



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

September 2014

Donors respond to Sevalaya children's needs

Cycles to make commuting easy and safer for 37 children

Sevalaya, functioning for the past 26 years, has created a niche for itself in Thiruvallur district. The school children have been getting 100% results continuously due to the good infrastructure and efforts of the dedicated, committed staff. As a result, underprivileged children from far flung villages are keen to join the school. They are ready to walk long distances to come to this school and often reach home often after sunset. When these children are promoted to higher classes the situation worsens as they have to come earlier or stay back for special classes.

A few months back Sevalaya's news - letter carried an appeal requesting funding for cycles, to make commuting easier and safer for Sevalaya's children who cover long distances daily. Many children had been repeatedly asking their class teachers for some help. Sevalaya has great faith in its donors who have always stood by the organization and so it was decided to appeal to them. The results were seen soon enough.

32 children of Sevalaya's school were given cycles by kindhearted donors on

9th August 2014. V. V. S. Ravindra and G. DuraiPandian, employees of TCS and regular donors of Sevalaya, along with their friends, donated these cycles. Earlier V. Ramiah, another longstanding donor donated a cycle for a girl. Donors from Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiithi, Besant Nagar and friends from Caring Souls Trust India also donated 2 cycles each to four children.

Vijayaraghavan, a student of Std VIII comes from Sembedu village which is nearly 10 kms from the school and the village does not have proper bus facility.

The bright boy is a member of all talent clubs. To excel in these he used to come to the school early in the morning and leave very late from school. After he was given the cycle he was so happy that he shared his joy with us. "I am proud to study in the school. This school has helped me to learn many things. I have lost my parents and the school is everything for me. Now for all the classes I can come on time and reach home on time. Thanks for the school which has given me everything."



The June 2014 issue of the newsletter had highlighted the daily problem of commuting faced by Sevalaya school children living a fair distance away.

It triggered immediate responses, with promise of cycles for the children, from many quarters.

Already, for 37 children, commuting has become less strenuous. They are also finding more time for studies and leisure.



The result

The response

The appeal

Joy of giving: *the way of life*

Dear Friends,

Ratnaboi is an eighty year old widow living in a small village Anjalikadavu near Kanyakumari. She is uneducated and so was her husband. Her husband passed away twenty years ago. Her children have left the village for better opportunities and the widow is staying alone in the village, because she has a purpose to serve.

Anjalikadavu is a very small village and there is no school there. There is a river passing through the village, which they call Thamirabharani. Although Thamirabharani passes through Thirunelveli, this small river is also called by the same name. But the river is sixty feet deep. If the villagers have to reach the school on the other side of the river, they have to travel twelve kilo meters, to use a bridge. But if they can cross the river by a boat, it is only half a kilo meter. Because of this issue, the

previous generations in this village had no education. Then Ratnaboi's husband offered to run a boat service for the villagers and then the children took the boat, crossed the river and went to school. This also gave the family of Ratnaboi a small income to support them.

For years together this was the only job for Ratnaboi's husband, but he fell ill and died twenty years ago. At that time, the problem surfaced once again – how will the children cross the river and go to school? Eventhough it was a great personal loss for Ratnaboi, at the time when she lost her husband, she saw the problem of the village too. Her generation remained uneducated as there was no access to school, but because her husband offered to run the boat, atleast the next generation had the opportunity to go to school. Why should it stop now? She readily offered to continue her husband's service. Her sons, by now grown up and

moved to nearby better villages, asked her to leave the village and go with them so that she can get a better life. But Ratnaboi refused to move out of the village and said that she will continue what her husband was doing and help the children to go to school.

Now twenty years have passed, Ratnaboi is eighty years old, but she is not tired. She continues to run the boat, but as her sons are well settled, she is not dependant on the income from the boat service; she is running it almost free. If anyone forces her to accept money, she just takes one or two rupees only, just to satisfy the giver!

This poor old lady in an unknown village is in all smiles when she says "This is my contribution to my village's education".

Happy Saraswathi Pooja.

Thanks & Regards

Murali

"This place gives me extreme satisfaction"

A. Sankarapandian, the Physical Director of Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiyar Higher Secondary School since 2003, is proud of his work in Sevalaya. His contribution is much more than that of a normal school Physical Director. His daily routine starts with prayer for the hostel children in the morning at 5.30, then their Yoga practice till 7. After that he returns to the school and helps in student's assembly and regular physical education class.

