



# LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

DECEMBER 2015

## Diwali brings joy and volunteers to Sevalaya



The week-long Diwali celebrations at Sevalaya this year were further sweetened by the visits from corporate volunteers spending time with the children. Renault Nissan Automotive India Private Ltd kickstarted the celebrations on 1st November 2015. As part of their initiative "Aram", 18 volunteers organized games for Sevalaya hostel children, distributed sweets and snacks to them.

On 6th November 2015, M Bagavanta Rao, President, SMSO Nidhi and Former Managing Director, State Bank of Hyderabad, was Chief Guest at the Diwali celebrations. New clothes, sweets and savories were distributed to the children and the elders. It was a fun filled day with the children bursting crackers.

On the occasion, certificates were distributed to 20 students of Mahakavi



*Namita, popular film star, at Sevalaya campus during Diwali celebrations.*

*Children lighting fireworks*

*Elders in their new dress for Diwali*



Bharatiyar Community College, who have successfully completed their internship. Teachers were given prizes for passing in distinctions in Computer Courses.

## Asian Paints' 15 lac CSR contribution for Montessori and Old Age Home

Asian Paints, a leading corporate in the country, has continued support to Sevalaya with a CSR Contribution of ₹ 15 lacs to Sevalaya. This will fund Montessori Kits and training for teachers (₹ 14 lacs) and amenities for Senior citizens in Sevalaya's Old age home (₹ 1 lac).

Handing over the Cheque, Sanjeevi Kumar, Senior Manager (QA), Asian Paints lauded the services of Sevalaya for the benefit of underprivileged rural children

Sevalaya is among very few schools to implement Montessori education in local language. So far this system has been implemented at Pre Primary stage only.



*Sanjeevi Kumar, Senior Manager (QA), Asian Paints, handing over cheque to V Magariga, AHM primary school.*

Now with the generous contribution from Asian Paints, the Montessori model of education will be extended to the primary school also. The funds will be utilized to provide Montessori Training to 20 teachers, and purchase of Montessori kits which will include Sensorial training kits (which develops fine motor skills), language kits and arithmetic training more children will benefit.

Sevalaya is grateful to Padmini Gopalan, President of Sri Ramacharan Charitable Trust, whose encouragement, guidance and support in terms of providing training for the teachers has been a major factor for the successful implementation of Montessori Method in Sevalaya.

# Joy of giving: the way of life

Dear Friends,

I attended the inauguration of the centenary celebrations of my school – PS High School (North). The school was started in 1916. Pennathur Subramaniya Iyer was a leading lawyer and he donated all his property for the cause of education. P.S.Educational charities were formed and schools were started in Mylapore. Now the Charities run 8 schools, two state board schools, one matriculation school and I think the rest are all CBSE schools.

In my time, all Mylapore boys will go to PS High School and girls to Lady Sivaswamy Iyer Girls High School. (Sir P S Sivaswamy Iyer donated all his property to run schools). These two gentlemen of Mylapore didn't think of education as business and they gave away all that they earned in their life time for the welfare of the society. Those days, we didn't have many English medium schools or CBSE schools. There was no "class" discrimination and people from all walks of life went to the same school. There was no craze for English medium. For example, I, from a reasonably rich family and Manivannan, currently driver in Sevalaya, both went to PS High School. No one felt the difference. Ironically,

after the politicians in Tamil Nadu started talking more about "Saving Tamil", craze for English medium and CBSE Schools have gone up – education has become business and all politicians own schools and colleges. People with no financial resources, who entered education business, have become millionaires. Just the reverse of what Subramaniya Iyer and Sivaswamy Iyer did! Once education has become business, there is competition, they have to offer something more than the others, so in this rat race, Tamil medium schools have become the last resort of poor people.

The Chief Guest His Excellency E S L Narasimhan, Governor of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana rightly mentioned that today all educational institutions are "converting Saraswathi to Lakshmi".

In the centenary function we had a huge gathering of who-is-who of Chennai, who were either present personally or were represented by their family members – S Venkatraghavan, former Indian cricket captain, V V Kumar, former test cricket player, R K Raghavan, former CBI director, "Cho" Ramaswamy, editor of Thuglak, Neelu, famous comedy actor, Ramji, former Commissioner of Railways, Ramanan, Director of Metrological dept,

Chennai. Many former bank MDs, IAS, IPS & IRS, many carnatic musicians, former judges, were all there. Why did they all come? Well, they were all alumni of PS High School!

