

# Valaya LOVE ALL SERVE ALL February 2015

# **Cognizant to fund Science Lab Project**

#### Laboratory infrastructure getting modernised and scaled up

Students of Sevalava's Mahakavi Bharathiyar Higher Secondary School will soon have access to a modern science laboratory, thanks to Cognizant Technologies coming forward to fund the modernisation and scale up of the laboratory infrastructure. The latest equipment and materials to be available will prove a boon to the children who are mostly first generation school goers receiving quality education free of cost.

The Cognizant funding of Rs.8.11 lakhs will create well equipped Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Computer Science laboratories, benefiting nearly half of the 2000 students of Sevalaya School, who are in the Middle/ High School and Pre Degree classes.

Sevalaya has enjoyed a long association with Cognizant and its leadership including N. Lakshmi Narayanan, Vice-Chairman and Satagopan Madhavan, CEO of the Cognizant Foundation. Both have been regular visitors to Sevalaya. Lakshmi Narayanan was supporting Sevalaya since 1989. Infact the furniture in the campus guest rooms were donated by him. The Foundation made a donation of Rs 7 lacs to furnish some classes. Rajashree Natarajan, Chief Operating Officer in the Foundation has been a personal donor from the beginning.

Physics, Chemistry and Botany labs were started in 2004, when the strength of of 6th to 12th std students using the

#### **Volunteers Wanted**

Sevalava is looking for students from Arts, Science and Engineering Colleges to serve as volunteers to help Sevalaya gain visibility in Colleges amongst the student community. If you are interested in giving your time for a noble cause, pls contact Radha Srinivasan @ 9884503039 or write to sevalayaprhead@sevalaya.org



Satagopan Madhavan, CEO, Cognizant Foundation handing over the cheque to V. Muralidharan, Founder and Managing Turstee

labs was 244. Since then, this is the first instance of equipment replacement and upgradation. The labs have suffered obsolescence and capacity constraints. The user group has grown from 224

to 922 currently. So the size up, with addition of equipment, will greatly benefit the children and will enable them to appreciate the role of science in meeting the challenges of life. Science labs are an important facility for students to think, learn and exhibit their knowledge and understanding in a very practical way. Laboratory instruction provides training in observation, supplies detailed information, and arouses pupils'

The complete project would be executed in a month's time. So, come the new academic year, a brand new lab awaits the children, challenging their curiosity and adding wind under the wings of these young minds to soar and reach, who knows, new regions of scientific knowledge.



## Hindu Spiritual & Services Fair

Sevalaya is participating in the 7th Hindu Spiritual & Services Fair from 3rd to 9th February 2015, from 9:30 AM to 8:00 PM, at A.M.Jain College Grounds, Meenambakkam, Chennai 600114. Please visit the stall and support Sevalaya.

#### **Donations** now through Card Payment

You can now make a difference in a child's life by simply swiping your card. Sevalaya now accepts donations at its City Office @ Mylapore and Campus Office @ Kasuva, Thiruninravur, through Card payment.

# Joy of giving: the way of life

Dear Friend,

Chitra Muralidharan is an insurance agent in Thiruninravur. She has an office in Thiruninravur main road and many people in Thiruninravur go and meet her and discuss their insurance plans and take policies. She also helps Sevalaya now and then. She talks to her friends and bring more people to visit Sevalaya. Seeing her interest in helping the organization, we had requested her to keep some pamphlets of Sevalaya and a "Hundi" (donation box) in her office. She readily agreed and kept them in her

One day she had a visitor who came along with his ten year old son. As they were discussing the insurance options, the son

kept disturbing his father. After sometime, the father got irritated and asked his son what he wanted. "Give me a ten rupee note" was the demand of the son. Father ignored him and continued his discussion. But the son was not giving up. "What do you want to buy now?" asked the father not able to tolerate the disturbance. Son didn't answer that question but kept asking for ten rupees. Finally as there was no other go, father gave up and took out his wallet and pulled out a ten rupee note and uninterestedly handed over to his son. The father was expecting his son to run out of the office, go to the next shop and buy some cookies etc., but to the surprise of everyone there, the child went near the Sevalaya donation box and dropped the note.