In the middle of his work as teaching staff, he is pulled out to be the guide to donors when they visit Sevalaya. Donors who come to the campus are taken round the campus to understand the activities of Sevalaya. Sankarapandian is popular with the donors since he patiently explains each and every small detail. "I want the donors to understand how Sevalaya was started, what Sevalaya is and its activities so that when they leave Sevalaya they know the best way to be of help to Sevalaya".

Anupriya Suresh, the campus coordinator in the office recalls an incident "Once a donor visited the Sevalaya campus and said that he wanted to meet Shankar. I told him there was no staff by that name and offered to help in whatever way I can but the donor was very stubborn



A. Sankarapandian
Physical Director

and said that he wanted to talk to Shankar only. I did not know what to do and then I suddenly realized he was referring to Sankarapandian. The minute Sankarapandian came into the office, the donor got excited and started talking to him as if he were a close relative of his."

Impact

This is the great impact that Sankarapandian has on the donors. He says: "Sevalaya is the place which gives me full happiness and I'm extremely satisfied with the work that I am doing. I can see the good impact this organization has on the development of the villages. That is what makes me want to stay with

this organization".

He is a very motivating person by nature. This motivation has made many of the children to show much interest in sports and has brought laurels to the

Sankarapandian packs a lot in a typical day, starting with leading the prayer for the hostel children at 5.30 AM

school in district level too. Without even a basketball court he had trained girls for basketball and made the team good enough to reach the district level competitions. This is the spirit that Sankarapandian shows on sports.

Sankarapandian got a Government job few years back in a School as Physical Education Teacher in his home town Sankarankoil. He served there for 1 1/2 years and left the job for lack of job satisfaction. He says "There was no job satisfaction and it was very monotonous. Hence I left the job."

This personality always remains in the minds of everyone and when a donor comes to the office, everyone remembers "PT SIR".

Indian heritage in focus at Sevalaya Expo 2014

At Sevalaya, Annual Exhibitions are gala affairs with all the staff and students enthusiastically working to make them better each year, and in an eco-friendly way. Models and other exhibits are made with natural things as far as possible, like clay, stones and plants, with minimal use of thermacol and other non-degradable materials.

Spread over 26 class rooms, this year's Expo focused on 'Ancient India's Heritage and Culture'. The Social Department put up displays of the earliest civilizations including Indus Valley Civilization, Vedic age, Gupta and Mauryan age. The lifestyles and governance during those periods and architectural achievements were highlighted. The Science Department explored discoveries of the ancient Mathematicians, Scientists like Aryabhatta and Bhaskara and how they could calculate the circumference of the earth, distance of the earth from other celestial bodies and the speed of light. The exhibits dealt with their grasp of Gravitational force, relative motion, decimal system and calculus as also the discovery of zero. Agricultural department focused on land types, modes of agriculture, fertilizers used and crops cultivated in the earlier age. The Literature department focused on the greatness of Sanskrit Language, the glory

of Tamil and the various great works in these two languages. Yoga, lifestyles, food, clothing, fine arts and games of the earlier ages were also covered exhaustively.

Held on 15th August 2014, it was open to all the schools in Tiruvallur district. Amutha Matriculation School and St. Claret from Thiruninravur, Sriniketan from Thiruvallur displayed their exhibits and children from 4 others schools visited the exhibition.

Holistic development

Exhibitions and projects are a part of all schools today specially as Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) is being implemented across the State. Education has shifted from the listening mode to an active one.

These exhibitions also bring out the latent talents in children. Many discover their colouring or calligraphy model making skills. Many a quiet, shy child becomes more confident and opens up when creating exhibits with the teachers. The rigid classroom atmosphere gives way to bonhomie as staff and students work together laughing, talking, joking – and hurrying to complete things on time. The eve of the inauguration is like a family affair with all the staff from other teams also pitching in to complete the work.

250 children were involved in manning the displays. As the children explain their models they develop self confidence to answer questions put by visitors. They learn from other exhibits on display. They also learn many life skills : team work, communication , problem solving , interpersonal relations, emotional maturity and the like. Exhibitions truly provide a platform for a holistic development of the child.



