

## Sevalaya responds to Kerala's distress call Relief materials rushed. Many staff contribute a day's pay



Relief materials from Sevalaya to Kerala handed over to E Sundaravalli, District Collector, Thiruvallur

The skies opened up in the first week of August, most dams were opened and gushing water submerged most of Kerala. Officially, 206 people lost their lives, lakhs of people are rendered homeless and living in camps. The extensive damage to property and infrastructure is yet to be estimated. With the prior experience in organising relief work during the Chennai floods in 2015, Sevalaya reacted swiftly and the first truck load of relief materials were handed over to E Sundaravalli, District Collector, Thiruvallur for despatch to Kerala on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2018. The consignment consisted of dhothies,



Relief materials ready to be sent to Kerala

sarees, water bottles, dress materials, blankets, buckets and mugs.

Sevalaya staff who had witnessed, if not directly affected by, the floods in Chennai in 2015, could relate to the situation at Kerala. Many staff volunteered to contribute one day's salary to be used for the relief measures undertaken by Sevalaya. It was really heartening to note that staff working on kitchen, gaushala and agricultural field, whose earnings may not be much, willingly came forward to donate one day salary.

Including a truck load that left on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2018, ` 5 lacs worth of relief materials have been collected or bought and despatched to Kerala.

## 'The best I could do'- farm hand Murugesan



Murugesan was the first one to readily offer one day salary for Kerala Flood relief. Murugesan and his wife Sivakami joined Sevalaya two years ago and work

in Sevalaya's organic farm.

"I am reminded of the 2015 floods. I have seen on television, the fury of the waters and how people were affected, stranded by the floods. When our neighbours are in distress, is it not our duty to extend support?" quizzes Murugesan.

"As an organisation Sevalaya does many things to provide relief for the people. As an individual I wanted to do my part. This is the best I could do", says Murugesan with all humility.

## First venture outside State

### Community College at Puducherry

Sevalaya's maiden venture outside the State of Tamil nadu, a Community College, was inaugurated on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2018 at Thirubhuvanai, Puducherry.

Full report on page 2...

# Joy of giving: *the way of life*

Dear friends,

During any natural calamity, there is always a rush to help and many times the efforts go unplanned and uncoordinated. During Chennai floods in 2015, lorry loads of food were taken to same area. When Sevalaya team arrived there with dress materials and blankets, we saw that one lorry full of Chapathies, one lorry full of mixed rice, butter milk, milk and many items entered a small village. The villagers become choosy and started demanding "I want only chapatti" or "Poori". We also found out that in many interior villages, no one had reached, as all relief materials were forcefully stopped by local dhadhas or political parties and were emptied near main roads, thus nothing reached interior villages. So Sevalaya decided not to have any banners etc., and our vehicles didn't show any outward indication of relief materials being carried. So we escaped from the goondas and reached interior villages.

Taking a lesson, the Government had decided to collect relief materials from all NGOs for Kerala and take them with Government escorts. There is lot of talk



*Little Anupriya with her piggy bank savings*

about do we really need to help – one viral audio clipping claimed that no need to support as the people affected are rich. The same audio also promoted one NGO and said they are the only ones doing genuine work! Well, even if a rich person has lost everything in the floods, he needs food and clothing for the next day!

When elders keep debating about the pros and cons of flood relief, a little girl has taught all of us a lesson. This girl Anupriya who is 8 years old saw in media the sufferings of Keralites and immediately responded. She had five piggy banks and was collecting coins

from her parents to save money to buy a bicycle. She has been saving for the past 4 years; that means the habit has started from age 4! Four piggy banks are full and the fifth one is half full! She emptied all the five piggy banks boxes and the total savings was ₹9000. She decided that helping the people in need is more important than buying a bicycle for her. The 2<sup>nd</sup> grade student had the clarity of thought to make this decision! With her parents help the money was sent to Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

While elders are debating about whether help is required or not, or how to help, this 8 year old girl, from Villupuram, a small town in middle of Tamil Nadu, had no problem in decision making. She had no hesitation in giving away her four years savings. Well-done, Anu Priya.

On learning about this, Hero cycles, a bicycle manufacturer, has offered to donate a bicycle to her every year! Clearly proving, what you give, will come back to you!

Thanks and Regards

Sevalaya Murali

## First venture outside Tamilnadu Community College at Thirubhuvanai, Puducherry

Sevalaya's first foray outside Tamilnadu is a Community College in Puducherry. On 9<sup>th</sup> August 2018, Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiyar community college at Thirubhuvanai, 21 KMs off Puducherry.

