



# LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

## Sevalaya's News Letter

SEPTEMBER - 2003

Dear Friends,

During the middle of August, the entire northeastern part of United States and parts of Canada plunged into darkness. Power supply was not restored for more than 24 hours. As people are used to electric shaving, electric cooking, electronic banking, etc. everything came to a stand still. In India, if power goes off, we are used to it and our utilities people are also experts in bringing power back, as they do it day in and day out! But in United states, they have never seen such a power break down for a very long time, hence they will not be geared up to work on the break down – may be they will be depending on technology to help them!

Trains came to a stand still. Many passengers were stranded. We can put up with anything stopping, but not food! Unfortunately, not much of food was also available, as cooking also depends on electric cooking range and microwave ovens. There were many people chasing the available food. The theory of economics say, that if demand exceeds supply then prices will go up. Yes, the prices went up to crazy levels. A bottle of water, which normally costs one dollar, was selling at five dollars! All food items were selling at 5 to 10 times higher prices.

But people should have money to pay. It is not that they didn't have money, but access to money became a problem. Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) refused to work; Shops were not able to accept credit cards, as the card network was down. Unlike India, in those

countries, people don't carry lot of cash. Technology made them poor, for a day!

In all this darkness, there was one bright spot. One Indian restaurant, 'Madras Mahal', started distributing free food and water! It is reported that many queued up in front of this restaurant to get food. These are people from the financial capital of the world! Here was a restaurant, which refused to make fast money, defied the law of economics, demand and supply didn't matter.

'Give food to all in this world; give them education and make the world a better place' says Mahakavi Bharthiar. In traditional Indian culture, food and education are not to be sold, as they are basic needs of every human being. Temples used to serve free food and also educate people on religion, spirituality and culture. According to Kamaraj, one of the Gandhian leaders from the South India, temples have tall towers only to serve as an indication to hungry people as to where food is available! Olden houses will have place called 'Thinnai', just outside the main door of the house, to enable strangers to come and have food and sleep there! Things have changed now, there are no 'Thinnais' now, and temples have also become commercial! But we still have some bright spots.

Technology may fail, but the Indian culture of 'Annadhanam' will not. Hats off to Madras Mahal, on Lexington Avenue, New York.

Thanks & Regards  
**Murali**

### Study Circle Meetings

- Date : 1.8.2003  
Speaker : Ms. Anusuya  
Book : You too can do Social service ( Tamil)  
Author : Mr. S.S. Vasan  
Venue : Admin. Office.
- Date : 2.8.2003  
Speaker : Mr V. Muralidharan  
Book : Gnana Deepam (Tamil )  
Author : Swami Vivekananda  
Venue : Service Centre
- Date : 8.8.2003  
Speaker : T.Nagaraj  
Book : Bharathi and God (Tamil)  
Author : M.P.Periasami Thooran  
Venue : Admin. Office.
- Date : 9.8.2003  
Speaker : Ms.M. Vatsala  
Book : What one has to learn from the unlettered genius Mr.Kamaraj? (Tamil)  
Author : Mr. Neelam Madhumayan  
Venue : Service Centre.
- Date : 22.8.2003  
Speaker : Mr. G. Ram Mohan  
Book : Sanskrit Proverbs  
Author : M.W. Karr  
Venue : Admin. Office
- Date : 23. 8. 2003  
Speaker : R. Vijaya Raghavan  
Book : Good Teacher (Tamil)  
Author : Meyyanban  
Venue : Service Centre
- Date : 29.8.2003  
Speaker : Ms. Latha  
Book : Effort is Success (Tamil)  
Author : Mervin  
Venue : Admin. Office
- Date : 30.8.2003  
Speaker : A.Arockiaraj Kingston  
Book : Excellent Living  
Author : Robin S. Sharma  
Venue : Service Centre

### Media focus on Sevalaya...

" At a time when private schools are focussing on cent per cent results in Public Examinations, an unaided charitable institution in suburban Chennai is not just igniting young minds but is also building character in them.." wrote Indian Express in its City Express pages on August,7,2003 , in an article entitled ` A School founded on Bharathiar's Vision ` . They have, however, unfortunately not mentioned

in the percentage of results that we also have achieved cent per cent success.

Radio Mirchi, a popular private F. M. Channel made mention about Sevalaya and our Old Age Home in the " info-bites " interspersed between their film songs in the ' Filter-Coffee ' Programme broadcast at day-break in the first week of August.