A Tamil medium state board school was able to produce so many luminaries from its students! I remember I paid ₹ 7 as annual fees when I was studying in that school (1970s). My classmates included sons of a private company MD, a bank manager, a temple priest, a Muslim cloth store worker, a vegetable vendor – children from varied families, from all castes and religions. The school never had any commercial interest and other than ₹ 7, not a cent was collected extra from anyone. Education was the single point agenda of the school. After 100 years, we see a row of great people as alumni – the proof of good education. Pennathur Subramaniya Iyer must be feeling very happy in heaven to see this result. His contribution has produced such illustrious people.

Like we say, "don't mix politics and religion", we should also say "don't mix education and business."

Thanks and Regards

Murali

## Two new Trustees for Sevalaya

**T M Lakshmikanthan** has joined as a trustee on Sevalaya's board. He has over 40 years experience in Banking sector, with a track record of consistently delivering exceptional results through branch business development, client management, and strategic planning and cultivating and maintaining key relationships. He has a B.Sc degree from university of Chennai.

He is currently the President of P.C Jeweller, New Delhi and also serves as an Independent director on the board of SMSO Nidhi, a private financial

institution. Earlier he was the executive director of Karur Vysya Bank and General Manager, Corporation Bank. He has handled many



T M Lakshmi Kanthan

training programs in business schools and corporates. He is very good in planning, motivating people and close monitoring. His experience will be very useful for Sevalaya in developing donor base and introducing new ways of fund raising.

**Sujatha Renganathan** is a long time supporter of Sevalaya. She is the founder of Harrow Desis, a registered Community Interest Company in United Kingdom supporting many charitable causes.

An associate of the Chartered Certified Accountants of UK, Sujatha is Principal

at AIMS Accountants for Business.

She is interested in music, dance, anchoring and zumba, and plays badminton.



Sujatha Renganathan



V Muralidharan was the Chief Guest at at World senior Citizen's Day celebration at Kancheepuram on 31st October 2015 organised by Tamilnadu Elders' Welfare Association.



Every year, Anna Nagar Auto Drivers Association, Pattabhiram, invites Sevalaya children for Ayudha Pooja celebrations. This year also Sevalaya children participated in the celebrations and presented a cultural programme. The association distributed gifts to them.

# Children's Day at Sevalaya



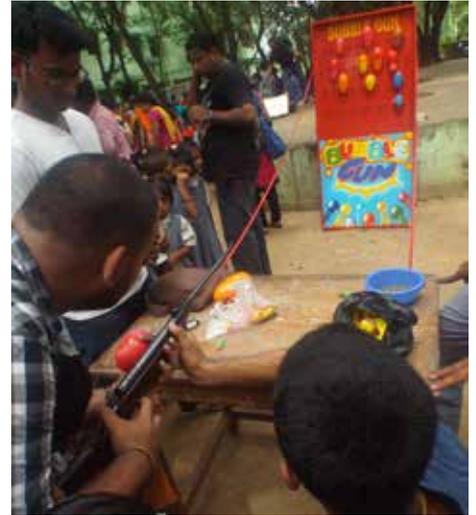
The children also distributed fruits and biscuits to all the children in the ward. Dr. Jagadeesan and Dr. Vijayaraj of the hospital participated in the celebrations.

250 staff of Scope international, a consistent contributor to Sevalaya's projects and supporter, were at Sevalaya campus on 30th October 2015 to celebrate Children's Day. They conducted many games like Musical chair, Skating, Balloon burst, Pin ball game, Snow bowling, Tattooing, etc., They also lovingly applied mehendi/nail polish to the kids.

E V Muthukrishnan, President – India Operations, Episource India Pvt Ltd was the Chief Guest at the Children's day celebrations at Sevalaya. The children presented a colourful cultural programme on the occasion.

Episource staff had collected lot of gift items for the children of Sevalaya. "Wish tree" was placed in their office and each and every child's wish was full filled by the staff of Episource. All such gifts were presented to the children on children's day.

As in the past years, Sevalaya also organized celebrations at the pediatric ward at the Govt. General Hospital in Thiruvallur, which was a welcome change for the children at the hospital and cheered them up.