The Community college offers free training in Tailoring and basic computer applications. This will offer a lifeline to school drop outs stuck without employment due to lack of employable skills. 45 women have enrolled for the courses which run in two batches.

Speaking on the occasion, the Founder and Managing Trustee of Sevalaya V Muralidharan, highlighted that the organisation has been running community colleges in seven locations in partnership with various corporates.

Vocational training in Courses like tailoring, basic computer applications, nursing assistant, beautician services, Electrician, AC & refrigeration service, bakery and lab technician assistant courses are conducted. Many rural youth are benefitted by these courses.



*Inaugurating the Puducherry community college*

Inaugurating the college, Sevalaya Muralidharan urged the students to make the best use of the opportunities provided to them.

Amarchand Jain Advisor Sevalaya, who addressed the students, said that educating women will benefit the entire family and hence all the students should regularly attend the classes, complete the course so that they can get employment and improve their standard of living'

Senior staff from Sevalaya, Thiruvallur, advisors and trustees of Sevalaya, and donors from Thirubhuvanai participated in the function.



*Suresh Kumar, Financial software and system (p) Ltd. handing over cheque for sponsoring education of 60 students and living expenses of 15 senior citizen to G Ramanathan, Trustee Sevalaya*

# 72<sup>nd</sup> Independence Day celebrations across various locations



*Dr Narmatha, Sevalaya alumna hoisted the flag at Kasuva Centre*

The first doctor from Sevalaya, alumna Dr Narmatha hoisted the National flag at Kasuva Centre. It was a very proud and emotional moment for her. Alumni E Madan, Head Constable, Economic Offences Wing, CID, and G Raghavendran, Vice President, Standard Chartered Global Business Services graced the occasion with their presence.



*Blood donation in progress*

Alumni Association of Sevalaya organised a Blood Donation Camp in association with Chennai Voluntary Blood bank and Research Centre, Chennai. 75 people including staff and alumni donated blood. The children presented a cultural programme.



*Saluting the National flag at Thirubhuvanai centre Sevalaya*

At Sevalaya's community College at Thirubhuvanai, Puducherry, P John, Social worker hoisted the National flag and spoke to the students about how to utilize the skills for Income generation and personality development. Competitions like 'Musical Chair' and 'Lemon & Spoon' were conducted and prizes were distributed to the winners.

Chief Guest K Arulappan, Assistant Manager - HR of Pinstar Automotive India Pvt Ltd hoisted the National flag at Sevalaya's Sunguvarchatram centre. Insisting on the importance of skill development, The Chief Guest urged the students to make the best use of great opportunity provided by Sevalaya. He also assured that his company would be willing to offer placements for the successful candidates from Sevalaya. 30 students and staff participated in the celebrations.



*Chief Guest K Arulappan hoisted the National flag at Sevalaya's Sunguvarchatram centre*



At Sevalaya's Ambattur centre, Chief Guest Sowmya Mahadevan, COO of Exeter Premedia hoisted the National flag. It was followed by an inspirational speech about "Importance of developing our skills and why it is needed in this competitive world. Prizes were distributed to the winners of Drawing and Essay writing competitions conducted for Govt Girls Hr. Sec School students earlier.



*Sowmya Mahadevan, COO of Exeter Premedia addressing the gathering*



*Chief guest B Pugazhenthii addressing the students at Vadanallur centre*

B Pugazhenthii, Retired LIC Development Officer and Social worker, was the Chief Guest at Sevalaya, Vadanallur centre, Independence Day celebration and hoisted the National flag. He spoke about freedom fighters and their sacrifices for our Nation. He also wished the students for a bright future.

R Chinnadurai, Rtd PWD Superintendent, Thanjavur hoisted the National flag at Sevalaya's Thanjavur centre. Children, teachers and Headmistresses of Panchayat school at Thalavaipalayam and Kollumedu, where Sevalaya provides



*Distribution of sweets to school children at Thanjavur centre*



*Breakfast for Panchayat school children*

free breakfast, participated in the celebrations.

The children presented a cultural programme on the occasion. Ranjan, a well-wisher and a patron of Sevalaya at Thanjavur distributed chocolates to the children.

## "Say No to Alcohol" - Students take pledge on Putliba Day

Over 500 students of the school and community colleges assembled with their mothers at Sevalaya Kasuva Centre on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2018. It was an emotionally charged moment when the students held their mothers' hands and promised that they would never touch alcohol in their lives. The occasion was Putliba day.

