

## Four students in Tamilnadu teams for Handball



L to R: R Swetha, S Amsa and V Deepak (above) and P Santhosh (above, right)

V Deepak and S Amsa of Std VIII have been chosen to represent Tamilnadu in the under 14 Handball Nationals which is to be held in Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Gajner, Bikaner District, Rajasthan between 26<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> December 2017. Deepak plays left wing and Amsa plays right back.

It is a proud moment for both the students who come from underprivileged backgrounds to reach this stage. They have been playing handball since Std VI. "They play with passion and the fact that they were among the 16 selected out of 72 probables is commendable", says the Physical Director A Sankarapandian.

In the Under 17 category, R Swetha, Std X will represent the State for the second year in a row. She is a goal keeper, and says her rigorous training helped her maintain the fitness and focus required to be selected. She will represent the State in the School Games Federation of India, in the Under-17 category.

P Santhosh will represent the state in the Under 19 category and will travel to New Delhi to participate in the SGFI games to be held in New Delhi in January 2018. He is a Std XII student and has been studying

in Sevalaya since Montessori. He gives equal importance to both studies and sports. He plays right wing.

Rigorous training is part of their daily regimen, which begins at 6.30 am every day and lasts for 1.5 hours. They are provided with sports equipment like shorts, jerseys and shoes. They are given nutritious food including milk, soya

chunks, almonds, dates to supplement their protein and iron requirements. Apart from sports practice, students are given physiotherapy exercises regularly. Each month the students are taken to Thiruvallur SDAT stadium to monitor their development, in their skill, by noting down their fitness.

### Soaring high, jumping long and sprinting fast - R Dinesh



Sevalaya home resident R Dinesh of IX Std was one among the 12 students from various Homes in Nagapattinam, Chennai, Ranipet, Thiruvallur districts of Tamilnadu, who were selected to participate in the NGOs National Sports meet held in New Delhi from 19<sup>th</sup> November to 21<sup>st</sup> November on the occasion of Children's day. In the meet in which 612 students from 25 states participated, Dinesh's national ranking is 4<sup>th</sup> in 100 mts, high jump and long jump.

"It is a great opportunity and a very good experience for me to participate in National level competitions. I will focus more on Sports and practice well and come out as a topper."

# Joy of giving: the way of life

Whenever we feel down, the best medicine is to count our blessings. Something might have gone wrong on that day, but if we see the overall life we have lived so far, definitely, there will be a lot to feel proud of, lot to thank God. Do we realize that we have a lot to thank God?

This story about an old lady who was driven away from her home, by her own brother and relatives, who had to beg and survive, teaches us how to thank God.

MV Sitamahalakshmi (85) who has been begging near the Prasanna Anjaneya Swamy Temple, Vontikoppal, Mysuru, for almost 10 years, donated ₹ 2,50,000 to the temple for giving her shelter and taking care of her during her time there. Till the age of 75, Sitamahalakshmi was working as a domestic help and she could not continue working due to old



Photo credit: Times of India

age. She could not get support from her brother or other family members. Left with no other option, she decided to beg near the temple premises. For the past 10 years, it is only Anjeneya swami who is supporting her, through his devotees. She opened a bank account and deposited the money which was

given to her as alms, after taking care of her minimum requirements. In the span of ten years, the deposit amount has grown to ₹ 2,50,000. She decided to donate all the money to the temple. But the temple authorities were shocked at this proposal and initially refused to accept money from a beggar. But as God does not differentiate between the king and the beggar, finally the authorities accepted the donation. Sitamahalakshmi has requested the temple authorities to utilize her donation to distribute prasadam (holy offering of food) on every Hanuman Jayanthi (birthday of Hanuman).

No wonder 'Sita Mahalakshmi' wants to celebrate the birthday of Hanuman!

