



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL

APRIL 2017

IWD: Empowered women of Community Colleges in focus



Above & Left : Lady staff and students of Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiyar Community College at the International Women's day celebrations at L & T Infotech

L & T Infotech urge Sevalaya women to think big

On 8th March 2017, L&T Infotech Pvt Ltd invited 25 women from Sevalaya's community colleges and the women's empowerment project (tailoring). Their team conducted a two hour session for the women at their office in Manapakkam, Chennai.

The first hour was on budget and savings by V R Balasubramanian, Senior officer, Accounts, L&T Infotech. The second hour was an interactive session on "Who am I" an activity on evolving their identity as well as talk about their strengths and weaknesses, conducted by Thenmozhi Sampath, Technical Architect. The women were divided into groups and encouraged to come out with a business plan by L&T Infotech Business development staff. The groups were asked to present their plans.

Ever since Sevalaya community college started the beautician course, the students who are part of the course find many opportunities to exhibit their skills at different corporates.

Royal treatment for Renault Nissan staff

This year, as part of the International Women's day (IWD), Renault Nissan Automotive India Ltd., Oragadam, hosted



a stall on 7th March 2017, where the students and alumni applied *mehendi*, did facials and manicure for 30 staff members of the company. All the proceeds will go towards educating the underprivileged students at Sevalaya.

It was a great opportunity to showcase the talents of the alumni students, and also a morale booster for them.



Wish trees for girl children at GE Power conversion

Sevalaya put up 'wish tree' at GE power conversion office at Ekkaduthangal, Chennai on 9th March 2017. The tree carried wish cards with the wishes of about 1000 girl students studying in Sevalaya. The wish tree caught the attention of the staff who donated for many cards, to fulfill the wishes of the school students.

Facelift and handiwork at Lionbridge Technologies

At Lionbridge Technologies, 7 students and a teacher celebrated Women's day with the employees. They did *mehendi* and facials for 55 staff members, on 9th March 2017.

Sevalaya organized two general health medical camps in two villages Melakondaiyar and Arundhadhipuram on 8th March 2017 - International Women's Day. 46 women were treated for mild fever, cold and stomach pain. They were given free medicines. A follow up camp was also done a few days later.

International Women's Day was also celebrated at Sevalaya's Community colleges in all locations-Kasuva, Vadanallur, Mambakkam and Ambattur. The staff cut cakes and distributed sweets.

Joy of giving: *the way of life*

Dear Friends,

There are many ways of giving in this country and music has been the major gift given away free by many great souls. For centuries we have had composers who have composed millions of songs, they didn't even want their name associated with their compositions! They all felt that it was a gift of God and they were just tools in this whole process and the music flowed through them and they can't claim any ownership for their own songs.

Purandaradasa was one such great composer – we have lost many of his songs, but the few which still remain are highly philosophical and are sung in many concerts throughout the year, all over the world. A composer who has composed millions of songs, many of which are still popular even after many hundred years, didn't even want his name to be known! Most of his songs are sung in praise of the Lord of Pandaripur, Purandara Vittal, and hence the composer came to be known as Purandaradasa, which means the devotee of Lord Purandar. His

original name didn't get popular at all. In fact he was the richest person in his town and was in the business of making more money. When he got attracted towards Lord Purandar, he walked out of his home leaving behind all his property and started singing on the roads like a beggar and walked to Pandaripur. All his songs are now sung in classical Indian concerts by many top musicians all over the world.

Oothukkadu Venkatasubbaier was another composer who composed beautiful songs on Lord Krishna, sitting on the steps of a temple tank. One day the King happened to pass by the temple and he got attracted to the music. He stood before the composer till the latter completed the song and bowed before him and said "I have never heard such music. What can I do for you? Ask anything you want, I will give you". The composer said "Just tell the temple authorities to give me little bit of Prasad (food offered to God) everyday during lunch time. I feel hungry and need energy to sing more songs. Just one handful of cooked rice every day will do". His songs

are also sung by many musicians all over the world.

The original name of Badrachalam Ramadasa is also not popular. He is just the devotee of Lord Ram of Badrachalam. He was arrested and tortured by the King, but all the hardships he underwent were nothing for him as he was content with singing the praise of Lord Ram.