Mahatma Gandhi, got permission from his mother Putliba to go to London for pursuing higher studies, only after he promised her that he would not touch wine, women and meat. This was in August 1888.

With alcoholism posing a great threat to the society in Tamilnadu, Sevalaya organises Putliba Day every year in August, when the students are made to promise their mothers that they will abstain from alcohol. This is a small but an important step towards creating a



better and healthier future for the rural youth. G Ram Mohan, Retd. Railway Safety Commissioner, and a Gandhian Scholar, who conceived and sponsor this

programme every year, administered the oath to the students. T shirts with the inscription "I will not touch alcohol" were distributed to the students.

## World Breastfeeding Week



*Breastfeeding awareness program in progress*

World Breastfeeding Week is an annual celebration held every year from 1 to 7 August in more than 120 countries.

Sevalaya's community college nursing students conducted a breastfeeding awareness programme at Nathamedu village.

The aim was to enhance optimal breastfeeding practices, which includes early initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth, continued breastfeeding for at least two years along with safe

and appropriate nutritious food on completion of six months. They were also taught about antenatal care, personal hygiene during postnatal period. There was an open discussion after the session in which their doubts have been cleared. Around 20 women attended the session.

"The team from Sevalaya cleared my doubts on how to increase lactation and how to take care of the baby."

**Shalini, mother of 20 days old baby**

## Gifts galore and birthday celebrations with SCGBS Staff

9 volunteers from Standard Chartered Global Business Services (SCGBS) landed at campus with 580 stationery gift packs for the students of Stds V to VIII. Each kit consisted of 10 small size ruled note, 1 geometry box, 1 box of pencils, 6 ball point pens.

The students were pretty excited to receive the gifts and they also shared the pencils and pens with their friends in other classes.

On the same day 211 students from Std IV to XII who had birthdays in June and July were taken to SCGBS office at Haddows Road, Nungambakkam.

Birthday celebrations were organised for these kids and the staff of SCGBS who had birthdays in June and July. It was all song and dance and celebrations all

the way. The birthday boys and girls cut cakes. The students were divided into groups. And materials were provided to



*Making greeting cards with volunteers*



*Stationery kits presented to children*

them to make greeting cards. Having got an opportunity to express their creativity, the students with the help of the staff of SCGBS made beautiful greeting cards and exchanged with their friends.

They were also treated to a special lunch. It was a very memorable birthday celebration for the children who thoroughly enjoyed the day.

## Providing quality health care to the needy ...

### Dr Gajalakshmi J R

Dr Gajalakshmi J R, working at Sevalaya's medical centre, shares her father's desire to improve health services in the interior villages of Thiruvallur district by building a hospital providing state of the art facilities to the underprivileged. However this desire came much later in life.

As a young girl studying in a private school at Thiruninravur, her role model had been her dynamic headmistress and little Gajalakshmi had wanted to become a teacher like her. Gajalakshmi would participate in all extra-curricular activities and walk away with prizes in all competitions.

Her father who had undergone several hardships and struggles in his life growing up at Agaram, a small village, dreamt of a doctor in the family who would serve the less privileged. However his elder daughter had set her heart on engineering and so Gajalakshmi was admitted to Meenakshi Medical College at Kanchipuram. While doing her internship, the postings at the ICU of the hospital gave her a deeper insight. "Sharing the hopes and fears, sorrows



and joys of the relatives of the patients, who bond with us, interns more than the busy Chief Doctor developed my passion for this profession." says Dr Gajalakshmi. After completing MBBS, the doctor set up a clinic at Tamaraiykkam and got a better understanding of the problems and challenges faced by the villagers. The basic lack of awareness of facts of life among teenagers and rural women strengthened her desire to work with the rural underprivileged.

"Working with Sevalaya since the past six months has been a satisfying experience as I am able to do just what I wanted. Sevalaya's Mobile medical van conducts about 40 camps a month and we reach out to more and more villagers who need

health care. When I went with the van to my native village, villagers crowded round me fondly when they realized that I was one of them." Says Dr Gajalakshmi with a twinkle in her eye.

Dr Gajalakshmi conducts regular awareness sessions for the teenagers at school, and for the staff firmly believing the adage that prevention is better than cure. The residents of Sevalaya's homes are under her constant supervision and the number of out-patients coming to the medical centre has increased, a veritable proof of her capability.

She is interested in the development and management of health care projects that focus on providing accessible and sustainable health care to the needy.

