



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Love 1 **Sevalaya's News Letter - October 2006** Serve 7 Price-Re.1

Dear Friends,

At Sevalaya, we strongly believe that the institution's root is very much in the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhiji, Mahakavi Bharathi and Swami Vivekananda. Whatever Sevalaya has achieved so far, is all due to the blessings of these three great sons of India. The very idea to start such an institution came because some of us read few lines from the writings of these people. We are sure, if the next generation takes a serious look at the philosophy of these three people, more powerful service organizations can come up in the future.

Keeping this in mind, Sevalaya conducts various competitions to school children, year after year. All these years, we were confining ourselves to the schools in Thiruvallur and Chennai districts. But this year we decided to expand all over Tamil Nadu. We sent invitation letters to nearly 7000 schools in Tamil Nadu, to participate in a unique open book examination on Gandhiji's life. The response was over-whelming.

Nearly 450 schools responded positively and about 60,000 students wrote the test. While going through the answer papers, we could clearly make out that children have really put in effort to study the book 'My experiments with truth' – the autobiography of Mahatma Gandhiji.

Some of the schools even conducted a special workshop for children, to make them understand the life and teachings of the father of our nation. Some schools invited us to go over to their place and interact with the children. The paper correction and selection process is on and the Tamil Nadu level toppers will be selected and prizes awarded on Sevalaya's Gandhi Jayanthi

celebrations, around 2nd October, the birth Anniversary of the Mahatma. September 11th, is now associated with violence. But in 1893, on September 11th, Swami Vivekananda traveled to Chicago, and made that famous 'Brothers and Sisters of America' – lecture at the World Parliament of Religions. In 1906, on September 11th, Mahatma Gandhiji announced to the world a new weapon, the 'Satyagraha' – a non-violent way to struggle against oppression. Mahakavi Bharathi passed away in 1921, on September 11th. So this is a very special day, a day to be remembered, cherished and reflected upon for Sevalaya.

To mark this occasion, many schools were invited to participate in various competitions, based on the life and message of Bharathi, Gandhiji and Vivekananda. Nearly 600 students from 45 schools participated and the prizes were given away by Swami Omkarananda, after a soul stirring lecture on Bharathi's Bhagavad Gita.

We feel that we have expanded our area of operation from just two districts to the entire state of Tamil Nadu this year. Ofcourse, it involved hard labour on the part of our staff members, who took upon themselves the pleasurable act of spreading the message of the Sevalaya's Trinity among the next generation.

When people understand the philosophy of Gandhiji, Bharathi and Vivekananda, there will be more peace in the world. That will be the real fruit of all this exercise.

Thanks & Regards
Murali



Medical Camp

Events

A free Siddha Medical camp was conducted on 10/09/06. The camp was organised by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi, Kilpauk. Doctors from the Arignar Anna Siddha Medical College and Hospital conducted health Check ups. Free medicines were distributed.

September 11th has become synonymous with terrorism and destruction now. But September 11th is an important day in the lives of the Trinities of Sevalaya. It was a turning point in the freedom struggle at South Africa in 1906, when the most effective weapon of truth and non violence "Satyagraha" was born; it was the day India shook off its shackles and one of her illustrious son stood up to proclaim to the world the Greatness of her rich cultural heritage at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893; it was the day the spirit of the richest of poets



Siddha camp by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi

transcended the physical frame and permeated the entire universe in 1921.

Sevalaya conducted interschool district level oratorical, essay writing, poetry writing and quiz competitions on the lives of these three great leaders to provide an opportunity to the younger generation to know about them.

Bharathi, Gandhi, Vivekananda Day was celebrated at Campus on 11/09/2006. Swami Omkarananda, Acharya of Pudukkottai Sri Bhuvanewari Avadhutha Vidyapeetam and Vedapuri Adiguru Shri Prajna Dakshinamoorthy Vidyapeetam, Theni was the Honourable Chief Guest.

His Holiness distributed prizes to the winners of the competitions and blessed the students. His Holiness delivered a lecture on Bharathi and Bhagavad Gita on the occasion.



BGV Day - Swami Omkarananda



BGV - Prize Distribution



BGV Competitions

Lions Club of Madras Dharshan conducted a one day free medical camp at Sevalaya on 17/09/2006. General Check up, eye and dental check up were conducted. Nearly 300 people were the beneficiaries. Free medicines were distributed. 16 Patients were referred for free eye surgery and free spectacles were distributed.

NSS camps

The NSS camp by the students of the John Hopkins University concluded on 02/09/2006. They presented a cultural programme on that day.