All these composers had no interest in monetary benefits. They didn't want even their names to be known. They composed music as an offering to God and gave it free to the entire human race. That is why even after hundreds of years, their songs are still popular, elevating many people.

Art, music, knowledge, love can't be purchased or sold. They have come to us as gifts. So, we should also pass it on only as a gift .

Thanks and Regards

Sevalaya Murali

Women's livelihood- sustained tailoring training by Sevalaya



S Kaveri, tailoring teacher at Sevalaya campus, teaching the intricacies of cutting garments to the trainees

50 beneficiaries of sewing machines belonging to the Irula community, were given sustained training by Sevalaya staff for one full year, as part of an agreement with L&T Infotech, who donated the machines. These were distributed to the beneficiaries in March 2016, after their livelihood and homes were washed away during the Chennai floods, in December 2015.

Each month, staff from Sevalaya's Kasuva or Vadanallur campus went to interior villages in Tiruttani taluk, Thiruvallur Dist., to provide training to the women. This sustained training has reaped rich rewards as many women are able to find a steady source of income by stitching fashionable clothes, after they attended the training sessions.

Kris Srikanth's contribution to Children's library

About 850 books in Tamil, English and bilingual books were sponsored by the Master Blaster Kris Srikanth and his family recently. A mix of story books, creative art books and inspiring biographies were added to the children's library. It's a pleasure to see the children walk in and use the facility.

Sevalaya campus has three libraries - one each for the primary children, staff and high school students / general public. Visitors to Sevalaya are encouraged to walk in and browse a book or two.



Kris Srikanth

R Archana - State Level Best Athlete (Under 14)



R Archana receiving the trophy from W I Devaram, IPS (Retd), President, Tamilnadu Athletics association

R Archana won Gold in the 100 metre Hurdles (20.39 seconds) and Long Jump (4.70m) in the under 14 group, at the Tamilnadu 2nd State Level kids open Athletics tournament held at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Chennai, on 25th February 2017. She was declared the best athlete in her age group.

1100 students from Thiruvallur, Chennai, Kanchipuram, Cuddalore and

Rapid chess moves by quadriplegic Vishal



Vishal carried by his mother receiving prize at the hands of S Balaraman, (International Arbiter and Honorary Secretary, Thiruvallur District Chess Association)

J Vishal studying in Std VIII won 2 out of 5 rounds in the Thiruvallur Rapid selection Chess championship held at Brittaniam High school, Padi on 26th March, 2017.

S Balaraman, (International Arbiter and Honorary Secretary, Thiruvallur District

Ramanathapuram districts participated in the sports events. W I Dawaram, (IPS), President, Tamilnadu Athletics association was the Chief Guest at the function.

Archana has been a star performer this academic year and has won medals in all the competitions that she has participated in, this year.

She is sure to reach greater heights with sustained training.

Chess Association), distributed prizes to the winners. He mentioned in his address that Vishal had a bright future ahead of him.

Passion for Chess

Vishal a quadriplegic since birth, became interested in chess when he was five years old. Vishal hails from Puliur village and his parents are farmers. His father learnt chess from his friends in the village who played the game. He developed a passion for the game and taught it to his wife and children also. The parents played chess at home regularly which was an inspiration for the sons. Vishal's brother, who is in Std X is also a chess player.

Vishal joined Sevalaya in Std VI and has been representing the school in various competitions.

"This is the just the beginning for me. I am confident of winning in many competitions," says Vishal proudly.

Igniting the science spark – Science day at Sevalaya



Curiosity was the buzzword for the children who attended the Science day at Sevalaya on 28th February 2017. There were interesting games based on scientific concepts followed by a quiz competition. The children had fun time learning useful scientific facts and principles in a happy, relaxed way.

The Chief Guest Dr P Meera (Subject matter Expert, Chemical Division Scope E knowledge Centre) distributed prizes to the winners of the various competitions conducted earlier.

S Saravanan, Founder of *Visai*, an organisation to spread awareness about environment among school children, also participated.