Vidiyal – The dawn that brings them joy

Students at Sevalaya enjoy their Library period but what doubles their joy is Vidiyal the manuscript magazine prepared by the students themselves . As soon as a new monthly issue is released, they crowd round it to find out if their creative outputs have found a place in it or to see their friends' writings/pictures

Children look forward to the arrival of the manuscript magazine in the library.

Vidiyal has been published uninterrupted since 1996.

in it. Faces break into proud grins when one sees ones creation in that issue and friends peep in to get a glimpse. One such alumni of Sevalaya Abirami discovered her artistic talents thanks to Vidiyal. Later, with support from Sevalaya , she completed her BA in Fine Arts and contributes professional quality illustrations for Lionbridge Technologies.

Beginning

In 1996, Managing Trustee V. Muralidharan talked about the manuscript monthly journal his group of friends used to publish in their college days, to express their ideas and their opinions on events and trends. The staff felt that providing such an opportunity to the students would help tap their creative talents.

Children were told to submit their writings, paintings and the like .There was a brain storming session on naming the magazine . Muralidharan suggested that since it was a new beginning, a new

dimension being added to the children's learning, it could be called Vidiyal (the dawn). Thus Vidiyal , an integral part of Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiyar Higher Secondary School , was born.

Improvements

Back then, the school was in its infancy and the number of students lesser. Each year only a couple of issues would be released. As the school grew more contributions poured in and the number of issues increased. The collection of articles, selection and production was being done by the Tamil faculty of the school. Then in 2003-04 one of the volunteers P. D. Narayanaswamy with



randomly while some staff would give certain themes for the monthly project. Some of the good articles were sent to newspapers and children's magazines and got published. Issues focused on specific subjects/themes helped improve the children's general knowledge. The school used to select specific areas of improvement each year based on which a slogan would be chosen for the year and many of the Vidiyal issues of that year would be linked to this. Later on, the festivals celebrated that month as also other issues of national/international importance in that month were taken up as themes for the month and this has been continuing till date.

Every student of Sevalaya gets an opportunity to display his/her abilities as the topics for the month are announced well in advance and staff also motivate the children to present their contributions. The group of teachers in charge of Vidiyal for that particular



similar interests involved himself in this project. He got together a group of talented, interested students and formed them into an editorial board and taught them some basics such as writing an editorial and , listing contents . For some time this group under his supervision took charge of the creation of Vidiyal and groomed juniors to take over when they had to prepare for board exams .By now the strength had grown and number of staff too had increased with many with new ideas and thoughts and all the staff got involved in this creative work.

This started a new period with the staff taking up this project every quarter on rotation .Students in primary classes also started contributing their work.

When Sevalaya was part of British Council's Global School Project from 2009-2013, Sevalaya's partner school Cunnigham Hill Junior School also contributed articles for Vidiyal.

Earlier the articles would be written



month also get a chance to exhibit / exercise their creativity which reflects in the way they select the themes for the month and execute, the lay out and design of the issue etc., Class leaders also exercise their leadership skills in getting maximum number of contributions from their class.

Vidiyal is thus a combined effort which brings out hidden talents in children, increases their self-confidence, sets them on the path of self- discovery and growth and contributes to their overall well-being .



Sevalaya film CD released



B. A. Kothandaraman, CMD, Viveks Ltd. releasing the first copy of the CD

A 20 minute documentary film on Sevalaya, titled 'Temple of Service', was released on 7th August 2014.

The functioning of Sevalaya mainly depends on the largesse of its huge donor base spread across the world. Most of the donors are not able to visit and see Sevalaya activities. For them, the film is a comprehensive presentation that also assesses the impact of Sevalaya's service to the community in the last 25 years.

Releasing the CD and speaking on the occasion, B. A. Kothandaraman, Chairman and Managing Director, Viveks Ltd said that Sevalaya's vision is truly justified by the activities that are being

conducted here. Also this generation of the rural underprivileged children have got a wonderful opportunity to study in a school like Sevalaya where moral values are inculcated in the children and various life skills taught along with the usual syllabus. He also felt happy to see that corporates like Scope International have generated initiatives to support Sevalaya.

The first copy was received by Lion G S Prahalada Rao.

