



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

August 2014

Bhumi competitions: Sevalaya champs, 4th time

School team wins 19 prizes in 19 events



Sevalaya children with their overall championship trophy

Sevalaya kids have once again proved their ability to excel in extra curricular activities, just as they do in academics. They have won the Bhumi Nakshatra competition for the 4th consecutive year.

Bhumi Nakshatra is a competition held among NGOs across Chennai, in arts, cultural and sports. The competitions for arts and sports were held on 12th July 2014, wherein 45 NGOs participated.

There were 19 events and the Sevalaya kids participated in all of them. The events are designed to bring out the hidden talents of the children. In arts, the events included Clay modelling, Junk art, Face Painting, Collage, Rangoli and Pot painting. The students won prizes in Face Painting, Collage, Pot Painting and Junk art.

They also got an wonderful opportunity to prove themselves in Elocution, Pot Pouri, Story writing, Guess it, Quiz and Star of Nakshatra. The children got prizes in all the events in both senior and junior levels, signifying the reassuring continuity of abundant talent.

S. Vijayaraghavan, a Std VIII student of Sevalaya got the prestigious 'Star of Nakshatra Award'. Said a beaming Vijayaraghavan: "The confidence that

my teachers built in me and the holistic approach of education in our school has got me this award. In the competition, I had to show my overall talent in answering the questions the judges asked and performing whatever they asked me to do. I was able to do it very well only because of the confidence I have"

Sevalaya kids also got the Second prize in the group dance. The judges commended the song and the dance selection of



"The confidence that my teachers built in me and the holistic approach of education in our school has got me this award"

S Vijayaraghavan,
winner of Star of Nakshatra Award

Sevalaya team which helped the team bag the the prize.

Sharing her experiences, S. Roobini, a student of Std X who participated in group dance said, "We have been participating in group dance competition for the past two years but we did not get any prize. This time we were particular about the song selection and the dance movements. We bagged the second prize and we are happy for it".

The credit goes to the teachers who put in their best to train the children to excel in the events.



Joy of Giving: *the* Way of Life

Dear Friends,

We keep hearing many stories about freedom fighters struggling to get pension from Government. They struggled a lot against the foreign rule, lost everything in the fight, many lost their belongings, many lost their family life, the children were left to fend for themselves, etc. are heart melting stories of those brave men and women who fought for our country's freedom. It is really saddening to note that for some of the freedom fighters, the pension announced by the Government has not reached them and they run from pillar to post to get it. Many of them have died a natural death and their kith and kin are continuing their struggle to get what was legally due to their parents. What free India has to offer for its freedom fighters, is something to be pondered.

We see many Government projects – government office construction, road laying, and railway track laying etc., need private land. Government attempts

to take over the land by announcing compensation to the affected parties and in many cases the parties are not happy to accept the compensation and they go to court. Court procedure takes few years and till then the public work is halted. This delays many development projects and general public are put to lot of hardship.

But if someone decides to give rather than to take, both the above problems are sorted out.

Many may not even know that late Mr. Venkatarama Reddiar was a freedom fighter from Krishnarayapuram in Karur district. His family makes no claims from Government, but wants to contribute to the public good. 20 cents of land in prime location in Krishnarayapuram is owned by this family. Wife and daughter of the late freedom fighter recently met the district collector, Ms. S.Jayandhi and handed over documents relating to donation of this 20 cents of land for Government use – to build sub-treasury and sub-registrar

offices. It is heartening to note that late Venkatarama Reddiar played a lead role in the establishment of taluk office, library, and Government Higher Secondary School in Krishnarayapuram. Now his family is continuing that tradition by helping Government to set up other offices.

Ms. V. Muthulakshmi, wife of Reddiar just wants the buildings to be named after her husband. We are sure the Government will honor her request. Ms.V.Mala, daughter of Mr.Reddiar, is very happy that she is able to continue her father's work.

It is estimated that the present value of the land donated is Rs 50 lakhs (USD 84,000).

This is one more occasion for us to salute our freedom fighters. Happy Independence Day.

Thanks & Regards

Murali

New Office Room inaugurated



Left : Padmini Ramachandran , Managing Editor, Sudesi Current affairs inaugurating the new office room

Mr. V. Ramiah, Rtd. Senior Audit Officer, Indian Audit and Accounts Department and the donor for the new campus office inaugurated the room on 25th July 2014. Ganapathy Homam was conducted and on the occasion he also donated a cycle to G. Tamilselvi a student of Std VIII who comes from Melakondaiyar village which is 7kms away from her school, Sevalaya's

Mahakavi Bharathiyar Higher Secondary School.