Thanks & Regards,  
Sevalaya Murali

# Fiery poet, captivating songs, melody personified

Dr Nityashree Mahadevan, a doyen in Carnatic music, enthralled the audience with Bharathiyar songs titled 'Kavirajan Kavithaigal' a program organised by Sevalaya at Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan, Mylapore on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

Mahakavi Bharathiyar's great grandson, Rajkumar Bharathi participated as the Guest of Honour, and spoke about the power of Bharathiyar's words and its eternity.

The audience was in raptures when Dr Nityashree sang some of Bharathiyar's famous songs, 'Kaakkai Siraginile nandalala', 'Vetri ettu thikkum'. One could see many people, especially the old timers, hum the songs along with



Dr Nityashree Mahadevan and troupe rendering Bharathiyar songs

Dr Nityashree. Such was the power of the lyrics that it resonates to this day.

As a kind gesture, Dr Nityashree Mahadevan and the accompanying artistes rendered the programme totally

free of cost, to benefit Sevalaya.

Dr Nityashree said that the service rendered by the organisation was dear to her heart, and she was always happy to be associated with Sevalaya.

# Mahatma's Collected works in Tamil

Gandhi Study centre, T.Nagar, Chennai every year conducts exam on Gandhiji's autobiography "My experiments with truth", to school children in Tamil Nadu. Prizes are distributed to the toppers every year at a function in memory of veteran Gandhian and founder of Gandhi Study Centre T D Thirumalai. This year function was held on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017.

Minister for Tamil culture, archeology and museums Mafoi K Pandiarajan was the Chief Guest and Sevalaya Murali the guest speaker. At the function, Sevalaya Murali appealed to the minister to bring out Gandhiji's complete works in Tamil,



Minister for Tamil culture, Archeology and Museums Mafoi K Pandiarajan, (seated fourth from Left), at the prize distribution ceremony, at Gandhi Study Centre

and the same was immediately accepted. The minister assured that in the next one year 100 volumes of complete works of Gandhiji will be published in Tamil.

## BGV class at Manachanallur Block



*BGV session in progress*

R Jeevendran, PG Teacher, Sevalaya and K Muthuramakrishnan, Advisor, Sevalaya conducted BGV classes on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017 in 5 Government middle schools in Manachanallur Block, Tiruchirappalli district. 250 students of Stds VI to VIII attended the classes.

The programme was coordinated by Durairajan, ex-staff of Sevalaya who is now an officer in SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) programme.

While Jeevendran concentrated on the lives of BGV, K Muthuramakrishnan briefed about the principles of truthfulness, fearlessness, and treating all equally without any prejudice on the basis of caste, religion, language, race, etc. Many examples from the lives of BGV were narrated.

Questions were put at the end and free books presented to children who answered correctly. The students listened with interest and responded well. The teachers of the schools appreciated this initiative of Sevalaya.

## "Taare Zameen Par" Drawing competition



Round Table India and Ladies Circle organized a painting competition, 'Taare Zameen Par' for over 4000 underprivileged kids at AVM Rajeshwari

Kalyana Mandapam, Mylapore on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2017. 49 students from Sevalaya participated and 6 of them won prizes.

## Rotary Neeta Talent competition

38 Students from Sevalaya participated in the Rotary Neeta Talent Competition 2017, conducted by Rotary Club of T Nagar, Chennai and Neeta Memorial Charitable Trust on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2017 at Kamarajar Hall, Chennai.

In the day long event, 2500 children which included special children also, from 52 NGOS participated in the various competitions like singing, dancing (both solo and group events), drama, etc.,

S Saratha and M Surya of Sevalaya were the winners in solo singing competition.



V Kanniga and B Sathish were selected for their best performance in group dance.

## A 'Kung-Fu Panda' treat for hostel residents



On 18<sup>th</sup> October 2017, the resident students were treated to a Special Movie Show by Madras coastal Round table Number 162. They sponsored the tickets for the movie Kung Fu Panda at Sathyam Cinemas. The 175 children had a rollicking time watching the blockbuster movie.

Foodbank sponsored lunch and snacks for all the children during and after the movie.

"I was thrilled to see the movie. We had a lot of laughs and time went by very fast. The snacks and food provided to us were also tasty."