"Why did you do that?" asked the father. The son was very happy with what he had done; with all smiles he answered "There are so many children like me in Sevalaya. See the pictures in this pamphlet. Many of them don't have fathers like I have. If I want anything I will ask you. Whom will they ask? How will they celebrate Pongal? They should all get new clothes, sweet pongal, sugar cane and whatever we all get. That is why this box is kept here. I want to help them". May be a child understands the requirement of another child better.

Wish you a very happy Pongal.

Thanks & Regards

Murali

# Modern Gau-shala getting ready



Bhoomi Pooja of the New Gau-shala building was held on 3rd January 2015. This new Gau-shala is being sponsored by Rajiv Bharwani of Hongkong and will be built on 6400 sq.ft with seperators between each cow. There will be dividers facilitating the cow to directly drink water and feed on the fodder. The cow dung and urine will be separately collected. The dung will directly go into the bio mass drum. The urine will be diluted by the water flowing out while cleaning the floors and will be sprayed as fertilizer in the agricultural fields of Sevalaya.

Seperate staff quarters for the staff of Gau-shala is also planned. Vermicompost beds are planned seperately and a separate stage to conduct Gau-pooja will also be constructed in this new Gau-shala.

#### **Thanksgiving to Sun God**

The Pongal urn was lit by C. A. Jeyakumar (Senior Branch Manager, LIC of India, Thiruvallur) and Chitra Muralidharan, Chairman's club member, LIC Mini Office, Thiruninravur. Speaking at the occasion Jeyakumar said that the children of Sevalaya are given a good opportunity to know about the importance of all the religions through various celebrations. He urged the children to give their best in whatever profession they take up quoting Bill Gates who has asserted that even if he were to be a sweeper he would strive to be the best sweeper. Jeyakumar distributed free books to 30 children studying in English medium section of the school.



Chitra Muralidharan lighting the Pongal

#### **Maattu Pongal Celebrations**

"When I took over the shop after my parent's demise, I expanded the business and now that small "idli kadai" has branches all over the country and also outside the country. Commitment, perseverance, striving for excellence and



above all self discipline, will make any business a success." Said S.Manoharan, proprietor, Murugan Idli Kadai while speaking in a function organized by Sevalaya on the occasion of Mattu pongal on 16th January 2015, in Sevalaya campus.

Sweet Pongal, banana, jaggery and rice were offered to 50 dry cows housed in Sevalaya Goshala. Gau-pooja was also conducted. Destitute dry cows, left to wander in the streets are worshipped in Sevalaya. Orphan and destitute children and senior citizens of Sevalaya homes, many villagers and people from Jain community in Thiruvallur participated in the celebrations.

## Lotte Choco Pie's support for the education of ten children



Sun Wang Woo, Vice President of Lotte handing over the cheque to our alumnus Srinivasan

Lotte Choco Pie has been supporting Sevalaya for the past few years. The organization regularly donates Choco Pies to the children of Sevalaya homes for the past few years. The Factory Manager Ravishankar came to know about Sevalaya through Sreenivasan, an alumnus of Sevalaya. Sreenivasan had stayed in Sevalaya's hostel and studied in Sevalaya School. Today he runs a pest control company and Lotte Choco Pie is one of his prestigious clients.

Impressed with the activities of Sevalaya Lotte Choco Pie decided to partner with Sevalaya for their CSR Project. On 30th December 2014, Vice President of Lotto Choco Pie Sun Wang Woo along with Factory Manager Ravishankar and Production Manager Ravi visited Sevalaya and handed over a cheque for Rs 60000/towards sponsorship of educational expenses of 10 underprivileged children of Sevalaya for a year. Sreenivasan received the cheque on behalf of Sevalaya.