# Creating awareness about library usage



In the knowledge industry, libraries play vital role, particularly shaping the students. Sevalaya's 3 libraries situated in the campus, are extensively used by teachers, students and youth from 40 plus villagers in the vicinity. To create awareness among school children about how books open up a new world of wonders, Sevalaya organized Library Awareness Programme in the villages.

As a part of this programme Sevalaya staff B Rajalakshmi visited 2 government schools in Thiruvallur district, Nathamedu Government Middle school and Melappedu Government Middle school. Talking to the students about how books enrich and elevate a person, Rajalakshmi invited the students to make use of the well equipped library at Sevalaya.

# Educational tour



Sevalaya's Community College Students visited the Aavin Dairy farm at Sholinganallur. The students went around the refrigeration unit where the staff of Aavin explained the process of pasteurizing and chilling milk for preservation.



## Kellogs Breakfast Campaign



Kellogs India Private Limited as a part of its Global Breakfast Campaign, an initiative to provide a healthy breakfast to hungry kids in rural India, served 1500 Breakfast kits, which included a 127gm pack of Kellogg's Chocos or Kellogg's Corn Flake, one sealed 200ml Tetrapak of milk, a bowl and spoon to all students of Sevalaya. They also distributed a small printed pamphlet to educate the children about the importance of breakfast. Kellogs has also donated breakfast packs for the next 6 months for all the children.

## Training sessions



V Muralidharan, Founder & Managing Trustee, conducted training on "commitment" for Sevalaya staff. He covered areas of involvement in the work taken up, planning, capacity building, tracking, and on the importance of completing tasks on time. He emphasized the need for cost effectiveness and perfection in the work undertaken. It was an interactive session with the participants raising questions on the challenges they face at work. Muralidharan guided them to face the challenges from a fresh perspective with a positive attitude. "We learnt more about time management, cost, capacity and quality and the importance of planning" was the general feedback from the staff.



Prof Dr S V Mani, Advisor, Sevalaya conducted a training on Stress Management for the Unit Heads and sub Unit Heads on 18th November 2015. He explained about the various types of stress, factors causing stress and ways to combat them. The session was an interactive one which in itself served as a great stress buster for the staff.



T S Venkataramani, Hony Coordinator conducted training on "Assertiveness" unit heads on 10th October 2015. Speaking about three types behavior, i.e. passive, aggressive and assertive behavior, he explained through games and role plays how assertive behavior alone results in a win win situation.



S Devaraj, Computer Instructor, Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiyar Community College conducted a training programme on "Photoshop and Excel" to the teaching staff on 24th and 25th November 2015. He taught about clearing the images, resizing the images, naming the files and inserting text in the image. He also taught about creating tables, inserting pictures and applying formulas in Excel sheet. Nearly, 80 staff participated in the 2 days training.



A session on cleanliness of the campus was conducted by Bhuvanewari Muralidharan, Hony. Correspondent, for all the non teaching staff of Sevalaya with emphasis on keeping the kitchen and dining areas clean. Kitchen staff were given suggestions on serving food in a proper manner. Bhuvanewari stressed the need to have ownership and sense of belonging, which will reflect in the work they do. "I got practical tips on how to maintain registers and records neatly. The thought ownership and involvement in the job will reflect on the quality of the work appealed to me the most" says Kanchana, School assistant.

## Thank you Thilak!



Sevalaya Trustee, Thilak Iyer has sponsored 6 black boards to replace the old ones.

## Sevalaya's quick action in flood relief

Heavy monsoon played havoc in the lives of the people in Chennai and other districts in Tamilnadu. Roads were flooded, huts washed away, many people were marooned with no access to food, medicine etc.,

Sevalaya geared up to participate in the rescue and relief operations.

On the night of 14th of November, Sevalaya received a call from Veera Raghava Rao IAS (Collector, Thiruvallur District). The Collector informed about a senior citizen stranded in the rains near Veppampattu village and asked if Sevalaya could help this person.

At 11 PM in the night, amid heavy rains and flooded roads, Sevalaya staff reached the location, rescued the senior citizen and brought him to the Campus to safety.

Upon inquiry, the man's name was found to be Krishnan, a resident of Govindapuram, near Jaya College. He

informed the staff that his wife's name is Geetha, he has a son, Kamalakannan and a daughter named Muniyammal. Sevalaya is trying to trace the family.

He has been admitted into the home for the elderly (Sri Ramakrishna

Paramahansa old age home), where seventy senior citizens are enjoying a new life.