## Kargil Day



The 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas (Kargil Victory Day) was celebrated at Kasuva centre by the Alumni association on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2018. The programme was

organised by the Alumni Association. G Ilayaraja, President of the Alumni Association and Trustee of Sevalaya, in his speech recalled the undaunted spirit of

valour and patriotism of our Army.

The 500 soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice of laying down their lives protecting the territory of our Nation from intruders were remembered and prayers were held in their memory.

Vaishnavi studying in Velammal Engineering College, Ashok Shankar working in Cognizant Technology Services, and Dr Narmatha who were the key persons in organising the programme, 380 students of Sevalaya and 25 alumni participated.

The students presented a cultural programme and performed mime, skits, song and dance in the based on the theme of Kargil war.

# Model Village Project at Nathamedu

Nathamedu, a sleepy little village, 5 Kms from Thiruninravur is a very ordinary village. There are 200 families in the village. The children have to travel 3 to 5 Kms to go to school. Open defecation was a common practice as there were no toilet or water facilities. Because of unhygienic conditions, people fell sick often and the nearest medical service is available at Pakkam which is 3 Kms away.

All this has changed now. Sevalaya as the NGO Partner in the CSR project of Cholamandalam Finance and Investments has implemented the Model Village Project. A medical centre has been constructed. A doctor and a nurse attend to the patients. Free medicines are also supplied to the patients. An RO plant has been installed to provide clean drinking water to the residents of the village.



*Doctor examining patient at Nathamedu medical centre*

Open defecation was a common practice in this village. Sevalaya has constructed a toilet complex consisting of 6 toilets for ladies and 4 for gents. An overhead tank and a water tank inside the toilet complex is also provided. Adequate water facilities are provided by repairing the Panchayat borewell and pipe connections which were damaged.

A tuition centre has also been constructed. 45 children from the village



*Toilet complex at Nathamedu village*

who go to Government Schools at Pakkam and Thiruninravur come to the tuition centre in the evenings.

A teacher has been appointed at the Centre who helps the children with their homework and pays individual attention to each one of them to clear their doubts.



*Tuition class is going on at Nathamedu*

The model village project was inaugurated by Richa Singh, CSR Head of Cholamandalam Investments and Finance Limited.

Hemanthakumar Pamarthy, CSR Consultant for Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Ltd, Pugazhendi,



*Richa Singh, CSR Head of Cholamandalam Investments and Finance Limited inaugurating the RO plant. Also in the picture Hemanthakumar Pamarthy, CSR Consultant and Sevalaya Muralidharan*

Village Administrative Officer, Nathamedu, Sevalaya staff and villagers participated in the function.

"All of us in our village thank Sevalaya for identifying our village and providing us the much needed basic facilities of drinking water, toilets, healthcare and education. We are very thankful to Sevalaya and Cholamandalam."

**Madan, Auto driver, Nathamedu**

## Training on E mail etiquettes



A 2 hour training session on E-Mail etiquettes was conducted by N Noor Faseeha, Data Associate, Amazon at Ambattur Community College.

"E mail has become the main form of communication and hence it is very important that students should be aware about etiquettes to be followed" she said.

*Left:E-mail etiquettes training program*

She further spoke to them about the need to be polite while writing mails, clear communication without being vague and leaving it open for assumption, the need to use correct spelling and grammar etc.,

25 students of Sevalaya's Ambattur community college attended the session.

# Gandhi 150 - India of my dreams

## Sevalaya's Annual exhibition - A curtain raiser for Mahatma's 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary

As a curtain raiser to the 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi, the theme of the Annual Exhibition of Sevalaya this year was Gandhi 150 - *India of my dreams*.

More than 225 students actively participated in the setting up of the exhibition, the theme of which was taken from the book "India of my dreams" authored by Gandhiji and Sevalaya's initiatives to make the dream come true.

The exhibits and models were displayed in 20 rooms.

The activities of Sevalaya in accordance with Gandhiji's ideas on education, vocational education, nonviolence, truth, simplicity, women empowerment, communal harmony, rural development, Khadi and cleanliness were explained through skits, puppet shows and villuppattu.

A film show on Gandhiji's life was also screened.



*Villuppattu Performance by our students*

43 students and 6 teachers from 8 schools - Govt. High school-Pakkam, Govt boys high school-Velliyur, Vivekananda Vidyalaya -Thiruninravur, Apollo Ashram school, Thirumazhisai, Oxford Matriculation school, Thiruninravur, Harihara Vidyalaya, Thamaraiykkam, Govt. High school, Trisulam 7 and Air force Higher Secondary School, Avadi participated in the exhibition and displayed their models.