Also present in the function was S. D. Lee, Managing Director of Sarada Motors Ltd, He said that the children were his friends and he promised to make regular visits to Sevalaya to meet his friends.

#### PPG Asian Paints staff have unique birthday party

PPG Asian Paints employees and management came up with a unique idea for their employee engagement programme. They placed a *Hundi* in their office canteen and employees, on their birthday, would drop their contributions in the *hundi*. At the end of the year the management would match the employees' contribution. This will be part of their company's CSR project.

On 27th Dec, nearly 120 employees from PPG Asian paints, Sriperumbudur plant visited Sevalaya. They spent the whole day with the kids and the senior citizens, conducting various games, plays and



Plant Manager of PPG Asian Paints, Om Prakash V. Baskar handing over the cheque to V. Muralidharan, Founder and Managing Trustee.

story telling sessions. They served special

lunch to the children and senior citizens with sweets and ice-creams.

The plant manager Omprakash V. Baskar handed over Rs 1.20 lakhs as the contribution collected during the year. The HR Manager A.R.Ariraj was all praise for their employees who willingly took part in this unique birthday party. V. Muralidharan, founder and managing trustee of Sevalaya explained that the contributions from PPG Asian paints is helping seven underprivileged children to take up higher education.

Very meaningful birthday party indeed!

### Swami Vivekananda Exam – prison residents also participate



Swami Vivekananda's Birth Day was celebrated at the Sevalaya's Service Center, in a grand manner. In order to inculcate the ideals and values preached by Swamy Vivekananda, among school and college students and prisoners, Sevalaya has been conducting State Level free open book examination and awards

prizes to the state level toppers during Swamiji's Birthday celebrations. This year winners of the prizes from all over the state and jail officials participated in the function and received the prizes. Kalpana Bai, Principal, Hindu college graced the occasion as the Chief guest. She appreciated the efforts of Sevalaya

to motivate thousands of youngsters to follow the ideals preached by Vivekananda and stated that the school and college students are the "Heart Of India". "Vivekananda is still living in the hearts of youth of India. India has a great tradition and Swami Vivekananda 's works brings out the greatness of our mother land" she mentioned.

The prison official from Cuddalore jail mentioned that such competitions held for prison residents will make them read self improvement books and improve their self image. He said that the prisoners were very happy to participate in a state level competition and win prizes. "Such programmes will go a long way in helping them to reform themselves.", he said.

#### Volleyball tourney on Mattupongal day

50 teams take part and hundreds gather to cheer

Sevalaya organized a volley ball tournament for village youth. 50 teams from 22 villages participated in the tournament. For the village ladies, Rangoli competition was conducted and ladies from 40 villages participated. Volleyball team from Velliyur village emerged as champions and cups and medals were presented to top three teams. Winning ladies in the rangoli competitions were presented sarees.

The medals and the cups for the winners were sponsored by Henrey Maris, Secretary of Nazareth College of Arts and Science.

Sevalaya has been conducting annual volleyball tournament for the past 15

L. Surendra Kumar, Inspector of C5 Police Station, Vengal being introduced to the team





Village women receiving the prize

years, coinciding with Pongal. Besides providing entertainment, this also has a social purpose. It was designed to divert the attention of rural youth from Jallikkattu, the bull fight popular in Tamilnadu during Mattu Pongal every year and give them an oppurtunity to prove their prowess. Volleyball is a non violent alternative and Sevalaya was successful in engaging nearly 1000 village youth for a full day in a meaningful sport.



#### Smokeless Bhogi to save the environment, the message has reached the villagers....

Year after year, for 25 years now, Sevalaya has organized Awareness rally on the need to celebrate smokeless Bhogi which has effectively driven home the message among the 38 villages in and around Kasuva. This has resulted in considerable reduction in burning of plastics in the villages. Children have been the major

agents of this change. This year the rally was held in Thiruninravur a town near Kasuva village. P. Chitra, Tahsildar of Thiruvallur district, flagged off the procession. Over 1000 students from various schools and colleges participated in the rally which started from Shanmuga Marriage Hall and ended in SR Marriage

hall in Thiruninravur.