Download Sevalaya documentary film, 'A Temple of Service' by visiting www.Sevalaya.org.

IOBians spend a day with the kids



Retired employees of Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) visited Sevalaya on 2nd August 2014, to spend a day with the children. They conducted games and other competitions to the children and distributed prizes to them.

The members from the group IOBians 6070 are employees of IOB during 1960 - 70. Said Panchapakesan, its Secretary: "We are happy at the opportunity to be part of Sevalaya team which is doing great service to the society".

Ramzan celebrations

Ramzan was celebrated on 8th August 2014. The Chief Guest for the function was Dr. K. V. S. Habeeb Mohammed, Vice President, Islamic Foundation Trust and Kunangudi Hanifa, Vice – President of Tamilnadu Muslim Munnatra Kazhagam.

In his speech Dr. Habeeb said that Sevalaya, while following the ideologies of great leaders like Mahakavi Bharathiyar, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi is inculcating good values in the children. According to a famous Chinese Proverb if children are taught to catch a fish rather than given a fish, they can fend for themselves in their future.



He also spoke about the importance of Ramzan fasting and how this fasting helps people learn and understand to see, speak & do good acts. He also hoped that the children would understand these values and live accordingly.

Sevalaya's Balakalakaars on stage



Balakalakaar is an initiative of the Chennai chapter of AIESEC. This year, children from 14 Children's Homes participated in day long cultural events and competitions. 560 children from Sevalaya participated in this event.

Independence Day Celebrations

Independence Day was celebrated at Sevalaya as a national festival. The day also witnessed a host of activities.

The flag hoisting was done by Sankar Krishnan, Deputy Head, Larsen and Tourbo Infotech Ltd. A classical musical concert by Lavanya Sundaraman Great Grand daughter of Carnatic Music legend Smt. D.K.Pattammal was also held. The artiste sang the patriotic songs of Mahakavi Bharathiyar which went well with the mood of the day and was enjoyed by the audience - children, old age home residents, villagers, staff and trustees.

In his address Sankar expressed his wish that Sevalaya should start a Goshala in his hometown Sundarapandipuram in Tenkasi district and spread the services wherever there is need. He remarked that the children studying here were fortunate to learn about great Satyagrahis, leaders who fought for our freedom through such varied programmes.

He then inaugurated the Annual Exhibition of Sevalaya.

Later, the foundation stone was laid for 300 ft compound wall in the campus. The compound wall is the project of the

employees of Lionbridge technologies who are planning to spend their spare time in helping with the construction of this wall.

The alumni of the school also took part in all the activities and had a meeting with their teachers and the Founder. The alumni have taken an initiative to collect money for the painting of the school and have actively participated in the painting of school walls and construction of compound wall.



They visited us...

Viveks Ltd

Celebrating their 50th Anniversary, Viveks are planning 50 service activities in 50 weeks. As part of this, the Viveks team visited Sevalaya on 28th June 2014 and conducted Games for the Children Home residents and gave away prizes to the winners. They also screened a movie for the children.

ABB

The ABB team of Sunil Upadhyaya, VP, Head – Zone Chennai and T. Govindhara-jan, Manager – HR & Admin visited the campus on 11th August 2014 as part of their CSR activity.

Asian Paints

M. Rajaram and P. M. Vinobha from Asian Paints visited Sevalaya campus on 13th Aug 2014. This followed the visit of V. Muralidharan, Thomas T Abraham and Radha Srinivasan to Asian Paints factory, where they met Capt. Naveen Kumar, Security Manager who showcased the CSR activities of Asian Paints in the neighbourhood.

L&T Construction



V.S. Ramana, GM - CSR & Construction Skills Training, L&T Construction along with the CSR team of R. RajaShekar, Subha Anand and V. Prashanth visited the Kasuva campus on 2nd August 2014.

This was followed by a visit by the Sevalaya team of V. Muralidharan, managing Trustee, Thomas T Abraham, Advisor and Radha Srinivasan, PR Head to L&T Construction Skills Training Institute (CSTI) on 6th August 2014. Activities of mutual interests were discussed with Dr.M.V.Venkatesan, Principal, CSTI.

