



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

Sevalaya's News Letter

SEPTEMBER - 2005

Dear Friends,

In one of the annual science exhibitions in Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiyar School, one student confidently said that some time in future Sevalaya would send space shuttles. This might look like an impossible dream, as it is coming from a village boy, where historically there was no education and the majority of population is struggling even to get one square meal a day. Education, even at the lowest levels, was out of reach for many of these people. They have spent generations working on the agricultural fields and brick kilns. Only if the entire family works whole day, they will get enough 'cooli' to have some sort of food. Sending children to school itself was like sending space shuttles!

After Sevalaya entered the scene, the situation changed and many such children have got free education and are doing very well. When we opened a free high school, children used to study up to 10th standard and then give up studies, as there was no other fully free school to support them beyond that. Then we upgraded our school to higher secondary school and this year we had the first set of students coming out of 12th standard.

After 12th standard, they will have to go to the university education, which is very expensive. We were moved by the continuous 100% results we were getting in the school and also by the high scores 12th standard and 10th standard students have obtained. If we don't support them for their university studies, again they will drop out after 12th standard and they may not be

able to settle in life. Hence we told them that at least the students who scored more than 1000 out of 1200 will get our financial support and if we are able to get more support, we will pass it onto more students.

Finally 28 out of the 42 students who passed out from Sevalaya's school have joined various university courses. We are very proud that two of our students got invite letters from Anna University (the technical education university in Chennai) for counselling. After the counselling session, they have got admission into engineering courses – one in Electronics and communication and the other in Computer science. Two students have joined B.Sc. Agriculture. One has joined B.Sc. microbiology. Three students have joined in polytechnic in civil and mechanical streams. One person has joined teachers' training. There are four of them in tailoring classes and many others have joined various B.Sc courses.

No one has ever gone to a university in these villages, from these sections of the society. Suddenly we see 28 students marching to university education from such a place is indeed a transformation. As usual lot of money is required to support these children at this stage. I am sure all of you will support us.

In another four years time, we will have first engineers coming out from this backward village. There will be more and more in years to come. And, who knows, after few years, space shuttle will fly from Sevalaya!

Thanks & Regards
Murali



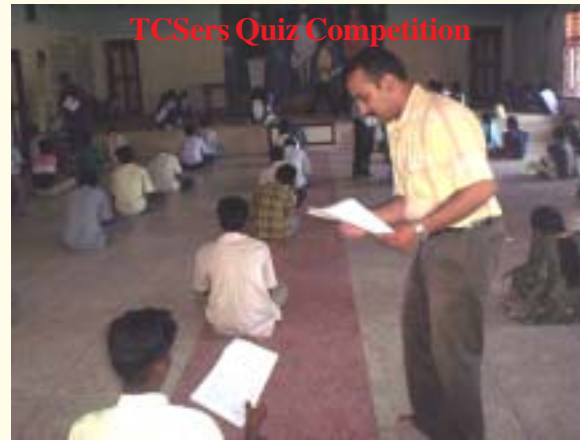
Science Exhibition

Educational Tours: The students of XI and XII were taken to the Museum at Egmore, Chennai on 17th August.

Independence Day was celebrated with patriotic fervour on 15th August. As is the practice for more than a decade now, the members of Y's Men Club of Anna Nagar West, members of Y's Menettes and Y's Lings celebrated the Independence Day at Sevalaya. Ysm. M. Prem Kumar the District Governor of Y's Men International hoisted the National Flag. Members of SEVA, a volunteering group also joined the celebrations and donated much needed notebooks and books to the children. The students in dance drama form enacted Mahakavi Bharathiyar's famous "Panchali Sabatham".

A team of TCSers led by V.V.S.Raveendra conducted quiz competition for students of 10th, 11th and 12th classes on 7th August . It was a written competition. The students will be short-listed based on the scores and a final round will be conducted in September 2005.

Science Exhibition: The 3 day Annual Science exhibition was held from 12th August to 14th August. The topic this year was the "The world of Light". Many charts and exhibits explaining principles of Light prepared by the students with the guidance of the teachers were displayed. There was a puppet show about the Sun, which was the highlight of the exhibition. The topic was also dealt with in a totally different angle in the languages stalls



TCSers Quiz Competition

where charts about the life and sayings of great men who lighted up this world with their wisdom were displayed. Every year during the Annual Exhibition Sevalaya provides a forum to the nearby schools to display their students' talents. This year two neighbouring schools - The Government Higher Secondary School, Thiruninravur and Palavedu Government High School participated in the exhibition displaying their students' works. The exhibition was inaugurated by Mr.Ramar, Asst. Elementary Educational Officer, Thiruvallur, who evinced keen interest and went around each and every stall and listened to the children's explanations with interest. The chief Guests for the valedictory function on 14th August was Dr.Subaraman (Ex. HOD, Dept. of Physics) and Mr. B.Kumar (Asst. Professor, Dept. of Printing) of Anna University.

Stepping out into the world.... The first 3 toppers of our school in +2 have joined professional courses. Vinoth Kumar has joined Sri Ram Engineering College, Divya Bharathi has joined Sri Krishna Engineering College and Thaigarajan has joined Agriculture College in Trichy. In total 28 children have joined university education. Sevalaya is supporting them in pursuing their education.

Study Circle Meetings: On 6th August Mr. P. Narayanamoorthy reviewed the book Education authored by Mr. T.Avinasilingam. Mr. C.Ganesan took up Mahatma Gandhiji's Book For Students for review on 13th August. While Mr. P.Chinnaraj discussed Bharathiyars ideas on education in the meeting on 20th



August, Mr. K. Shanmugam shared his views on the book "Achievements of Sportsmen from Tamilnadu in the World Arena" on 27th August.