Our Managing Trustee Mr. V. Muralidharan's interview was broadcast live in All India Radio's FM Rainbow on 16.8.2003 in Cinema Neram Programme. That the programme was enthusiastically received was evident from listeners' feedback received later, all of whom mentioned that the programme was inspiring. The programme executives of AIR must have also been motivated by the work of Sevalaya can be inferred from the broadcast of songs containing good messages in-between.

### Training and Development

" Fund raising and Image Building " was the topic for our Leaders' Meet held at Chennai on 3.8.2003. M/s K.Chandrasekaran and M. Radha krishnan, top-notch marketing men in the field of Life Insurance were the facilitators. They gave useful guidance on prospecting, pre-approach, approach, interview and presentation. Useful tips based on Neuro linguistic programming were also given.

Three of our Staff members were deputed to attend a programme on the **Science of Living** by Sage T.G. Narayana Swamy At Chennai.

### Reaching out...

On 8.8.2003 and 21.8.2003, Mr.A.Annamalai, our Trustee, addressed the children of Bala Vikas Kendra, Palavedu and Government Higher Secondary School, Velliyur respectively with the aid of Audio-Visual equipments

On 25.8.2003, Mr.Saravanan, a Unit Leader in our Service Centre addressed the students of the Government Higher Secondary School, Thiru ninravur on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda.

Our Mobile Library is making its weekend rounds in the nearby villages. The record turn out of enthusiastic readers was at Pakkam Village with 218 entries.

### School Associations.

Bharathi Tamil Literary Association organised a special lecture by Vidwan L. Shanmuga sundaram, a close associate of the Late Rasikamani T.K.Chidambaranatha Mudaliar, on 9.8.2003. The subject was the glory of Tamil literature, with particular accent on Tirukkural.

The Association also conducted an oratorical contest for students and announced prizes.

Abdul Kalam Science Association and Social Science Club also had their events. While the former discussed the subject of Universe, the latter conducted an oratorical competition.

### **BGV on firmer footing..**

This is a subject we mentioned in our earlier issue. Mr. Ramjee, ably supported by Mr. Mu. Srinivasan conducted orientation programme for our teachers on Bharathi Syllabus teaching to our students. The programme was in two afternoon sessions on 9.8.2003 and 23.8.2003.

### **Catch'em Young..!**

Talent-spotting, special training in Sports, Yoga, Dance, Music, Painting, Yoga, Hindi and whatnot. Now our leaders in the Campus are keen on developing qualities of Leadership in our children too! Leadership development programmes are conducted for the senior children in our campus periodically. Book-presentation on the model of what is done by staff members, volunteers and Trustees form part of the meets. Mast. Karthick, Mast. Dharani, Baby Chitra and Baby Gayathri presented the books they recently read in the sessions this month.

Nila Mutram is also an increasingly popular programme. In the programme conducted on 19<sup>th</sup> August, children performed a Dance recital based on Bharathiyar's songs. A drama on the evenhanded justice dispensed by Manuneechi Chozhan was also staged.

### **Competitions**

On 6.8.2003, our children participated in competitions conducted at Tiruvallur District level in Poem writing, oratory, Painting etc., and are awaiting the results with bated breath.

### **Independence Day**

Independence Day was celebrated on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2003. District President of Y's Men Club International, Ysm. P.WAF M.Prabhakaran hoisted our National Flag and delivered an inspiring lecture to our children. Mr. Deepak Rajendran, President, Y's Men Club of Anna Nagar West also addressed the children on

the occasion. Our children presented a colourful cultural Programme on the occasion.

About 15 staff members from GE Countrywide visited our campus on 15.8.2003. They conducted painting competition and games like musical chairs. Winners were awarded prizes. The children participated enthusiastically and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

### **Sari Gama Padha ni.. ... Music in their life....**

Grand Pas and Grand Mas from our old age home were enthralled to attend a Carnatic Music Cutchery they were taken to at Chennai this month on 16<sup>th</sup> Aug 2003 by GE Countrywide.

### **Camps and Tours.**

Sevalaya Children-sixteen of them, and the three Volunteers from Denmark who are currently rendering voluntary service at Sevalaya were taken on a 2 day tour on 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> August 2003. The itinerary included Tiruvengadu, seat of Lord of Planet Mercury, Swamimalai and Sun Temple at Suriyanar Koil. Another noteworthy place visited was Tharangambadi, (Fort Tranquebar) where the first settlement of Foreigners in Indian soil came about.

