every year, with a view to creating awareness among the students about these three great leading lights. This year the competitions were conducted on September 2, 2005 at Sevalaya service centre. Nearly 300 students from 23 schools participated in the competitions. The winners of these competitions were awarded prizes at the Bharathi, Gandhi, Vivekananda Day organised by Sevalaya on September 10, 2005. Mr. Pa. Lakshmanan of Ilakkiya Chinthanai and Mr. M.S.Perumal, Director, Doordharshan Kendra, Chennai (Retd.) were the chief guests on the occasion. Mr. Mu. Srinivasan, a Bharathi scholar distributed 200 copies of collection of Bharathiyar Poems to the students on the occasion.

Dreams....

A senior official of Tata Consultancy Services, Mr. Shiva spoke to the children about dreams, the need to have a dream and the steps to achieve ones dream in a meeting on September 10 2005. At the end of the meeting the children had identified their dreams and have themselves worked out an action plan to pursue their dreams. There will be periodical follow up meetings where the children will be encouraged to assess their progress and determine where they stand.

Family Day at Sevalaya

September 4, 2005, Teachers Day was celebrated as Family Day at Sevalaya. With a view to involve the families of the staff of Sevalaya and have closer interaction with them Sevalaya celebrates Family Day every year on the Teachers Day, inviting the family members of the staff to campus. It is a day of fun and frolic. Games will be arranged for them; they mingle with the residents of Sevalaya, have a festive lunch and relax. This year, for a change, a trip to Mahabalipuram was organised. They were



Release of Bharathiyar CD by TGN Foundation

awe struck by the beauty of the sculptures and the skill of the artisans. The cool beachside provided relief from the merciless heat of Chennai.

Festivals at service centre

Vinayaka Chaturthi was celebrated at the service centre on September 10, 2005.

Film Shows

The Children's Film Society of India screened the children's movie "You Can" (Tamil) (Ungalaal Mudiym) on September 12, 2005.

Participation in External Programmes

The final round of quiz for the children of Sevalaya conducted by staff of Tata Consultancy Services was held at TCS office at Vadapalani on September 3, 2005. The participants were also taken on a visit around the facility after the programme. Senior officials of TCS addressed them about employment opportunities in IT sector for non-engineering students. The students returned an inspired lot.

Sevalaya children won the first three prizes in the essay competition on "Small Savings" conducted by Life Insurance Corporation Of India – Adyar branch.

TGN Foundation released a CD on Bharathiyar on September 18, 2005. The cassette was released by Sage T.G.Narayanaswamy and the first CD was received by V.Muralidharan, Managing Trustee of Sevalaya. Sage T.G.Narayanaswamy lauded the yeomen service rendered by Sevalaya for the underprivileged section of the society and urged all the participants of the meeting to visit the service centre.

A.A. Kingston, Hostel – in –charge participated in the seminar on "Nutrition and Dietics" conducted by CIOSA (Confederation of Indian Organisations for Service and Advocacy) on September 06, 2005. Dr. Varsha, Executive Director of Gujarathi Hospitals spoke on Nutrition and Balanced Diet. Many NGOs participated in the seminar. The need to have a network of NGO's with similar objectives was also discussed in the seminar.



P.Selvam, Old Age Home & Craft Centre – in – charge and Mr. Nagarajan, Volunteer attended a get together organised by Vishranthi Home for the Aged for the care takers of Old Age Homes on September 24, 2005. People from various Old Age Homes participated and had an opportunity to discuss the problems faced in the care of aged people and ways to tackle them.

G.Chitti Babu, Campus – in – charge and A.A.Kingston, Hostel – in –charge participated in the seminar on “Adolescence Behaviours” conducted by CIOSA (Confederation of Indian Organisations for Service and Advocacy) on September 29, 2005. Dr. Nambi, Head of the dept. of Psychology, KMC spoke on Adolescence Behaviours.

Satyagraha Centenary Celebrations Inaugural Function

Sevalaya children participated in the inaugural function of Satyagraha Centenary Celebrations organised by the Committee for Celebration of Satyagraha Centenary at Gandhi Mandapam on September 11, 2005. It was 100 years ago, this day, at the Empire Theatre in South Africa the seeds of Satyagraha were sown. Sevalaya Children sang Bhajans and presented a villupattu (a traditional art form in Tamilnadu where the artiste narrates a story in song form using bow as the main musical instrument).

School Clubs

Science Club met on September 8, 2005. The students were taught how to prepare Vermi compost.

Study Circle Meetings

Mr. G. Chittibabu spoke about the views on Education of Sevalaya’s Trinity, Mahatma Gandhi, Mahakavi Bharathiyar and Swami Vivekananda on September 4, 2005. “Oh! Motherland! Listen”- a Book written by Swami Vivekananda was discussed by Ms. G.Premakumari on September 10, 2005. On September 17, 2005, Ms. Geetha spoke about the book “Life of Dr. Ambedkar” by Mr. Paulraj. P.Senniyans “Hard Work and development” was Ms.