If anyone has details of Krishnan's family, please contact Sevalaya (Ph.7299004456).



Krishnan during rescue



Krishnan at Sevalaya

The newest resident at Sevalaya's Old Age Home is 65 year old Krishnan. Stranded in the torrential rain near Veppampattu village, Krishnan was rescued by Sevalaya's staff on the night of 14th November.

## Support for Cuddalore flood affected

Cuddalore district suffered huge loss of lives and property due to the torrential rains. Overnight, people were rendered homeless. The continuing rains also posed challenges for relief work. Through Ennangalin Sangamam, a network of NGOs, Sevalaya got in touch with G K Charitable Trust, an NGO working in Cuddalore and handed over dhothies, sarees, towels and bed sheets for distribution to the affected people.



## Sevalaya celebrates Halloween

The two volunteers from UK, Caroline and Zoe introduced a new celebration at Campus – Halloween.

On the 31st of October, they organized various activities for the hostel children to celebrate the Western holiday, Halloween.

The tradition of Halloween originated from an ancient Celtic harvest festival and involves remembering the departed and celebrating life. The activities involved the traditional Halloween games of apple bobbing and What's the time Wolf?" as well distribution of sweets.

Apple bobbing is a game that involves the children attempting to remove an apple from a bucket of water using only their teeth.

Due to its complexity What's the time



Wolf?" was mainly played by the older hostel girls whilst the younger girls played a variation of hand games, accompanied with English rhyme.

To finish the night Caroline and Zoe handed out lollipops and sweets to all the hostel children and staff, a traditional aspect of Halloween, which is called "Trick or Treat" in the West.

## Contribution by Ratnagiriswarar Temple...



Maha Annbhishekam is an annual ritual performed at all Shiva temples on full moon day in the Tamil month of Aipasi. During this once-a-year ritual to Lord Shiva, the full Shiva Lingam is covered with cooked rice. The pranic energy and life-nourishing qualities of rice invoke the power of Lord Shiva to come into the Shiva Lingam, a symbol of His energy and power. The sanctum sanctorum is decorated with vegetables and fruits. Every year, after the event, Ratnagiriswarar temple at Besant Nagar donates raw rice, fruits and vegetables contributed in large quantities by the devotees for this annual ritual, to orphanages. Sevalaya is a beneficiary of this noble gesture by the temple.

## Amazing progress in seven short months



Sue Humphreys  
London, UK

At the beginning of 2015 I decided to take a short break from the corporate world of IT Security to do some charity work with the underprivileged. Since India was my first choice I approached a friend of mine who introduced me to Murali and Sevalaya. It was a perfect solution since it covered my interest of helping elderly people, children, and the local community.

Leaving the cosmopolitan London city life I headed to the remote village of Kasuva, 45 km outside Chennai where Sevalaya campus is located. The first thing I noticed as I entered was the sign at the gates asking people to shed any prejudice they may have in relation to diversity. This made an immediate and positive impact on me. Sevalaya has the policy of treating all people the same.

My arrival was greeted with enthusiasm by both the children and the staff and I immediately felt comfortable and at home, which was lucky as Sevalaya would be my home for the next 4 weeks.

The work I undertook was based upon my skills. In addition to helping out with functional English I arranged a number of computer classes daily for teachers, staff, and some members of the community college who expressed a desire to learn such skills. The advantage of teaching the teachers was for them to integrate the knowledge into their own classes. Staff too, used the knowledge they learnt to improve their daily/weekly reporting tasks. I cannot express the pride I felt when my adult students at the end of my time at Sevalaya were able to create advanced PowerPoint presentations.

What impressed me were the smiles which greeted me every morning when I went to the girls' hostel to help wash and dress the young ones. After bathing, these children then washed their own uniforms on stones on the ground, helped each other to be presentable and ready for school in a timely manner. The children are proud to be able to achieve these small tasks. These

conditions may seem primitive to those of us from the West, however this is normality here in Indian villages.

The children's attitude to education is one of respect. Watching the children interact with both each other and with the teachers was so impressive. They respect their teachers, each other, and the fact they have the opportunity to learn. No child takes education for granted since this is their 'passport' to an improved future. Their dedication and commitment to studying and learning is so extraordinary. These are children, whose lives before coming to Sevalaya were simply bleak. Sevalaya is now the only family and stability they have.