Sevalaya Stalls

PR team put up stalls in Ceebros Park Vallasaravakkam on 16th August 2014 and at Indian Institute of Materials Management on 9th Aug 2014. M. R. Jambunaathan, City Head, received 2nd prize in the Chennai Quiz conducted in the event by noted historian, S. Muthiah.

Training tie up with MMA

Sevalaya has established a partnership with Madras Management Association (MMA) and have been given invites for all the MMA training programs. Radha Srinivasan and G. Thangapandian attended session by MMA on Rural Marketing on 7th Aug 2014.

HR training

16 Unit Heads from Sevalaya attended HR training with regard to Leadership skills and performance appraisal process at Kelsa Management Solutions Pvt Limited. It was a 3 hour training conducted by Bindhu Muralidharan and R. V. S. Sandhya. This is the first part of a two part programme.

"I am confident that I can soon give back to Sevalaya..."

S. Rajesh, who completed his XII in 2007 is an active alumni of Sevalaya. He is now a one man agency handling various services relating to the Income Tax department. The moment when all the staff of Sevalaya were asked to obtain PAN cards, the HM remembered Rajesh. He has maintained such a good relationship with all the staff.

Rajesh has now kept a *hundi* (donation box) for raising funds for Sevalaya. Rajesh has chalked out a plan to popularise the Sevalaya donation boxes in Kavanoor, which is a town near Kasuva village. He

Alumni Talk



S. Rajesh

plans to persuade all the big shops in town to keep them. That is his way of spreading the message about Sevalaya and garnering support.

"I was not in a position to give back anything to the organisation. But I have the confidence that I can do so in the near future."

He dedicates his growth to N. Annapurna, now Trustee, who was his English Teacher through his Std VI to XII classes.

"My English teacher had taught me the language well. Now, I can manage to a good extent when I go and meet people".

A birthday bash they enjoyed



N. Uvaraj presents the cheque to V Muradidharan

43 children from Sevalaya's Boys and Girls Home had a memorable day on 18th Aug 2014. They were on the guest list when Poorvika Mobiles and Fortunes Communication celebrated the birthday of their CEO N. Uvaraj, at GRT Temple Bay, Mahabalipuram. Uvaraj presented a cheque for Rs 1.29. lacs, covering the living expenses of the 43 children for six months. S. Shalini, a student of Std XI

recalls: "The place was magical. It is the first time I'm seeing such a place. The fire crackers were totally different. We enjoyed the dinner as well". For her friend J. Priya, "the most interesting experience was, we were all given masks and when the chief guest came into the room we removed the masks and sang *Happy birthday song*".

Generosity of an enlightened family

R. Kannan, a resident of USA decided to hold his son's *Upnayanam* (Holy Thread Ceremony) at their birth place Thiruninravur on 22nd August 2014. Kannan had specified in the invite itself that all gifts received would be donated to Sevalaya.

A great example of sharing and giving!



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September 11

Forget the terrorist connotation of September 11. To us it is a date to remember being the date on which the concept of Satyagraha was born. It was on this day in the year 1906 the Indian Community of South Africa assembled at the Empire Theatre building in Transvaal. They were agitated about a "Black ordinance" about to become law, which was humiliating to the Indian community. They were to pass a resolution that they would never submit to the Law and would suffer all the penalties attaching to such non-submission. One Seth Haji Habib in his emotional appeal advised all the members to take a pledge in the name of God.

While Gandhiji appreciated the spirit of Seth, his suggestion to take an oath put him on alert. He explained to the gathering the seriousness of taking an oath in the name of God. He said, "We all believe in one and the same God, the difference in nomenclature in Hinduism and Islam notwithstanding. To pledge ourselves or to take an oath in the name of God or with him as witness is not to be trifled with. If having taken such an oath we violate our pledge, we are guilty before God and man. A man who lightly pledges his word and then breaks it becomes a man of straw and fits himself for punishment here as well as hereafter."

He explained to the House that the punishments that could be meted out to them for disobeying the Law. He advised them to take a pledge in the name of God, only if they could withstand the hardships and still hold on to the pledge. As for himself he was determined to take the pledge and face the consequences come what may.

The House heard him with rapt attention and then all of them rose as one man to take the pledge. This struggle by holding on to Truth was later named as *Satyagraha* - a force which is based on Truth Love and Non Violence.

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-Sathya Sai Baba

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