Students carried placards and recited slogans urging people to avoid burning of garbage, plastics and other waste items and to distribute used clothes to the needy instead of burning them.







#### To talk to Gajendran is to realise the essential sameness of human life.

Gajendran's life story of 81 years has its share of achievements and proud moments, of deceit and grief, but he narrates it all with the objectivity of a contented person, almost as if it is the subject of some third party.

Gajendran was born in 1934, the fifth of nine children. His father was a lowly paid employee of the Corporation 's health department. So, at the age of nine, Gajendran found himself a job — mostly sweeping and some assistance in sales, at Premier Textiles opposite Rippon Building. His monthly salary was Rs 2.

ever so slowly, a fading album from an old Saravana Bhavan plastic cover, to show fading black and white photos. They show a handsome Gajendran in floral silk shirts, sporting gold-rimmed glasses. and spreading clothes with a flourish, to entice the VIP customers. It fell on him to vist their homes to deliver the clothes.

Gajendran got his opportunity to meet the then Chief Minister MGR in connection with a function to honour script writer N S Krishnan on his passing away in 1957. From then on, Gajendran used to visit MGR's Royapettah house Gajendran was selected as a trusted aide to do night duty for 15 days in Royapettah Government Hospital. After he recovered, MGR presented Gajendran with thousand rupees. "I got them in hundred rupee notes. But I knew friends will ask and I could not have denied them. So I changed them into a thousand rupee note in 1970", explains Gajendran, proudly displaying it like a trophy.

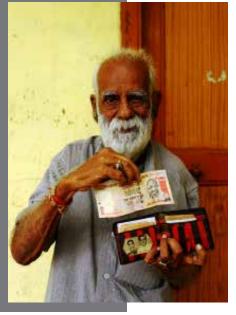
Gajendran got married around that time. The couple was childless. He lost his wife in 2000 and soon thereafter he reired from his job. Here on, the story turns even more sour. Gajendran narrates with controlled emotion how he lost a plot of land he bought with his life savings, cheated and driven out by his nephews, how he found himself a liability in the house of his obliging sister and how he joined Sevalaya in 2014.

He smiles through his white beard when he recounts his joy when Sevalaya children fuss around him, calling him "Grandpa, Grandpa". He is grateful to the Sevalaya management for the peace of mind he has regained — and for the satisfaction of helping bed-ridden residents.

It is three months since he got his monthly pension of Rs 1,000. Yet there is no rancor. Life has taught him to take with equanimity the sweet and the sour it offers.

Gajendran(right, foreground) attending to C N Annadurai, former CM of Tamil Nadu(left, foreground)

# The sweet and the sour are both the same for him



One day, while sweeping before the shop opened for business, he saw a five rupee note lying on the floor. He promptly returned it to the shop owner. This happened a few times. One day, he saw a hundred rupee note. Then he knew: he was being tested for his honesty. So when handing over the big note to the owner, young Gajendran told him: "Sir, please don't tempt and make me a thief." The owner was very happy that Gajendran passed his honesty test.

#### Serving VIPs

Slowly Gajendran's salary grew in proportion to his owner's growing trust in him, and reached RS 120. But supporting a family required more. So he joined another textile show room – Rattan Bazaar in Flower Bazaar) as a salesman. There he got to serve many famous people including former Chief minister C N Anna Durai and K Kamaraj as also then stars of the celluloid, Padmini and Jayalalitha. While recounting those proud moments, Gajendran takes out

every month, to deliver textile materials.

MGR was impressed by the young man. So much so that, shot at by M R Radha, when he was hospitalized in 1967,



#### 20 free Engineering seats offered to Sevalaya students

The 66th Republic Day at Sevalaya was an event filled day with a blood donation camp, career counselling programme and Farewell party to the outgoing XII students.