*J Divya, Std V*

## Donor visits 'his' children



*R Madhavan and his family with children*

R Madhavan, a long standing donor visited Kasuva centre with his cousin V Suseela and daughters Priya Madhavan and Sangeetha Madhavan on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2017.

They were astonished by the growth of the organisation and the range of activities. They conducted games and quiz competition for 100 children from various classes and distributed gifts to them. Madhavan had already created Endowment for Education and living expenses for 5 children and now he created endowment for the education of 3 more children.

# Children's Day Celebrations by the Children, for the children

Every year, Sevalaya's students celebrate Children's day with children in Thiruvallur District Government General Hospital. This year too, Sevalaya's students performed cultural programme for the children at the hospital. 8 students danced for the children in the hospital ward. More than 70 sick children who were undergoing treatment for various illnesses were provided some relief from their pain and suffering. Sevalaya children distributed fruits and biscuits to the children in the hospital and wished them speedy recovery.

Dr Prabhu Shankar (General Medicine) said, "Sevalaya celebrates Children's day every year in the Hospital for the patients in the children's ward. I am delighted and thankful to Sevalaya", Dr Jagadeesan (General Medicine) and staff nurses also participated in the celebration.

At the school, K Gnanasekaran, District



Sevalaya children visited each child in the hospital ward, distributed fruits and biscuits and offered solace to them

Elementary Education Officer was the Chief Guest in on the occasion. In his brief speech he mentioned that felt honoured to participate in the function. He advised

the children that they should be self-confident and shared some of the events took place in his life.

## Library contest



Winners of the library competition

To inculcate the habit of reading books and encourage the use of library Sevalaya conducts various events like Essay writing, Oratorical, Poetry writing, Drawing and Drama competitions, every year for the students. The students have a library period every week when they are encouraged to read books from the library. The themes for the competitions are based on the books read by the children.

The top 3 winners in each competition will be awarded prizes. This year 450 students from Stds VI to VIII participated in the competitions with interest and enthusiasm.

"These competitions have encouraged the students to read more books. The library usage by children has improved over the years."

**D Pradap, Library Coordinator**

"I look forward to these competitions. I also keep looking out for any new arrival of books in the library. These books are helpful for preparing for oratorical competitions about the books I read with my friends in the book review meet".

**S Ranjani, VIII A**

## Caring for children with learning disability



Christiana Precious, an independent child counselor undertook training for all elementary and higher secondary school teachers, on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017 at the campus. She explained about Maslow's hierarchy of needs and slowly gravitated towards learning and methods of learning. She talked about where the difficulties usually lay among children and how to detect them early.

"We understood the Maslow's pyramid. We understood how to identify students with challenges in learning in the class and will apply what we learnt in the session in our class. We understood how to spot behavioural changes in the students."

**R Jeevendran, Chemistry Teacher**

## Volunteer activities in Kasuva



Volunteers from BNY Mellon immersing themselves in preparation of charts and flash cards for students

On 28<sup>th</sup> October 2017, 8 BNY Mellon volunteers came to the campus and made more than a 100 seedballs. The uniqueness of these seedballs is that they have the three ingredients needed to sprout – water, earth and seed all rolled into one. They can be thrown in arid areas and ditches, and still have a reasonable chance to sprout.

The volunteers also made Teaching Aid materials like Charts (Mathematics and Science) and flash cards for Mathematics. They were happy to see the trees planted by other BNY volunteers growing well in and around the campus.

## Nursing mentorship by BNY Mellon



BNY Mellon, the sponsors of the Nursing Assistant course at Kasuva campus, conduct seminars and training from time to time to benefit the students. This time they brought in specialists from their Womens Initiative Network team who presented a session on the aspects of taking care of the patients, like providing them utmost care, treating them like your own family, being attentive to their needs and ensuring that visitors don't get too close to the patients. The team also

mentioned that the Nursing assistants should take precautionary measures for their own safety. They finally rounded off by talk giving a few tips on ways to attend an interview.