The children, who came with nothing, and who have so little, treasure that which they have, be it a comb for the boys or a little bead necklace for the girls. Nothing is taken for granted.

It was my birthday during my time at Sevalaya and to have 170+ children singing "Happy Birthday" to me in the dining hall was one of the most moving experiences of the trip. The girls put flowers in my hair and the boys shook my hand. The experience was precious.

The values of Sevalaya are second to none. It takes into consideration humanistic issues, animal welfare, and 'green' environmental issues.

A number of events or visits from donors took place on a weekly basis. International Women's Day was one such event which I attended where it was demonstrated through talks that women do have choices and can have a career and Sevalaya actively follows through with this.

Because I was so moved by my experience at the beginning of the year I decided to return to Sevalaya for the month of November. The first things I noticed were

some significant changes which have been made thanks to donations and generosity of the donors and sponsors. A new science laboratory has been built. This will greatly help students with their studies and give them a safe place to conduct experiments. The dining hall now has mosquito screens on all the windows and entry ways which will further enhance hygienic conditions. A new Gausghala 'home' for the cows has been built, providing better conditions for the animals. A 2nd school bus is on campus, providing safe and secure transport to the children in the surrounding villages.

I was amazed at how much has been achieved in the 7 short months since my first visit. Seeing these changes has confirmed to me even more what a wonderful organisation Sevalaya is.

November is monsoon season, and with no exception the rains fell, and fell, and fell. On more than one occasion the government cancelled school due to the floods in the area. Water at times was knee high, yet the children and elderly people still needed to be fed. Undaunted, the amazing kitchen staff managed to overcome the challenging conditions and produced meals 3 times a day which were hot, nutritious and well-balanced.

Diwali was the big holiday for November and the children delighted in the celebrations. Crackers and fireworks were abundant with the night sky lighting up spectacularly. Children were each given 2 boxes of sparklers which they enjoyed a lot. Everybody was beautifully dressed in new clothes for the occasion.

I am very sad to leave Sevalaya again, but know that this is the charity and cause I shall always support. I look forward to my continued relationship with the children and staff of Sevalaya and helping to raise awareness of this amazing project.



# Passionate about creating champions

## Nithyanandham V

There has been a major thrust in sports coaching since our new PT master Nithyanandham joined Sevalaya in April 2015.

Hailing from an agricultural family at Malliankumppam village, in Arani, near Periyapalayam Nithyanandham says that he started participating in sports only from XII Std. He won the district level athletics championship and was a medallist at the divisional level. He recalls with gratitude his Physical Education Teacher, Mallika, who encouraged him to concentrate more on sports as he had a natural talent.

Having chosen his field, Nithyanandham completed B.P.ed from YMCA college, Madras University. While at University, he found out that since he had no long years of training in athletics, he could not shine in that field compared to his peers in college. However he discovered that whatever training he had in athletics, helped him in playing Handball and hence chose that game. Soon, he found a place in the Madras University handball team. Nithyanandham went on to pursue Masters in Physical Education from Pondicherry University. He again was in the University Handball team, of which he was the captain in his second year.

Then, Nithyanandham went on to do M.Phil in Biomechanical Research at the Tamilnadu Sports University. On being asked about his choice of topic for research, Nithya replies with a



smile "I like Physics very much and this topic provided scope for analyzing the game techniques, the angle of the hand movement, the speed and its effect on the ball etc., which will help us to perfect our techniques and improve our skills.

While doing M.Phil, Nithyanandham was working part time at Talwalkar Fitness Institute, Anna Nagar. He says that even for a part time job, he chose an area related to Sports as he was keen that he should not lose focus on his career.

Nithyanandham also did a 1 year special certificate course on athletics at National Institute of Sports at Laxmibai National College of Physical Education, Trivandrum.

Armed with a high qualification and many achievements to his credit, Nithyanadham joined a Private school where he worked as a physical education teacher for 5 years.

5 years back, he first read about Sevalaya in a Tamil weekly. He along with his friends took the initiative and gathered a group of children from his village, and brought them on a trip to Sevalaya, to see this place and also to bring about awareness among the children of his village as to how they can help others.

It has always been his dream to help the poor and the destitute children and being a sports person, he can help them professionally by training them and

helping them to achieve great heights of success. The visit to Sevalaya made him think more seriously about his passion. Now he has found a place which has ample scope for realizing his dream. After much thought, he finally took the plunge. He left his job at the private school and joined Sevalaya as the Physical education teacher.