Awareness campaign on cleanliness



On 17th March 2017, a cleanliness awareness campaign called Swachhta pakhwada (sanitation and cleanliness drive) was held at the campus. B Senthil, District Child Protection Officer, B Dasarathan, Member, Child Welfare Committee, Dr D Valanthi, Medical Officer, Puliur PHC exhorted the students to keep their surroundings neat and clean, always, to prevent spread of diseases and ill health. The dignitaries conducted competitions like drawing, poster presentation, speech, essay writing and skit for 150 hostel children.

A Pledge on cleanliness was taken by the children.

Active volunteers bring weekend cheers



Creating new flora and fauna in the villages

On 25th February 2017, 28 volunteers from BNY Mellon visited the campus to plant 60 neem trees. The trees were planted with a tree guard around it, to protect against the damage by animals and naughty children. Care of the planted

trees will be a continuous process. The trees will be watered and nurtured with organic manure from time to time, by the staff and students to make the campus green again.

On the same day, 15 volunteers from

BNY Mellon conducted a creative story building session for students studying in Std VII. Nature and environment was the theme. It was an interactive session and the children were given charts to draw what they thought about the environment.

"The importance of trees to our very survival was brought out very well by the volunteers. I will remember the lessons and do my best to save the environment."

M Ranjani



Volunteers pitch in to make a 'Green Cover'

PwC Volunteers planting the future



PwC India foundation sponsored 300 trees to be planted within Sevalaya campus and nearby villages, as part of their CSR activity, after Cyclone Vardah had left an indelible mark in the environs.

In what can be termed as a long term plan, the trees will be a mix of neem and other local trees, as well as fruit bearing trees, which will provide shade and fruits.

The trees will be safeguarded by a tree guard and organic manure will be used to strengthen the roots. The trees will be watered by the students and village people.

On 11th March, a group of volunteers from PwC India foundation came the campus, and started planting the trees, by doing all the grunt work, by shovelling the dirt, digging pits, and planting trees. Local villagers also assisted in planting the trees.

All the villagers were unanimous in their appreciation for PwC India's continued support to Puliur village. First it was the rehabilitation of 20 families during the Chennai floods and now the tree planting to make a green cover over the entire village.



Volunteers from IIT for a verdant campus



17 students from IIT Madras planted around 40 fruit bearing trees inside the campus. Sevalaya is in the process of planting many fruit bearing trees after cyclone Vardah felled most of the them in December 2016. The IIT volunteers themselves dug the pits to plant the trees and were ably supported by Std IX students in the activity.

"We learnt about the right selection of trees for each geographical location and climate. We planted fruit trees near the kitchen which has rich alluvial soil."

M Elango, Std IX

Multiple activities by Volunteers from Standard Chartered Global Business Services



About 100 volunteers came to Sevalaya campus on 14th March 2017 and involved themselves in a variety of activities. One batch of volunteers painted the interior of the old age home while others planted trees. Some volunteers painted new canvas shoes. The students were also involved in this activity. These shoes were then gifted to the children.

The volunteers also donated sarees, dhothies and shawls to all the elders.

Piotr Zajac, CEO Risk - Standard Chartered (Global business services) handed over course completion certificates to the 26 students of Computer PC skills and 11 students of computer hardware of Sevalaya's Community College. 16 students secured placement in nearby companies and industries. The appointment letters were handed to the alumni as well.



Piotr Zajac, CEO Risk - Standard Chartered (Global business services), planting a tree in Sevalaya campus as part of the green campus drive

21st century IT professionals go 'Organic' and conserve nature

Organic farming - by DTCC



On 25th February 2017, 17 volunteers from DTCC got into Sevalaya's organic farm and helped harvest the vegetables and spinach. They also assisted in carrying the harvest to the kitchen.

Another batch of 10 volunteers from DTCC distributed chocolates to all the 2100 students at Sevalaya. They conducted story telling sessions, riddles and also sang for the children. They spent an entire day with the residents of Sevalaya.

"Listening to stories told by our elders has been an important part of our growing. The DTCC volunteers were very engaging in telling the stories. I plan to do the same to my siblings and cousins."

V Devi, Std IX

L&T Infotech get their hands 'dirty' at Sevalaya farm



L&T Infotech volunteers rough it out in the organic farm

The hands that create code for software applications during the week, toiled at Sevalaya organic farm on 12th March 2017.

20 professionals dug in and sieved the vermicompost, filled manure in the manure pits, and cut grass for cows. They literally got their hands 'dirty'. They

did seem very happy at the end of the exercise though. They mentioned that it was quite a welcome change from their daily routine.