On 21.8.2003, 15 of our children led by Mr.Selvam and Ms. Nirmala our Staff members were on educational trip to Anna University Printing Technology Department. Professors Kumar and Govindarajulu had organised the tour and Head of the Department, Dr.N.Sankaranarayanan was the hospitable host. The team were taken round different sections and also to the Human Physics and other Departments in which the children exhibited great interest.

### **Birgitte, Birgitte and Ane..**

These are the three volunteer girls who landed at our campus on 10<sup>th</sup> August with a programme to stay and serve here for four months even as they are cooling their heels for higher studies after completion of their Junior college course. Birgitte Engelhardt, Birgitte Kirk Jacobson and Ane Kirstine Mandrup, to quote their full names, are interested in Music, Art, Painting, Physical Education, Languages and Travel.



## GURUS OF OUR GURUS

At Sevalaya our constant endeavor is to run our institutions in conformity with the ideals preached by our trio of guiding lights – Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Mahakavi Subramania Bharati. We treat them as our revered teachers. To use the Indian terminology, they are our *gurus*. A *guru* is much more than a teacher. The *sisya*, or the pupil, venerates him, (or “enthrones him in his heart”, as described by Gandhiji) and treats him as his mentor and guide in all matters. We at Sevalaya, do feel such veneration for our *gurus*. But then, did each one of our *gurus* venerate anyone as his *guru*? This is a question often asked of us. The answer, as we shall see, is “Yes and No!”.

The answer is an emphatic “Yes” in the case of Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji was a young teenager named Narendranath when he first met his *guru* Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. And immediately, a bond developed between them. It is believed that even on their very first meeting the Master recognized Naren as the disciple who was to carry his message to the world. But Naren at first rebelled against the Master for what he felt was an undue imposing of the Master’s views on him. But as he observed the Master more, and basked in the radiance of his great personality, he found his own inner powers and potentialities being roused. He accepted the Master as his *guru*.

Mahatma Gandhi has written in his ‘Auto biography’ of his belief in “the Hindu theory of *Guru*, and the *Guru’s* importance in spiritual realization”. He says, “True knowledge is impossible without a *Guru*”. But the Mahatma was not lucky the way Swami Vivekananda was, in getting a *guru*. The ‘throne in his heart’ remained vacant till the end, although he continued his search for a *guru* till quite late in life.

But there was one acquaintance of his whom the Mahatma held in great reverence as his spiritual teacher; and he was the person if at all any, that came nearest to being the Mahatma’s *guru* in spiritual matters. His name was Rajchandra Ravjibhai Mehta, and Gandhiji respectfully refers to him in his ‘Autobiography’ as Raichandbhai.

He was a wealthy jeweler in Bombay, and Gandhiji met him first on the day after his return from England in 1891, having just qualified as a barrister. Rajchandra was rich, cultivated, well-read, a poet, possessed of a brilliant mind and a seeker after Truth and God. At the time of the first meeting, Gandhiji, uprooted from London and grief-stricken by news of his mother’s death, needed someone he could trust and admire. Rajchandra became that trusted authority for young Gandhiji. He kept his contact with Rajchandra, using him as his “guide and helper” whenever in serious doubt on matters spiritual. Unfortunately, in the year 1901 Rajchandra died, while still in his early thirties.

Subramaniya Bharati also had no single person who could be called as his *guru*. In his case perhaps there could have been no single *guru*, as his genius was spread over many fields, ranging from poetry to journalism, from Indian nationalism to universal brotherhood of man. In poetry, Bharati’s great early love was for the poems of the English Romantic poet P.B.Shelley. Indeed he described himself as “Shelley-dasan” at one stage (meaning that he was a humble admirer and follower of Shelley). So Shelley was his first *guru*. In journalism, Bharati had a teacher and mentor in G.Subramania Iyer, a doyen of journalism in Tamil Nadu. Bharati worked under Subramania Iyer as an Assistant Editor in his Tamil newspaper ‘Swadesamitran’ and learnt the intricacies of journalism from him. Subramania Iyer might not have been a *guru* to Bharati, but he was certainly his teacher.

In the matter of staunch Indian nationalism there were many leaders of his time whom Bharati liked – among them Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpati Rai, whose dedication to the nationalist cause he greatly admired. But his great ‘devotion’ was reserved for Lokhamanya Balgangadhara Tilak. Bharati even used to address Tilak as “Guruji”. When Tilak died in 1920, in an outpouring of emotion Bharati sang:

*“Eternally may your name live on , my guru”*

### **For Free Circulation :**

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