"Many schools, pay lip service to sports saying that more importance should be given to sports activities but in reality, when the students reach X and XII, sports take a back seat and the whole focus is only on academics, board exams, marks, rank etc.," says Nithyanandham. "But in Sevalaya, I find that the management is really quite serious about nurturing sports. The cooperation from Management, and colleagues is very encouraging. The children are also very talented and show a lot of interest. By providing them nutritious food and proper training, I am sure our children will shine very well."

Two boys and a girl from Sevalaya in the under 14 category have been selected by School Games Federation of India to represent the Region in Handball team. The boys will be going to Dharmapuri and the girl will be going to Vriddachalam to play at the State level selection match next month. "I am sure at least one of them will find place in the State Handball Team" says Nithyanandham with pride.

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## The great cleanliness divide

Gandhiji, based at South Africa, made a sojourn to India in 1896. While he was at Rajkot, plague broke out and there was panic all around. He offered his services to the State. The offer was accepted and he was put on the committee which was appointed to look in to the method of sanitation. As a member of the committee, he visited every locality. He laid main emphasis on the cleanliness of latrines and made efforts to improve them. It was decided to inspect every street. The poor people had no objection to the inspection of their latrines. They readily carried out the improvements suggested. But, as for the upper classes, some of them even refused admission, not to speak of listening to the suggestions. The latrines of the rich were most unclean. They were dark and stinking and reeking with filth and worms. The committee gave some suggestions improvements, so as to give the latrines more light and air. The upper classes raised numerous objections, and in most

cases, when the committee decided to inspect the Untouchables' quarters, only one member of the committee agreed to accompany Gandhiji. When Gandhiji entered the quarters and asked for permission to inspect the latrines, they were astonished. They had no latrines and were performing only in the open. "Latrines are only for big people!" they exclaimed. Gandhiji went inside their houses, which were, in fact, only holes. He was delighted to see the insides were as clean as the outsides. The entrances were well swept; the floors were beautifully smeared with cow dung and the few pots and pans were clean and shining.

In contrast, Gandhiji describes an Upper Class quarters. Every room had a gutter, which was used both for water and urine, which meant that the whole house would stink. One of the houses had a storeyed bed room with a gutter which was being used both as a urinal and a latrine. The

gutter had a pipe descending to the ground floor. It was not possible to stand the foul smell in the room. Gandhiji wondered how the occupants could sleep there. It must have left him wondering who should be an untouchable on grounds of being unclean. He had a similar distasteful experience while inspecting a Vaishnavite place of worship. There was a part of the place where refuse and leaves used as dinner plates used to be thrown over the wall. It was the haunt of crows and kites. The latrines were of course dirty.

Gandhiji concludes the relevant chapter with the following observations:

"It pained me to see so much uncleanliness about a place of worship. One would expect a careful observation of the rules of sanitation and hygiene in a place which is regarded as holy. The authors of the smritis as I knew even then have laid the greatest emphasis on cleanliness, both inward and outward."

## Together, let us build an athletic track for rural children

**Sevalaya does not have an athletic track. That has not stopped its dedicated PT masters from producing some champions.**



One of them is D Keerthana, daughter of farm labourers. She never ran till two years ago. Then the PT master 'discovered' her, and coached her for the hurdles, using wooden pegs in place of the hurdles stands. Result: First place in 80 meter hurdles, in the Division, and a berth for the State Championships, a month away!

Imagine, if these talented children had some sports infrastructure!

That is why we have started on a special project, more an act of faith, faith in the goodness of people, to volunteer with their labour when they visit Sevalaya. A donor has offered the material cost for three (out of the usual eight) lanes of a 300 meter track. (Why 300 meters, not the standard 400 meters? Because, that is all the space we have). With voluntary labour by our visitors, we will build the track, square foot by square foot.

***Sq ft by sq ft, we will build the track, to create rural athletic champions.***

Published by: Bhuvanewari Muralidharan and owned by/on behalf of Sevalaya and published from F2, Jains Eden Park, 4- Judge Jambulingam Road, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004.

Printed by: S Kannappan @ Gem Offsets, No. - 24(Old no.20), Swami Achari St., Royapettah, Chennai -600 014.

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