L&T Infotech volunteers have been in the forefront in assisting students with creative activities and academics at Sevalaya.

Students and Elders day out - a trip to Pondicherry



Every once in a while, the senior citizens and students of Sevalaya are taken on day tours, mostly to temples and general places of interest. One such trip to Pondicherry was sponsored by D Nandha Kumar, Aricent Technologies &

friends, on 19th February 2017. 24 senior citizens, 31 students and 2 caretakers, visited Panchmukha Anjaneyar temple, Manakular Vinayagar temple, and the beach. All of them enjoyed the trip and had many fond memories of the same.

Avila students visit again

For the second time in three months, 15 students and 2 professors from Avila University, Kansas City, MO, USA visited our campus on 14th March 2017.

They explored the campus and were effusive in their praise for the activities done by Sevalaya. The volunteers spent time with the senior citizens in the old age home, and with the children in Montessori section and higher grade classrooms.



They also picked up many wish cards to fulfil the wishes of the Sevalaya children.

Career guidance programme - opportunities in accounting and finance

On 18th February 2017, Vishwanathan Gopalan (GM – Finance, BNY Mellon) alongwith R Gopal and Haribabu Venugopal, both Functional process owners (Finance) at BNY Mellon conducted a session on handling interviews, and job opportunities available in accounts and finance. They also advised the alumni on ways to enroll for CA. The BNY Mellon officials also took Accountancy classes for the

"I was able to understand the interview procedures in Accounting companies. Understanding the basics of Accountancy clearly will help us in our higher studies, because the concepts are the same."

K Kalaiyarasi, Std XI



Std XI students and reinforced their basics. More than 50 alumni and

accountancy students attended the session and found it to be very helpful.

"It was a memorable trip for all of us. The organisers took very good care of us. We had good darshan at the temples and enjoyed our visit to the beach. We thank Sevalaya and the sponsor for arranging this visit."

K Geetha, Old age home resident



Senior citizens enjoying their evening cup of freshly brewed filter coffee Thanks to HUL, Chennai who donated 4 cartons of coffee powder. This project was coordinated by Sudha Shankar, Head CSR, HUL, Chennai.

With best compliments

"Better is to educate an underprivileged child"

-MahaKavi Bharathi

"The soul of India lives in its villages"

-Mahatma Gandhi

"God comes in the form of Roti for a hungry man"

-Swami Vivekananda

Well wisher

Hallmark of S Sidharth – his humility

S Sidharth is an introvert and a very unassuming student. He is appearing for Std X board exams this year and is confident of making it to the top ten in school. He studied in the local government school till Std V, after which he was admitted in Sevalaya. Although he was an average student till Std IX, his teachers have been gently coaxing him to focus on his studies. Something must have clicked as his attitude towards studies improved by leaps and bounds in the current year. Not only his studies, but his general demeanour has undergone a perceptible change. He is always well groomed, and his conduct is exemplary. He is very good in Science and Social



Studies. His aim is to become a Doctor.

It was a month or so after cyclone Vardah that Sevalaya actually got to know about the work he had done in his village. When a big tree had snapped and fallen in the middle of the road, blocking both entry and exit from his street, he rallied around a few elders, and some youngsters and took charge of clearing the branches and other debris. He not only helped clean his village but also helped the neighbouring

village. We also got to know from his village that he cycled approximately 5 KMs to fetch water for his home and village, as there was a power outage and potable water was a problem.

He comes from a broken family. His mother is a daily labourer, and often times without work. No matter what, his heart is in the right place.

Team Sevalaya wishes him brilliant success.

Facilitating children with learning difficulties to join the mainstream...

K Malarmathy

“Amma”, as she is affectionately called by all students in the campus, has found a niche in honing her skills for children with learning difficulties. She says, “These children need a lot of love, support and encouragement. Positive reinforcement can help them overcome this difficulty.” One of her greatest qualities is that she does not give up easily. She knows it is a struggle but says she is used to facing such struggles. “In the beginning I faced a lot of problems to brighten up the slow learners. It is a work in progress. I am slowly beginning to see the children show interest in studies and an inclination to learn”.