"BNY Mellon team gave us a practical demonstration of attending interviews, and ways of tending to patients. It was very useful for us."

**V Sathya, Student, Nursing assistant, Kasuva**

## Strength-Weakness-Opportunity-Threat analysis



Sudha Umashankar, a regular volunteer at Kasuva, took a motivational session for Std X – Std XII students. She explained

about S-W-O-T (Strength-Weakness-Opportunity-Threat), and the ways it will benefit the students appearing for the exams, as well as their future. She impressed on the students to face the exams without fear.

"This session made us think about our goals and how to set goals. She motivated us to develop our own unique talents. This session was exciting and I am motivated to do my best."

**A Mahalakshmi, Std XII**

## Field visit by IIT Madras



10 students and 3 staff from IIT- Madras came to the campus on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2017. The students came to study the activities at Sevalaya to present a report for their social entrepreneurship course at IIT-Madras. They spent their time to observe the work at the Medical centre, Community college, Gaushala, Homes, Library and Organic farm. The visit was coordinated by Centre for Social Initiative and Management (CSIM).

Sevalaya is a role model, and I am inspired by the all-round good work done by the organization. I will definitely come again and contribute as much as I can in future.

**K Ramkumar, MBA, IIT Madras**

## Seminar on integrated education

On 11<sup>th</sup> November 2017, two Sevalaya teachers attended a seminar on Elements of Integrated Education conducted by Agarwal Vidyalaya Matriculation Higher Secondary School. Swami. Mithranandhaji Acharya, Director, Chinmaya Mission spoke about the need to develop four values - National values, Cultural values, Society values and Spiritual values. He also mentioned that education is not just about teaching that enables the child to score marks and qualify for next level. Education should deliver knowledge. Knowledge, he further mentioned, shapes ones thought, action, and character and creates a wholesome individual.

"The seminar provided an opportunity to discuss, place our views and develop an approach which can be used for imparting a fruitful education."

**K Revathi, AHM, Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiyar Elementary School**



## Achieving the impossible.....

### P B Vijayaraghavan

"I knew Sevalaya and Bhuvanewari Muralidharan, the Hony Correspondent, from the time Sevalaya was just an idea and let me frankly tell you... I was sceptical... My concern was genuine... What if things go wrong...? It is a tough thing to sustain... You can't even roll back as it will involve the lives of children and that was my biggest fear... Though I had an identical vision, I did not have the moral strength to take the plunge... Now after 30 years, I am happy to be proved wrong.... I am amazed at the growth of Sevalaya and the range of their activities and beneficiaries... says P B Vijayaraghavan, Officer on Special Duty at CAMS, beaming with pride.

"I now fully appreciate that the



*Sudha Vijayaraghavan and P B Vijayaraghavan*

importance of focusing at the present, within the framework of a grand plan, taking one step at a time and expanding as you grow. These concepts have been practically proven by Sevalaya....

Another wonderful thing about Sevalaya is people development. The kind of vertical and horizontal growth Sevalaya has achieved in these 30 years... it would have been impossible with just one Murali. I see that many more Muralis

have developed. I am impressed by the commitment to the cause which I can see in Ravi, Kingston, Radha, Vijaya, Anu. It is a great achievement which will ensure sustainability.

"Every time I visit the Sevalaya campus at Kasuva, I see a change, an improvement and many things happening... The discipline of the children, dedication of staff, the well maintained Gaushala, the effective implementation of the Montessori method of education encouraging the children to explore and learn, organic farming.... anything and everything about Sevalaya is amazing, inspiring and there is an abundance of positivity..."

Sevalaya is highly regarded in all sections –and I would say a 360° positive feedback – from the donors, the staff, the beneficiaries and the authorities... Sevalaya is also respected well in the social sector among other social organisations. In short, Sevalaya is a corporate in the social sector... very professional, bringing about effective positive changes in the lives of the underprivileged. I think that is its uniqueness..." concludes Vijayaraghavan.