The Chief Guest Sujith Kumar, HR, Infosys hoisted the National Flag. In his address to the students he insisted on the importance of attitude and dreaming big to achieve success in life.

He spoke about his growth from a humble beginning to a successful career in HR which was both interesting and inspiring. Later he conducted a career counselling session to the students of Standard XII and the alumni. The children presented a cultural programme on the

occassion. Sujith has offered to get 20 engineering seats free, including hostel facilities to the top 20 rankers in Sevalaya. The alumni association of Sevalaya in association with The Indian Red Cross Society organised a blood donation camp at the Mahatma Gandhi Medical Centre. 55 people including alumni and villagers donated blood. The association also donated Rs.22,000. Raja Sriram, Rotary Assistant Governor, Muthu Palaniappan, District Chairperson for Rotary foundation and Julian from Snegam, a voluntary association of Infosys employees also participated.

A Farewell party to the outgoing XII standard students was held. The alumni

and teachers addressed the students and wished them success in their XII standard examination. Some students shared their experiences in school.







#### London Charity Harrow Desis to sponsor 13 children's education

When Sujatha Renganathan, a practising accountant in London, founded Harrow Desis in 2008, it was her way to keep up her passion for music and dance. Harrow Desis soon became a great platform to celebrate Diwali as a group through cultural events. 'This is a lovely way to demonstrate that the tradition and culture would never be forgotten even though we Desis are miles away from our homeland', says the Founder.

In 2013 Sujatha lost her friend Hina,

then just 37, to cancer. "I realised that the best tribute to Hina would be to give back to the community in whatever way one could - and to bring a smile to the less fortunate, through collective contributions", recollects Sujatha. Thus, 2014 not only saw the fifth anniversary of Harrow Desis but also its registration as a community interest company intent on helping the community to fully participate and integrate with the society. Preeti Vanchinathan joined Sujatha in

2014 and has been extending strong support in administrative and IT affairs.

The first charity event was a Ladies' midnight walk and Harrow Desis raised £1058 in aid of St.Lukes' hospice in June 2014

Sevalaya was introduced to Sujatha by Annapoorni Panchanathan, a longstanding donor from UK. The annual Diwali event on Oct 11 was held in support of Sevalaya and an endowment was set up to support the educational expenses of 13 Sevalaya children. Harrow Desis have commited their continued support to Sevalaya. After being briefed about the activities of Sevalaya, quite a few businessmen belonging to the local Indian community have promised to join hands with Harrow Desis next year.

Having only heard about Sevalaya, the members of Harrow Desis eagerly await their visit to Sevalaya Campus on their next trip to India.



#### **Class on Value Education**



A long standing supporter Narasimhan of Sri Sathya Sai Trust spoke to the 150 children of std XI on "Education Through Values" on 10th January 2015.

# Hony. Correspondent a panelist



Sevalaya's Hony. Correspondent, Bhuvaneswari Muralidharan, was invited by BNY Mellon to be a Panel speaker in the panel discussion at the Women's Symposium on the topic, "Purposeful Life – Living and following your dreams", as part of their 10th Anniversary Celebrations held in Hotel Radisson Blu on 13th Dec 2014. She spoke about her journey as a Hony. Correspondent of Sevalaya, the challenges faced by organizations like Sevalaya from society and how students in the current generation can contribute with passion to serving the poor and the needy .

#### **Visit to Science Center**

On 19th January 2015, 20 science teachers visited Science Centre in Ramakrishna Higher Secondary School, T. Nagar. This was a good observation visit for the staff who inturn wanted the children also to gain knowledge about the centre. Hence, 40 students along with 2 science teachers visited the centre.

# Shrine Velankanni Alumni meet

The Shrine Velankanni High School Alumni club organised their Alumni meet on 28th December 2014. They had invited V. Muralidharan, Founder and Managing Trustee of Sevalaya as a Special Guest for the function.

Nearly 50 Alumni and teachers participated in the programme and handed over a cheque of Rs. 45,000/- for 15 Black boards to Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiyar School.