She began her career at Sevalaya in 2010 as a Montessori teacher. From 2013 she is now teaching Tamil for high school students. She has thus far coached five batches of students for Board exams and has a 100% pass record in her subject. In the past few years, she has also assumed



the role of a counselor for the students (especially girls) who feel comfortable approaching her with personal issues too. She has earned the love and respect of her students, by giving them a patient hearing and guiding them with realistic and appropriate suggestions.

Another facet of Malarmathy is her constant presence when Sevalaya students participate in various competitions, both within and outside the campus. In the last 2 years she has assumed responsibility of not only organizing various competitions in the school, but also take care of preparing the students for each of these competitions. She is a constant source of encouragement and can be seen with the students preparing alongside them. She has been instrumental in Sevalaya school

winning many competitions and bringing accolades to the school.

Malarmathy further says, “I talk a lot about Sevalaya to my friends and relatives. Many of them are fascinated by the range of services offered by Sevalaya, and have visited the campus. The motto of Sevalaya LOVE ALL SERVE ALL inspired me a lot and I am proud to be a Sevalayan. My life has undergone a sea change.”

Malarmathy hails from Pattabiram. She is a B.Lit in Tamil and a D.T.Ed. Her husband is employed in the private sector. She has 2 children. Her son is studying E.C. Engineering 1st year and her daughter is in Std XII. She beams with pride when she says that Sevalaya has sponsored the higher education of her son.

The Baranagore Phase

After the Mahasamadhi of the Master, the young devotees were bewildered. The lease of the house they had rented was to expire. Where would they go? The house holder disciples advised them to go back home. Some of them expressed the view that they should realize God first, and then take up preaching and other works of service. But, Narendranath was firm that monks should serve mankind in a spirit of worship for purification of their hearts, and that this would ultimately lead to the realization of God.

In fact, some of the youngsters did go back and resumed the studies. But, Narendranath was determined that all of them should lead a life of renunciation. The Holy Mother understood the situation. She prayed to the Master, "O Lord! You came in human form, sported with them, and went away! Should everything end with that? What then was the need to undergo so much suffering? I saw in Varanasi and Vrindavan many sadhus who get their food by begging,

and shift their residence from the shade of one tree to another. There is no dearth of sadhus of that type. I cannot anymore bear to see my children who have given up everything for your sake, going from door to door for food. I pray that those who renounced the world for your sake may never be in need of at least coarse food and clothing. They will live together, taking your name and holding to your ideas and ideals; and people afflicted with the sufferings of the world will resort to them and get relief by hearing your teaching from them. Was this not what you really came for? I am really pained at heart to see them wandering about like this!" Her prayer was answered. By a Divine Vision of Sri Ramakrishna, a householder disciple was commanded to help his children who were in a bad plight and were wandering in the street. Surendra, the disciple immediately obeyed the command, and rendered them support. They hired a house at Baranagore which was said to be

a haunted one. With all the disciples who went out returning, the monastery came in to existence.

The young monks faced dire poverty. Unwilling to beg, they lived on what chance might bring. They vied with one another in doing the household chores. Many were the days when there was nothing to eat. Their only clothes were the kaupin and a few pieces of ochre cloth. One piece of cloth and a wrapper to be worn about the shoulders were common property.

Swami Vivekananda reminisced those days later: "Just think of it- a dozen boys, telling people vast, big ideas, saying that they are determined to work these ideas out in life. Why, everybody laughed. From laughter, it became persecution... Who would sympathize with the imaginations of a boy-imaginations that caused so much suffering to others? Who would sympathize with me? None-except one..." That one, was, the Holy Mother."

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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, New no. 24, Old no.20, Swami Achari St., Royapettah, Chennai -600 014.

Send your comments to: City Office : Sevalaya, No 54, P S Sivaswamy Road (North), Mylapore, Chennai-600 004, Tamil Nadu, India. Phone: 7299064457, 9444333529, 044-24982204
E.mail : sevalayaprhead@sevalaya.org, sevalayakasuva@sevalaya.org www.sevalaya.org

Editor T S Venkataramani

Correspondents

Anupriya Suresh, Kingston A A, Manoharan S, Radha Srinivasan, Rangarajan P, Rekha Perumal, Vijaya R

Design Thomas T Abraham