The Chief Guest for the occasion Ms. Padmini Ramachandran, Managing Editor, Sudesi Current Affairs Magazine, appreciated the services provided by Sevalaya team and wished all the children to use the opportunity provided and

Below : V. Ramiah donating a cycle to G. Tamilselvi



succeed. She encouraged all the students to live in unity and understand the values that are inculcated through the BGV Syllabus followed in the school.

Education through Technology

Gone are the days when a teacher with a chalk in hand would explain concepts by writing /drawing on the blackboard to a group of students in front of him/her. The children too would be listening wide-eyed wondering how so much information was stored in their teacher's head. Today all the information one needs is virtually a click away and many a time students come to class with a lot of information about the day's lesson. So teaching methodologies have undergone changes and different techniques are adopted to capture the attention of the young ones.

One such method now in use at Sevalaya is the Video Conference classes which serve more than one purpose. To start with it brings in expertise from all corners of the world to a classroom in a remote hamlet. It provides a platform for dedicated, committed people to pitch in and contribute their mite in a noteworthy, noble task. It completely captures the full attention of the group of rural youngsters who are happy to learn from an uncle/aunt who is in some other part of the world/country—a place they have seen only in their geography maps.

Every Tuesday Shanthi Krishna of Bangalore tells a story in Tamil to the children of Std III. The children are more enthusiastic when the day comes and eagerly wait for the session to start. R. Devadarshini says, "I really feel happy when that aunty tells us a story. I don't take leave on Tuesdays, since I don't want to miss the class".

The good Samaritans don't just tell a story, they patiently answer the queries



Linked through technology the children listening to the story telling session of S. Dahad from United Kingdom.

put forward by the listeners whether they are relevant or not. One such story teller from UK went around with the laptop showing the children a typical English house.

The children of Std IV and V get an opportunity to participate in a story telling session in English every Wednesday.

S. Dahad from United Kingdom tells a story in English to the children and the sessions are very interactive. Children of class IX and XI learn English in a similar manner. G. Padmanabhan teaches English every Monday and gives assignments to the students. The children feel more interested in writing such assignments since they improve

their language skills.

Professors in Physics, Maths, Chemistry, well wishers of Sevalaya have expressed their willingness to contribute by taking such classes and Kasuva students will be taught by such eminent educationists from the different parts of the world making this hamlet literally a Global Village.

New gains from reliable connectivity

In a week 3 sessions on English for the children of higher class.

2 sessions of Story telling for the primary school children

2 sessions of Value Education

Health and Hygiene class by Lionbridge Volunteers

On 24th July 2014, Susheel. R, Arokia Dass and 10 volunteers from Lionbridge Technologies conducted Health and Hygiene classes for the children of Std IX and XI. The team was guided by the project director Prasanna Vishwanathan. The team in groups screened presentations on the importance and hygiene.

To encourage the students they conducted Drawing, Essay and Rangoli competitions and distributed prizes to the children. Products of HUL, Soaps, Handwash, Toothpaste were distributed to the children.



House of 5000 birds: trees creating bio-diversity



Sevalaya now has more than 300 trees - not counting the plants and shrubs - in the Kasuva campus spread in 15 acres. There is an old story behind these trees.

When Sevalaya was started in Kasuva village, in the area where the trees flourish today, there was a lone hall with a thatched roof and the area in front was barren with no shade to play or sit under. V. Muralidharan used to contrast the situation with his visit to the Pittsburg University in USA where the thick vegetation provided a natural green cover for the entire campus. Murali's words motivated the then English teacher N. Annapurna and her colleagues R. Vijaya and S. Mariyammal to change things. They suggested "green campus" as one of the goals while giving suggestions for the annual projects to be taken up. That was in the year 2002-2003. Soon few more members of the staff were ready to pitch in and pursue the goal.