## A self-taught chef

### L Venkatesan

"I started my career at the age of 11, cleaning and packing biscuits in a local Bakery" says L Venkatesan the Master in Sevalaya's Bakery. "I was studying in Std VI, at the Government High School, Periyapalayam, when my father passed away in 1990. I could not continue my studies and had to seek employment to support my family. Although I belong to Periyapalayam, I have worked in many Bakeries in and around Chennai as well as in Tirupathi. My first salary was ₹ 15/- per day."

"In each Bakery that I worked in, I learnt new trades – making biscuits, puffs, cakes, bun, bread, muffins. I got married in 2004. I went to Tirupathi in 2006 and worked in a Bakery there for three years. It was hard work, and I used to come to Chennai only during the weekends. In Tirupathi I



got to learn how to make Butter biscuits, cream biscuits and coconut biscuits. The market in Tirupathi is completely different from Chennai. People were not interested in bun, cakes or bread. They ate only biscuits."

"I decided to move back to Chennai in 2009 to be with my family and become an entrepreneur. I took a loan and started a bakery in Periyapalayam, my home town. In the mornings, I used to bake a variety of biscuits, bread and muffins. In the

evenings I used to go door to door to sell them. Initially I was able to break even, but the market became tough as the days went by. The interest on the loan that I took became very difficult for me to repay. In 2011, I decided to close the venture, at a huge personal loss. It was the most distressing period of my life. It was during this time that I became aware of Sevalaya and approached them for admission for my two children. My daughter is studying in Std VII and son is studying in Std V. I moved my family to Kasuva village to be near the school."

"After a tumultuous period, I went back to work in a bakery in Thiruninravur. It was a regular 9-5 job. Although the work was hectic, it did not provide the necessary satisfaction as I was not able to concentrate in one area of expertise."

"In December 2014, my wife got a job as a helper in Sevalaya. When Sevalaya started their bakery in June 2017, I was hoping to get a job. Even though I do not have formal education in Baking, Sevalaya gave me a chance showcase my skills. In the past few months, we have supplied cakes, vegetable puffs, biscuits and muffins."

"My family is happily settled and I look forward to working at Sevalaya for a long time."

## Counseling for Donor relations staff



*Interactive session on donor relations*

T S Venkataramani, Hon. Coordinator, Sevalaya, used his vast experience in LIC to provide counselling sessions on how to speak effectively to donors. It is an on-going exercise aimed at providing inputs

and gathering data from the trained staff. The topics explored the basic idea of donations, preferences of donors and their choice of institutions, prospecting new donors, and maintaining existing donors, and call etiquette.

The staffs were enthused and excited about the sessions.

"I have been doing donor relations for more than two decades, there were many things that I learned from the session. The most important message was to constantly stay in touch with the donor over the years."

**N Ravichandran, DR Officer**

## Motivation with a difference



Sqn Ldr Unni Nair, a retired Air Force Officer from Chennai offered an interactive motivational session to the school and community college students. He covered various aspects of human nature – fear and perseverance. He gave practical examples of fear via videos, and how to quell them. He gave examples of achievements of human beings who

had lost their limbs. Again, videos were shown for impact. He spoke about the practical uses of static and kinetic energy in our day to day lives.

Last but not the least he sang meaningful songs from MGR movies to entertain the children.

## Training in Video editing



V Devaraj, Instructor, Community college, Kasuva campus, conducted two day training for city and campus staff on video editing.

## Progress in 5S training



T M Venkatesan, Chairman and Mentor; Geetha Venkatesan, Founder and Administrator, Focus 5 Training Institute, Hyderabad and T N Ganesh, Independent

## Creating a conscious learning environment



Three volunteers from Heartfulness came to the campus on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2017 and conducted a session on relief from stress, effective lesson plans for students, and meditation. Fifteen teachers benefitted from the session.