Study Circle

Mr.Narayana Moorthy reviewed the book "Gandhiji's Bhagavad Geetha" on 02/09/2006. Mr.Kingston discussed Gandhiji's Self – Rule (Tamil) on 16/09/2006. Ms.Vatchla reviewed the book "Vivekananda's Gnana Deebam Vol - XI" on 30/09/2006.



BGV Competitions



Training to Staff

Students Study circle

P.Srinivasan of 12th Std reviewed a book on Darwin in Tamil by Yoganathan in on 02/09/06. Santhakumar of 12th Std reviewed a book on "World Famous Women" (Tamil) by Dr.Sarala Rajagopalan on 09/09/06. Ashok Raja of 12th Std shared his thoughts on the book on "Veerapandia Kattabomman" by S.Ramani on 16/09/06. Pugazhenthii of 12th Std reviewed a book on "Our National Leaders" (Tamil) by Ms.Santhana Lakshmi on 30/09/06.

Training Programmes

A five Day seminar on Educational techniques and methodology was organised from 23/09/2006 to 27/09/2006. Educational Consultant Mr. R.S.Nallaperumal of New Flower Educational Guidance Service, conducted the training. Quoting that "The destiny of India is made in our Classrooms" he exhorted the teachers to realise the great responsibility that lies with them in shaping the future generations. He stressed the need to make the children to have a strong foundation in handwriting (neat and legible), calculation skills and communication skills. He demonstrated how various educational models can be made with inexpensive items, which will enrich the understanding of the students and make learning a pleasure. The seminar was highly inspiring and motivating.

What would Gandhiji do?

The Hindu recently carried an article under the caption, "Would a Gandhian approach help?" The author wanted to find out if Gandhian philosophy is still relevant to day. He took up a few instances of every day problems and posed the question, "What Gandhi would do?"

1. You are late at night at it's started raining. After a lot of haggling, you agree to take an auto to your destination for way more than the regular fare .On the way the auto driver tries to get other customers to share your auto. You get livid because you are already overcharged, anxious to get home, and nervous about being alone. How would you handle this problem in a Gandhian way?

2. What would you do if you are on a crowded one-way road and a car drives up in the wrong way and blocks your path?

3. The water tanker driver refuses to deliver unless you pay him money that he is not really entitled to. What Gandhian strategy would work for this man who loves his bribes?

Truth and Ahimsa Gandhiji preached are not new. They are "as old as the hills." Hence questioning the relevance of Gandhiji, would be questioning the relevance of Truth and Love.(Ahimsa in its broadest sense.)

Gandhiji did not propound any academic theory. "If I had only to discuss academic principles, I should clearly not attempt an autobiography. My purpose (is) to give an account of the various practical applications of these principles." He did not codify any rule of conduct. But we have a basic frame work, which we can glean from his Autobiography and other biographies as to how he acted in circumstances , be they of great import or trivial.

Gandhiji was a relentless fighter. He was a pacifist but not a passivist. He resisted evil, but did not bear any malice towards the evil-doer. He stood up firmly for what was right according to his perception and conscience. He would fight even if he were to traverse a lonely path. He was not governed by fear

or self interest in any of his actions. He was prepared to undergo suffering for standing up for what he considered Truth. His actions were based on trust of the opposite party. He was a good planner and was meticulous about working out details.

With the above guidelines in mind, let us figure out what a Gandhian approach would involve in the given instances.

Instance 1:- This situation will never arise in a Gandhian approach. Gandhiji would have worked out the reasonable fare on the basis of distance involved, fuel cost, overheads and living wages for the driver. If he was satisfied that the demand was reasonable, despite Governmental prescription, he would have paid it. Otherwise, he would not engage the auto, but choose to walk the distance. Also, His being livid or nervous was out of the question. However, taking the circumstance as given, one, as a Gandhian would think of the would be passenger who would otherwise be stranded alone in rain. He would be willing to accommodate him. The fact that the driver would earn a few extra bucks or the discomfort this would entail to himself would not enter his calculation.

Instance 2:- For this the answer is that a "Gandhian" would block the car, and reason out with the driver to trace back and never violate the traffic rules as they are meant for the safety of people. If he is not able to see reason, he would report to the Police and ensure that action was taken.

Instance 3:-Gandhian method (Don't call it strategy) in this instance would be, to refuse to pay the bribe and in the process undergo the suffering of non supply of water and ask the people to resist payment. Even if nobody is heeding, we still do not pay, and take up the matter with the authorities till the water supply is ensured to all without payment of bribe.

There is however flexibility of action on the basis of what one considers right according to one's own perception and conscience.

We will be interested to have feed back from our readers on alternative ways of dealing with the situations, whether Gandhian or otherwise.

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