Nurtured with care

So a collection drive was started. Interested staff voluntarily contributed the maximum they could spare. They went to Bhuvana nursery at Poonamallee, where there was a well wisher of Sevalaya. Like a group of excited children, the group of teachers went in the school van making plans of what to buy, places where the saplings are to be planted etc. When the well wisher at the Nursery heard about the project he made contributions from his side as well and Vijaya remembers how they brought back a van full of saplings of various kinds. An enthusiastic bunch of students and staff planted the saplings and watered them religiously, taking care, ensuring the tiny saplings were not

eaten up by the cattle . The growth of the saplings and their flowering were events keenly observed and enjoyed and even the tiniest harm to the fledging trees was not tolerated. Today they stand like sentinels, tall and strong, spreading their shade to comfort all who come to Sevalaya. In subsequent years the students of the Pasumai Padai club led by the Agriculture teachers and Biology teacher R. Vijaya planted many trees. From then on, it has become an annual practice to plant large number of saplings, both within the campus and in the nearby villages, on World Environment Day

Much before the awareness campaign of



the importance of trees started, Sevalaya had started spreading this message during various environment programmes. As a result, a love for trees is deeply entrenched in the hearts of many. The botanical names of the trees have been put up on the trees and provide useful information. Subsequently this played a leading role in Sevalaya receiving awards for Environment protection.

Mariammal says "We now have many trees in our campus which have many values. Almond, Banana, Lemon, Mango and *Karyasithi* are among them. A special mention should be made of the *Karyasithi* tree which absorbs more carbon di-oxide than other trees and produces oxygen. This helps to create fresh atmosphere around the school".

Herbal Garden

Another idea which sprung up in the minds of the science teachers while teaching related Bio lessons was the creation of a 'Herbal Garden'. When Vijaya and Mariyammal attended Care Earth Workshop, they decided to take up Herbal Garden as a project and along with



interested students took the plunge.

The result is a Herbal Garden which today has various plants including *Karpooravalli*, Basil, Lemon grass, Betel, Thulasi, Hibiscus, Aloe Vera, Banana, *Pirandai*, *Kizhanalli*, *Thumba*, *Kuppameni*, *Eruku*, *Siriyangai* and *Vallarai*.

The trees house around 5,000 birds and in the evening after 5:30 the still atmosphere gets charged with the chirping sound of these birds –a cacophonous harmony – that delights many of our visitors from the city.

“Women’s Empowerment through Education”



Women Empowerment through Education is the adult literacy project for women proposed by Anu Oza, one of the well-wisher of Sevalaya. It is being implemented in the villages near Sevalaya bywww the Gandhi Team of Sevalaya.

Kakakandigai and Bandikavanoor villages were identified and two animators were nominated in each villages. To make the

session more interesting the students of Sevalaya, who come from these villages were also involved in this project.

On 3rd June 2014, S. Nambi Varadarajan of Sevalaya interacted with the people of Kakakandigai and 40 women participated in the session. He explained the project. On 12th July 2014, the project was inaugurated in these two villages.

Stakeholder consultation

With a view to involving the neighbouring communities in all the services of Sevalaya, selected members of the community, G. Mahesh of BMS Motors, P. Mahesh of Raghavendra Offset Printers, Chandrasekaran of Chandru Studio, Dayalan of NRS Petrol Bunk, S. K. Ponnuswamy, G. Munuswamy , Dakshinamurthy, Raju were invited for a meeting at the Sevalaya campus on 29th June 2014. Sevalaya’s principles based on the three great leaders were shared with this core group. They were taken on a conducted tour of the entire campus.

Improving awareness

Centre Head A. A. Kingston then explained to the members about all the services provided by Sevalaya. Apart from the School providing free education to the village children, which is a well known service of Sevalaya, the members were also provided detailed information on the new medical centre and community college at Sevalaya. Surprisingly, awareness on these services has not reached many of the villages. The core committee was requested to spread information about these services in their respective villages.

On 27th July 2014, parents who showed interest in involving themselves in the activities of Sevalaya were invited for a meeting. The need to involve the village community in this service was stressed and the cooperation of the parents sought in making Sevalaya a movement in the villages.

600 benefit from medical camp

Sevalaya conducts regular health camps in the villages as well as in the school. This has benefitted many people. On 24th July 2014, in association with Udhi Eye Hospital, a camp was organized in Sevalaya’s Mahatma Gandhi Medical Centre. 300 children who were shortlisted from the initial check up conducted by volunteers, Justice Willis and Chambrey Ann were assessed by the doctors from Udhi Eye Hospital and spectacles were provided for the needed children.

SCOPE International also organized camp by Sankara Nethralaya and villagers of Vishuvakkam and Karikalavakkam were the beneficiaries of this camp. The camp was held on 10th and 18th July 2014, in these villages respectively. Around 200 people were screened and 30 people were referred for cataract surgery. Dental Camp was organized for the children of school. The doctors from Priyadarshini Dental College screened about 300 children.