The 5 day exhibition was inaugurated by N Latha, Director, Non Formal and Adult Education, Govt. of Tamilnadu on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2018. In her address she mentioned "The true victory for Gandhian principles is when they are put into practice and Sevalaya has been doing



*N Latha, Director, Non Formal and Adult Education, Govt. of Tamilnadu viewing the exhibition*

this commendably for 30 years now."

She said that children from all schools must visit this exhibition which highlights that Gandhiji's principles are still relevant.

320 students from 5 schools - Govt. High school, Pakkam, Govt. Girls High school, Veliyur, Govt. Higher Secondary School, Thiruninravur, Amudha Matriculation school, Thiruninravur and Harihara Vidyalaya, Thamaraiykkam visited the exhibition.



*Noakhali yatra of Gandhiji depicted*



*Model of Sabarmathi Ashram*



*Model of a self sufficient village*

The theme of the exhibition – Gandhi 150 – *India of my dreams* and the presentation through skits and puppet shows were excellent. The meticulous efforts by Sevalaya team could be seen. It was quite an educative and informative exhibition. Sevalaya also provided our students an opportunity to participate in the exhibition. The theme encouraged the students to read more about Gandhiji and his vision for India and made them think. On the whole it was a wonderful representation of past, present and future India which made the younger generation feel proud to be an Indian.

**Principal, Harihara Vidyalaya, Thamaraiykkam**

# The "I Will Do" Mantra (A liberal rendering of a story in Tamil by Mahakavi Bharathiyar)

Eight hundred years ago, a city called "City of Knowledge" was ruled by a king by name Stout heart. He had many enemies. He was once kidnapped by his own relatives, with the connivance of a few treacherous employees.

He was made unconscious during the operation by squeezing an herbal juice in to his nostrils. He was lodged in a dark cave and the entrance was closed with a boulder.

Waking up, he found it was utter darkness. His hands and legs were chained.

He could not see anything nor was he able to understand who among his enemies could have done this. He was deadly thirsty; he was breathing fast, could not stand up and his eyes were reeling.

He shouted as loudly as he could, "God! Have you decided to take my life?"

"Yes" replied an invisible voice.

"Who are you?" He demanded to know.

"King of Death" pat came the reply.

He said, "I am in the prime of my youth. I have an intelligent and beautiful wife; I have a leonine son. I have a kingdom, and have to take care of my subjects."

A derisive, loud laughter was what he could get in response.

Suddenly, a Mantra taught by his mother when she was in her death bed came to his mind. She had told whenever he was in danger he should chant this Mantra which will protect him." I will do; I will do; I will do" was the Mantra.

He chanted the Mantra.

At this time a snake came and bit one of his toes.

Dismayed, he asked, "Is this the effect of the Mantra?"

A Voice resembling that of his Mother firmly said, "Don't Fear! Chant the Mantra! Chant the Mantra! Chant the Mantra!"

He chanted the Mantra," I will do; I will

do: I will do."

"Do, Do, Do!" said the voice.

Suddenly he felt strong and with a fierce force he shook his limbs. The chains broke away. He pulled the sword which was with him and cut of the toe bitten by the snake. Blood was streaming. He tore a piece from his attire, and tied at the spot.. The blood flow stopped.

He was exhausted by this effort and was terribly thirsty. "What should I do? What should I do?" He cried out," Never, Never, Never give up!" the voice urged in response. "Bang your head on the rock!"

He banged his head on the boulder that had been set to close the entrance. His head bled. Unmindful, he banged his head.

The entrance was not properly closed, and the rock gave way. Crying out joyfully, the Mantra, "I will do; I will do, I will do!" He went to his kingdom, and ever chanting the Mantra, he ruled the country peacefully thereafter.

## Musical and Dance theatre *Moovarnam*



Dhakshayani Ramachandran, Director, Nrithyaarpana Dance School, provided an opportunity to 14 students of Sevalaya to participate in her production, *Moovarnam*, a musical and dance theatre on the occasion of the Ruby Jubilee

celebration and the 72<sup>nd</sup> Independence Day celebration. *Moovarnam*(Tricolour), depicted the stories and sacrifices made by the innumerable freedom fighters for the Independence of our Nation. Sevalaya children were very thrilled.

## Donation for land purchase



D V Sridharan, long time donor and well wisher, handing over cheque for ₹ 8,50,000 for purchase of land at Madurantakam

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