Vijayanandini’s choice for discussion on September 24, 2005. Mr. P.Narayana Murthy spoke about Mahatma Gandhiji’s “Hind Swaraj” at the study circle meeting at Sevalaya administrative Office on September 30, 2005.

In the Students Study Circle meeting, S.Shantha Kumar spoke about a book in Tamil on Nethaji Subash Chandra Bose, written by Mr.Mathi Oli, on 3rd September 2005.

Temple Visits & Tours

Students of XI Std were taken on a tour to Children’s Park and snake park at Guindy on September 1, 2005.

The hostel students went to the Vinayagar Temple at Kasuva Village on September 3rd & 24th, 2005.

Understanding Carnatic Music

Sevalaya makes best efforts to provide an exposure to the children to various art forms like music and dance, in addition to academics. In an effort to create an understanding and appreciation of Carnatic Music, a lecture demonstration on Understanding Carnatic Music by popular vocalist Mr. N.Vijay Siva was organised on September 28, 2005. Mr. Vijay Siva explained the basics of Carnatic Music in very simple and clear terms and in an interesting manner. It was an interactive session. At the end of the lecture, he conducted a quiz. Mr. Vijay Siva was accompanied by Mr. N. Manoj Siva on the Mridangam and Mr. Sriramkumar on the violin.

World Elders Day

The Vice Consul of Japan, Ms. Sakura Ozaki, visited Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Old Age Home on September 30, 2005. It was befitting that she visited the Old Age Home on the World Elders Day as the building and infrastructure of Sevalaya’s Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Old Age Home owes its existence to the munificence of the people and Government of Japan. The Rotaract club members of Gurunanak College visited the Old Age Home on the World Elders’ Day and presented cultural programmes for the grandmas and grandpas.

Soul and the soup

Swami Vivekananda's purpose in life was to spread the message of his Master Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa far and wide. "Liberation for the soul and Service to the needy." While so, he never lost sight of the practical aspects of day-to-day living. Like with Mahatma Gandhi, people used to seek his advice on matters of practical import. His advice or tips on matters of conduct benefited his disciples and those who came in contact with him. His Eastern and Western disciples have recounted many of their reminiscences. A few from Mr. Haripada Mitra are telling.

Mr. Mitra was in the habit of taking medicines liberally. To him, Swami's advice was: "When you find that some disease has made you bed-ridden, then only you should take medicines. Not otherwise. Ninety percent of diseases as nervous debility are mere figments of the brain. The physician kills more people suffering from such diseases than they save. Take it easy as long as you live and be cheerful."

Mr. Mitra was not pulling along well with his superiors in office, and he complained to Swami. His forthright response was: "Know it that the ideas we entertain about others express themselves through our conduct. Even though we may not express these in words, people react accordingly.... From this day, try to get rid of the habit of finding fault with others, and you will find that the attitudes and reactions of others will also change."

Once Mr. Mitra expressed to Swami that he was harsh in his criticism of a section of people. "I spoke only truth and nothing but truth. I find no reason why truth should be watered down or hidden back- I am in the least sorry for what I did out of a sense of duty... I did not speak of anger, nor do I regret now."

Swami was against useless talk, gossiping and vain arguments. "One who wastes one's energy in dabbling in other people's affairs and in other aimless activities can hardly have any energy

left for performing a desirable duty." He added a story to tell how human nature functions.

"Once a king advanced with his army against another territory. The defending king convened a big council to devise ways and means of arresting the advance. The council consisted of people from different fields. The engineer advised to put a barricade and dig a deep trench. The carpenter said, "Raise a wooden wall." The cobbler suggested putting a leather barricade all around. The blacksmith firmly put forth: "All this will be of no avail. An iron wall is the best thing for shots cannot penetrate through it." The pleader would not agree. "Let us convince the enemy by argument that he has no right to conquer our territory." The priest concluded, "You are all raving like lunatics. Offer sacrifice, perform other rites warding off the evil, offer tulasi leaves etc., and the enemy will be baffled in his attempt." The result was nothing was done to save the kingdom but the councillors went on debating ad infinitum!

Yoga: karmasu kowsalam. Dexterity in action is Yoga. Swami gave equal importance to all his tasks-Sublime, or the earthy. In his own words: if you really want to judge the character of a man, look not at his great performances...Watch a man do his most common action.

Josephine McLeod narrates an interesting episode. She was returning in car with Swami after he delivered one of his "Inspired Talks". His talk that day was on Jesus of Nazareth. During the talk, he seemed to radiate a white light from head to foot. He was lost in the wonder of the power of Christ. On the way back, he was in deep concentration and the lady did not speak to him for fear of interrupting the great thoughts she thought were in his mind. Suddenly, as if recovering from a reverie, Swami said, "I know how it is done." McLeod thought that Swami must have discovered a profound truth like the Buddha under the Bodhi tree and curiously asked, "How, what is done?" Swami serenely replied, "How they make the mulligatawny soup. They put a bay leaf in it."

FOR FREE CIRCULATION :

Send your comments to: Sevalaya, #3, First Link Street, Karpagam Gardens, Adyar, Chennai-600 020.

Phone : 24468202 / 24468205 E.mail : sevalaya@vsnl.com visit at: www.sevalaya.org