In the Students Study Circle meeting, S. Pugazhenthii spoke about a book in Tamil on Maha Alexander, written by Mr. J. John Durairaj, on 6th August 2005. Ashok Raja reviewed the book Padikkatha Methai Kamarajaridam Padikka Vendiyavai by Mr. R. Mathumayan on 20th August 2005, in Tamil.

Sports events: Our Junior team in Volley ball was the winner in the Zonal Level meet on 2nd August. In the individual events on 5th August K. Sathish came first in Long Jump, M. Arun Prakash secured III place in shot put and discus throw. In the 100 metres running race Rajesh secured II place, in 200 metres K. Satish came III and in 400 metres, Santhakumar won the II place and Kumar won the III place. P. Shakthi secured III place in shot-put. In the 4x100 relay race our team – Rajini, Luggesh, Sathish and Azhagiri came I. In all a total of **13** prizes were won by Sevalaya in the zonal competition. In the district level Sarojini Bai Henry Memorial Cup Kho-Kho Competition held by Nazareth College of Arts and Sciences on 24th and 25th August our girls under 16 team were the winners. They were awarded a Rolling Cup.

Temple Visits: 20 residents of the Old Age Home were taken on a tour to the temple



towns Chidambaram, Seerkazhi, Thiruvengadu and Swamimalai on 27th and 28th August.

The Hostel girls were taken on visit to the Vinayaka Temple at Ramanathapuram village on 05/08/2005. The Hostel boys went to the same on 19/08/2005.

Training & Development: Mr. S. S. Nagarajan and Mr. Kumari Chezhan spoke to the students of Agriculture Group in +1 & +2 about modern & improved techniques in agriculture and organic farming on 6th August. They spoke to the farmers of the village on the same topics on 13th August.

In collaboration with NABARD a 2 months free course in Advanced Training in Tailoring and Embroidery for the rural poor women was conducted from 04/06/2005 to 31/07/2005. In addition to the tailoring classes, many lectures were organized for the trainees. Mr. P. Srinivasan spoke to them about Entrepreneurship and setting up of small scale units, Mr. V.M. Mandiram spoke to them about Swami Vivekananda, Mr. Mohan on Gandhiji, Mr. Muthiah Ramanathan on Personality Development and Ms. Sudha Shah of Canara Bank and Dr. J. Vasanthakumari on the availability of loans from Banks to start their own units.

The feedback from the trainees was positive and encouraging. A group of the trainees have already launched their own tailoring Unit.

On the last bit of Indian rock

Young Narendranath was an ardent questioner. "Have you seen God?" is the question always on his lips whenever he came across a spiritual personality. He was of the view that if God really existed, he should surely appear in answer to the sincere prayer of devotees. His question remained unanswered for long. Can anybody claim to have seen God?

At Dakshineswar, Narendranath could get a positive answer to the question that was haunting his mind. Sri Ramakrishna said, "Yes, I see him just as I see you here. God can be realised, one can see and talk to Him as I am seeing and talking to you. If one weeps sincerely for Him, He manifests Himself." In fact, by the Grace of the guru, Naren got a vision of Goddess Kali and experienced Nirvikalpa Samadhi (Transcendental Bliss) for his request for the permanent grant of that ineffable peace, Sri Ramakrishna chided him and said, "Just as a treasure is locked up in a box, so will this realisation you have just had, be locked up and the key shall remain with me. You have work to do. When you have finished MY work, the treasure box will be unlocked again." What was the Guru's work that Naren had to accomplish? It was Service to all creatures recognising that all creatures are God.

However after the mahasamadhi of Sri Ramakrishna, Naren's hands were full of tasks-tasks to be immediately undertaken-like finding a shelter for the co-disciples, establishing the Math and educating the gurubhais not only in religious texts but in secular knowledge like Economics, sociology, literature, Indian and Western Philosophy etc., so that they do not remain frogs in the well. Again he had a burning desire to move around the country as a parivrajaka (wandering monk) gaining experience. The passion for Nirvikalpa Samadhi had not also died down in him.

He wandered around the whole country, nameless and identity-less with only a staff and Kamandalu in his hands. Many times he had been in the jaws of death. On occasions, he took

shelter in caves. He was starving, foot-sore and weary. He had faced danger and humiliation. It was during this period of wandering he had seen with his own eyes, the ignorance, misery and the squalor of people. His whole soul was afire and he was burning with a fierce desire to change such evil conditions. His mind was a burning cauldron. He had to throw it all up and save the motherland. What held him back was his irrepressible urge for transcendental bliss. Now, he needed to meditate in a tranquil atmosphere. What a better place could there be for such a sacred purpose than the "Sripada Parai" sanctified by the Tapas of the Virgin Goddess to win the hands of Lord Siva? Having no money to pay to the boatman, he swam across the two-furlong stretch of the turbulent ocean.

Sitting on the last stone of India, he meditated on the present and the future of the country. India had been in the pinnacle of glory. -And now it has fallen into the depths of degradation. In his own words, "At Cape Comorin, sitting in Mother Kumari's temple, sitting on the last bit of Indian rock, I hit upon a plan. We are so many sannyasis wandering about, and teaching people metaphysics-it is all madness- did not master use to say, "an empty stomach is no good for religion?" That these people are leading the life of brutes is simply due to ignorance. We have for all ages been sucking their blood and trampling them under foot."

The remedy was renunciation and service. The mendicants had to go from village to village disseminating education and seeking in various ways to better the condition of all down to the chandala. But from where was the money for all this to come? Yes, he would go to America in the name of India's millions, earn money by the power of his brain. Returning to India, he would devote himself for the regeneration of his countrymen.

Thus it was the last bit of Indian rock that proved to be the first step towards Swami Vivekananda's giant status as a prophet and a patriot.

FOR FREE CIRCULATION :

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

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