115 villagers attended an Eye Camp at Pakkam village on 28th July 2014.



Sevalaya wins two awards at Seva Mela

Sevalaya's PRO, N. Ravichandran received the best NGO worker award and PR Head Radha Srinivasan's presentation about Sevalaya also won her an award during the Seva Mela 2014 organised by CIOSA, (Confederation of Indian Organizations for Service and Advocacy), Department of Human Rights and Duties Education and Ramanuja Trust on 25th and 26th July 2014 at Ethiraj College, Chennai

Sevalaya set up a stall explaining the

services rendered for the education of the poor and care for the elderly and animals. Sevalaya's various products were also displayed at the stall. The PR team participated in the competition conducted by the authorities and presented Sevalaya as a service organization under the theme "Human Rights". Various activities like sale of Craft items, games for the students and elders, Mehendi designing by the students of Community College and Palm Reading by the resident of the Old Age home, caricatures by Alumni of Sevalaya were the highlights of the event.

HSSF Fair



Union Cabinet Minister for Women and Child Development, Maneka Gandhi visiting the stall

The 6th annual fair was conducted by the Hindu Spiritual and Services Foundation from 8th to 14th July 2014 at Sri Ramachandra Medical Grounds, Thiruvanniyur, Chennai. Sevalaya participated in the Fair by setting up a stall, describing the various activities of Sevalaya. The stall also had several Craft items, Bags and Wood Items made by the Students of Sevalaya on display. Minister for Women and Child Development, Maneka Gandhi visited the Sevalaya stall during her visit to the fair. The visitors to Sevalaya Stall got a good idea about the services rendered by the organization. The stall also received wide coverage by the media both, print and electronic.

Sevalaya's Ravi adjudged Chennai's best NGO worker



Dr. A. Nirmala, Principal, Ethiraj College for Women presenting the award to N. Ravichandran, Sevalaya's longest serving employee who was adjudged the best grassroots NGO worker in Chennai, by CIOSA (see profile on page 8)



Thiru. V. M. Muralidharan, Chairman, Ethiraj College Trust, gave the Best Presentation award to Radha Srinivasan

Caterpillar CSR in Sevalaya

Caterpillar India Pvt Ltd, as part of their CSR activities, celebrated Thiru. Kamaraj's Birthday on 15th July 2014, with the students of Sevalaya. The team conducted indoor and outdoor games and activities for all the students from Classes LKG to Std XII. They also conducted games like Kolam competition and Pallankuzhi for the old Age home residents. Srinivasa Rao, Country Manager, India of Caterpillar along with his team visited Sevalaya Campus and gave away the prizes for the winners in the games.

Caterpillar also conducted a medical camp for about 220 children and senior citizens on 17th July 2014. General Physician, Gynecologist, Orthopaedic and Skin specialists visited the campus and did medical checkup and consultations



Frank J. Crespo, Vice President, Global Supply Network Division of Caterpillar handing over the contributions of the employees.



for the residents and updated their medical records. Health Tonics were distributed to the residents and the Lady Gynecologist gave a presentation on health and hygiene awareness for the resident women.

At the function held on 24th July 2014, dignitaries Janice Lin, Doug Weston, Scott Shepherd and Ed O Neil, Frank J. Crespo distributed prizes to the toppers in the X and XII exams.

Awards...



V. Muralidharan receiving the award from Mahavir Bothra, President of T. Nagar Rotary Club for the Best Old Age Home

They visited us...

Viveks Ltd is celebrating their 50th Anniversary and 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.



BEST WISHES TO SEVALAYA

The inimitable service of Sevalaya to the Community is indeed most Laudable and hope such service to humanity would enable this nation to progress forward. This organization needs to be encouraged, for achieving higher goals in this field.

V.R. Vasudevan, B.E. (Hons.), I.R.S.E., F.I.P.W.E.
Commissioner of Railway Safety (Retd.)



V. Muralidharan receiving the award from Ln. Janarthanan, President Lions Club Madras West for his Service.

Training for teachers



Ms. Uma Garimela from Hyderabad conducted two days workshop to the teachers on handling children writing portfolio, students assessment Rubrics and Continue Comprehensive Evaluation. The training was done through various activities, videos and lectures. The session was very useful to the teachers and it gave a vast knowledge in handling children.