**Herbal Garden** 



K. M. Girish, Resource Associate of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) plantiing a herbal tree during the inauguration of the Herbal Garden. This garden is supported by TERI.



Marianand's Art Gallery inauguration by V. Muralidharan



V. Muralidharan was the Guest Speaker in the National Level Nursing Conference held in Chettinad College of Nursing on 23rd January 2015.

#### **Train Friends group**

PAASAM (acronym of Pattabiram Siding Avadi Madras) train friends is the apt name of the group of co travellers on the Pattabiram Military Siding to Chennai Central route. Drawn from varied vocations, these 36 friends had one unifying thought: How to serve the needy in the community? For the last 14 years they have been visitors to Sevalaya. Recently they were at the campus on 18th January 2015. D. Guru Pandian who represents the team says: "When we decided to help the people we found Sevalaya to be the right place we hope to extend our support to the organisation till our last breath. We 36 members along with our family visit and entertain the children. This is a very small support from our side but we are happy that we could make others

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#### Good for evil done!

Gandhiji regrets that he was taught all sorts of things in school except religion. What he picked up on the subject was from his surroundings. Of course he means religion in its broader perspective-understanding Self. He was initiated in to the efficacy of Rama nama by his affectionate nurse who suggested it to him as an antidote for fear of darkness and ghosts. He chanted the same more out of faith in the nurse than in the nama. Of course, in later days, by his own intuition and experience he found the name efficacious in trying circumstances. Rama nama was on his lips even during his last breath.

Gandhiji remembers to have been enraptured by the reading of Ramayana by a scholar. This led to deep love for Tusidas Ramayana as a divine literature. Bhagawad Gita did not impress him in earlier days, but he developed reverence for the scripture

after listening to Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya later in life. Congregation of people of various faiths in his house led him toward toleration of different religions. It was mere tolerance; in fact, he did not have living faith in God during very early stages in life. Manusmrithi least impressed him.

However, by his exposure and experience, he developed his own views on ethics and religion."Love Thine Enemy" became a living philosophy for him. Let us hear Gandhiji:

But one thing took deep root in me-the conviction that morality is the basis of things, and that truth is the substance of all morality. Truth became my sole objective. It began to grow in magnitude every day, and my definition of it also has been ever widening.

A Guajarati didactic stanza, likewise, gripped my mind and heart. Its preceptreturn good for evil-became my guiding principle. It became such a passion with me that I began numerous experiments in it. Here are those (for me) wonderful

For a bowl of water give a goodly meal;

For a kindly greeting bow thou down with zeal;

For a simple penny pay thou back with gold;

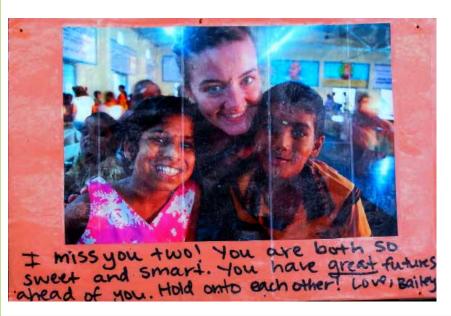
If thy life be rescued, life do not withhold.

Thus the words and actions of the wise regard;

Every little service tenfold they reward. But the truly noble know all men as one,

And return with gladness good for evil done.

## Pictures such as these capture marvellous human bonding. Framed, for life



It keeps happening in Sevalaya.

Young people from far off nations come to Sevalaya with the intent to serve. Here they find their mission, and engage meaningfully, by adding value in very many ways.

Many of them are fascinated by the simple ways of rural living and the unpolluted air.

But nothing binds them for good with Sevalaya as much as the friendships they develop with Sevalaya children. These friendships do not end with the ofter misty eyed - if not tearful farewells. The children are gladdened to receive letters - and photos such as this from French volunteer Baily.

The volunteers also become ardent ambassadors for Sevalaya, garnering support in distant lands.

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