The session started with a memory exercise that evolved into a game. The volunteers explained about the origin of stress and the ways it percolates into the human mind and body and causing damage. The volunteers talked about class room activities and the method of engaging students with effective lesson plans. Videos were also shared during the session. The session ended with meditation. The session was very useful to the teachers.

"We learnt a new teaching technique through Heartfulness education. We learnt some new ideas to make a good lesson plan. I enjoyed the meditation session during training. I will introduce some of the techniques to improve the teaching methods to benefit the students."

**R Ezhilarasan, Biology Teacher**

Consultant Trainer Professor and H V Ramanamurthy, Director, FOCUS-5 have been coming to the campus regularly to impart and monitor the 5S program initiated a few months ago at Sevalaya. On 25<sup>th</sup> November they came to the campus and guided the staff. They also monitored the road map and tracked the progress for the previous month.

"This is the third session I am attending. Now I have a clear idea of responsibility and execution. I am responsible for Primary school playground and the ground floor. I keep the place neat and clean always."

**R Priyanka, Primary School teacher**

## Each job - a gift of God!

Here is an anecdote from the life of Gandhiji.

After World War II began, there was a deep dispute between the Congress and the British Government. The cause of the dispute was that the Viceroy had unilaterally announced that India was with the Allied Nations. Congress' stand was, when they had majority in eight states, they should have been asked on which side they were.

"If we were asked, we would negotiate, we would ask them to declare their intentions about the war, and if they were to declare as their intention freedom for subject nations, then the route to our independence too would open up" was their line of thinking.

There was strong protest in the country and Gandhiji was asked to come to Simla to discuss the matter. While Gandhiji had

the liberty to talk on his own ideas, the viceroy as a representative of the King could not take all decisions on his own. During a particular stage of talks, Viceroy said the talks could continue after a week. Narayan Desai, who had accompanied Gandhiji, was very happy that he could enjoy a week of sight-seeing in Simla. But very soon his ambitions were dashed to the ground. Gandhiji said, "Pack up!" Desai could not believe himself. "Where to?", he asked in disbelief. "From where we came!", pat came the reply. It was Sevagram. From the coolness of Simla to the sweltering heat of Sevagram!

It would take two days to go and two days to return. Four days gone. What important work could have been there in Sevagram for just three days?

Yes. There was a very important work waiting for Gandhiji in Sevagram. There

was one Pachuri Sastri who was a former resident of Sevagram. He had gone back to his home. But when he contracted leprosy, his own people drove him away. Gandhiji had built a hut for him to stay. Whenever Gandhiji was in Sevagram, every day for 45 minutes, he would massage with his own hands that patient of the 'incurable leprosy'. He did not want to miss the opportunity of massaging Sastri for three days.

To Gandhiji, the issue of on which side India should be in the war and massaging a leprosy patient are of equal importance.

Narayan Desai says, "Why did this happen? Because he thought of each job, as a gift of God. As it was all God-given, he could see equal importance in everything."

## Yoga session in city office



A 'basic of yoga' course was conducted at the city office on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2017. The half-day session was attended by fifteen staff and a guest. The course was conducted by Yogasharan (V S Prakash), a full time practitioner from Atma Niranjan Yoga Vidyalaya, Chennai. The session was a blend of talk and practice. Keeping the spine erect at all times and awareness of breath were the most important takeaways from the session.

"This was an eye opener for us. Practicing these techniques will surely benefit us in the long run."

**Radha Srinivasan, VP-Donor relations, Sevalaya**



**V Rameshwari**  
Awarded 'Seva Vidhya',  
Computer Skills Training



*Mahakavi Bharathiyar Community College, Vadanallur, Kanchipuram, Tamilnadu*

*"Being born poor its not my fault, but growing out of it is my choice"*

*After completing +2, I was looking for a job.*

*It was then I came to know 4 months free training on "Computer Skills" by Sevalaya Community College.*

*I grabbed the opportunity and qualified myself.*

*Now I am working as 'Customer Support Executive' in Rural Shores Pvt Ltd'*

*Thank you Sevalaya !*

*- V Rameshwari*

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