Honing photography skills



S. C. Suresh, teacher of the primary school, attended a photography training in GYAN Institute. He in turn shared his learnings with the staff who regularly take photos at the events at the campus. The training gave an indepth knowledge about the skills required to take quality photographs, the settings to be made in camera and handling the camera.

Value education by SCOPE volunteers

Volunteers from SCOPE International visit Sevalaya every Thursday and Friday and teach value education to the students. This has helped the children acquire a new dimension in values education. The children from Std VI to XI are divided into batches and are taught values through short films and Powerpoint presentations.

With best compliments from



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Swamiji- Embodiment of Love

Here is a less known incident in Swamiji's life that shows his loving and compassionate nature. This has been narrated by Swami Sadashivananda in his reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda. He writes:-

Sevashrama was started, inspired by the ideal of Seva as infused by Swami Vivekananda. Amongst the workers, was a lean and thin one, who attracted the Swami's notice. This youth had come from some interior part of Bengal and was stranded at Varanasi. So, he had joined the Sevashrama as a worker out of necessity, but he was weak and sickly. One day, he went to see the Swami who inquired about him and asked him to dine daily with him: "My lad, you are not very strong, and you have to work, you must eat well. You must come daily and

dine with me: at least you must take your noon-day meal here with me."

The work of the Sevashrama often kept the boy beyond the fixed time for Swamiji's dinner hour, who was constantly besought to take his food very timely, lest his fell disease, viz diabetes, aggravated. The physicians and brother-disciples entreated him to take particular care of his health and he also agreed; but out of motherly love for that boy, he forgot all their entreaties and his own health. Before dinner he would anxiously inquire about the boy and wait for him; he would pace the floor with impatient steps and look towards the road and the door expecting him to appear there any moment. If he met anyone, he would at once ask him, "Has he come? Poor boy! Why is he so late today? He is very

weak and has not taken anything till now. So young and weak, and so much to do!" When at last, the boy came with hurried steps, Swamiji's face changed once again; it was glowing with happiness and contentment of a mother who meets her son after a long separation. Smilingly he asked the youth, "Why, my child! Why so late? I know you were very, very busy. But did you take your breakfast in the morning? See, I have not taken my meal, for, I am waiting for you. Come! my son wash your hands and feet, let us hurry to our dinner. It is already late and you know, my boy, I am not so well. If I do not take my food timely it will aggravate my illness. So try to come a little earlier. But what could you do, my child, pressure of work has kept you so late; I know it, I know it."

"Can't leave these kids for anything", says Sevalaya's Ravi Anna

Sevalaya's longest serving employee, N. Ravichandran joined the NGO in 1994 when he was 23. He had worked with his father as an auto mechanic and then in textiles marketing. He had known Founder V. Muralidharan's neighbourhood family in Thirunandravur - the only family in the village that allowed free viewing of TV programmes, waiving off the prevalent 25 paise fee!

When Ravi came to Sevalaya, all it had was a lone hall with thatched roof, and 25 children. The smiles and the chatter of the children evoked suppressed memories of his own childhood dominated by his step mother. Helping the children became his life mission. At this point, Ravi becomes emotional, his otherwise ever present smile leaving him for a while. "I cannot think of leaving the Sevalaya children, though I had opportunities with better salary options", he says as if that is the most natural thing.

From selling greeting cards to donors, Ravi moved to donor relations. Ravi

keeps in touch with Sevalaya's individual donors, making some 25 phone calls and 10 to 15 personal visits every day. The daily train commute of three hours on a typical day is also productive time, to talk about Sevalaya with evangelical ardour and to distribute pamphlets, creating life-long donors out of ordinary people with limited means.

A friendly demeanour, a genuine interest in helping others and learnings from his early stint in textile marketing are powerful allies in Ravi's work. He remembers just one instance of upsetting a donor - that too, because a colleague failed the punctuality test of that ex-army officer. Ravi apologised profusely, became a regular visitor when the officer fell ill. Next year, the officer called to say his customary cheque was ready, to be collected!

Ravi also has another task he takes seriously. He is the chosen one to sing invocations at functions. As the City team is ready to Skype with the Kasuva campus team, his colleagues will say, "Ravi Anna,



start *pannungo*". That is cue for Ravi to start with a joke that has all in splits, before he launches into his full-throated invocation.

In Sevalaya's deep rooted family atmosphere, he is Ravi Anna to everybody. He every bit belongs there.

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