

## LIC funds ₹25 lac for Thanjavur OAH new block

K Venkatraman, Senior Divisional Manager, LIC of India, Thanjavur, inaugurated the new block at Sevalaya's Gandhi Ashram Krishnan Memorial Senior Citizens' Home at Thanjavur on Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

The 1200 sq.ft block with a dormitory which can accommodate 10 senior citizens, 3 bathrooms and 3 toilets, and a common hall is sponsored by LIC Golden Jubilee Foundation.

The land for the Home was donated by Sri K Muthuramakrishnan and family, son of a veteran freedom fighter Gandhi Ashram Krishnan. Sri A Mageswaran, Sevalaya's well-wisher who is an LIC official and B Chandramouli, retired LIC official and board member of Sevalaya, helped and guided Sevalaya in the process of applying for and getting the grant from LIC Golden Jubilee Foundation.

K Rajeswari, District Social Welfare Officer, (DSWO), Thanjavur and Prof. T Indira, (Rtd. Professor of English, Kundavai Nachiyar Govt. Women's Arts College), Thanjavur and devotee, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mariyamman Kovil, Thanjavur were the Special Guests at the inaugural function.



Inaugurating the block, The Chief Guest K Venkatraman mentioned that it was his good fortune to have got an opportunity to participate in this function. "While I cannot wish that Old age Home should grow in size, I whole heartedly appreciate the services offered by Sevalaya in providing a peaceful and dignified life for the destitute elders." said Venkatraman.

Prof T Indira spoke about Swami Vivekananda's ideas on social service and shared inspiring anecdotes and experiences from the life of Swami

Akandanandha when he was serving the needy. Rajeswari, District Social Welfare Officer, in her address appreciated the services of Sevalaya and assured all support from the Social Welfare Department.

Sevalaya, ([www.sevalaya.org](http://www.sevalaya.org)), a registered Charity serving the cause of the underprivileged since 1988, started its operations in Thanjavur in 2018. 20 senior citizens, who are abandoned find a life of peace and dignity at this home.

## Divya reaches Nationals



A Divya of Std VIII won gold medal in the State Athletic Championship 2021 conducted by Tamilnadu Athletics Association in the U-14 category in the ball throw event.

She recorded a distance of 40.98 mts - a lead of 4 cms.

She will be representing the State in the National Meet to be conducted at Sarjuserai Stadium at Guwahati from 6<sup>th</sup> February 2021 to 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

Congratulations Divya and best wishes to win the Nationals!

# Homage to Dr V Shanta

Dear Friends,

Dr V Shanta, the architect of Cancer Institute (WIA) popularly known as Adyar Cancer Institute, in Chennai was an inspiration to many.

She has saved many lives, treated many poor cancer patients with love and care, given solace to many families suffering from the deadly disease. Her passing away recently has snatched away a dedicated social worker, a warrior against the deadly disease.

Normally we see qualified people use their qualification only to make money, build their personal fortune, become richer and richer. Very rarely we find a person who is highly qualified but has a total disregard for monetary gains and offers ones services totally free of cost.

Dr V Shanta joined cancer hospital when it was just a 12 bedded small hospital. It was founded by the legendary Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy, who was first

female surgeon in Chennai and one of the first few female doctors in India.

Dr Shanta joined this team and after Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy, worked closely with Dr S Krishnamurthi, her son and built the hospital brick by brick. Today the Adyar Cancer Institute is a state of the art hospital, serving the needs of millions of poor cancer patients.

Dr Shanta lived all her life in a small one room accommodation inside the hospital.

She did this so that she can be on call 24 X 7. Whenever any patient needs her support, she will be there within minutes. No weekend, no week off, no holiday, no personal life! She lived like this for more than 65 years, inside the hospital and breathed her last at the age of 94. She did not have a family of her own and all poor cancer patients were her family.

I had the occasion to meet her in couple of functions, one held inside the hospital. She was always smiling – it is very difficult



to smile when you see so many people with illness around you all the time! She was very simple and always remained

focused. Even during the function, I could notice that she was giving instructions to other doctors about treatment to be given to some patients.

We will miss a dedicated, sincere, service minded, affectionate doctor. It will be very difficult to find one more personality like this in future.

Thanks and Regards

Sevalaya Murali

## 3 New Associate Vice Presidents Join

Sevalaya registered appreciable expansion in operations during the months of the pandemic, responding to the unique situations and challenges. To manage the ongoing growth in prospect, the manpower resources have been strengthened, with the addition of three Associate Vice Presidents.

N Navin Kumar will work with Vice President - Donor Relations, P Prasanna. L Ashok Kumar and C Jaikrishna have joined in Operations, supporting A A Kingston, Vice President – Operations.



N Navin Kumar(49), Associate Vice President – Donor Relations brings with him, two decades of varied

and pan India experience in the social development sector, including project management, training and development, knowledge management, quantitative research, stakeholder engagement, social audit.

Starting with short stints in CRY and Oxfam India Society, Navin's major engagement has been with Deepam

Educational Society for Health. Navin is familiar with community structures, having worked with women's self help groups, Tsunami relief and health awareness.



L Ashok Kumar (37), Associate Vice President - Operations did BE (EEE) from Hindustan college of Engineering, and MBA

from Madras University.

Ashok Kumar has an overall 16 years experience in Production & Quality Assurance in Switchgear/Circuit Breaker Assembly, Voice, non voice and customer service in Panickker Switchgear, HTMT, Allsec, Reliance BPO and HTC Global.

Active in NSS in his college days, he has been associated part time with Human Rights of India since 2015.

"What I experienced at Kasuva convinced me to join Sevalaya, though I had three job offers with better salaries. Sevalaya has given me the opportunity for social service at a level I cannot do alone", he says.



C Jaikrishna (33), Associate Vice President - Operations is a B.Sc in computer science from Hindu college, Pattabiram

and MBA in HR and Marketing from S A Engineering college.

Following 3 years in the Quality and Audit Team at Hexaware, he switched to Logistics and soon turned entrepreneur. Running one's own company has been an great opportunity for wholesome learning. Slowdown in business caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic led to the closing down of the business.

A resident of Thiruninravur, he had known about Sevalaya for long. What he saw in Kasuva recently rekindled his desire to do social service. He says he always had a bitter experience about NGOs and their quality of work. But after joining Sevalaya and finding the services he has changed the mind that there are good NGOs who are working for good cause. "I am impressed by what Sevalaya is doing. I am happy to join Team Sevalaya." says Jaikrishna



# Welcome 2021



The dawn of New Year was celebrated at various centres of Sevalaya in the first week of January 2021. Jyoti Lakshmi Narayanan, Director of Information Technology, DTCC was the Chief Guest at Kasuva Centre at the celebrations on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021. K A Ramaswamy, Freelance Vocational Training Consultant also joined in this event.

At Mambakkam, Manjunathan Msc, Deputy BDO, Sriperumbudur, was the Chief Guest for the New Year celebrations on 2nd January 2021.

At Thirubuvana centre, Puducherry, A Sandirane, Vice Principal, Pavendar Bharathidasan Govt Hr Sec. School,

P S Palayam was the Chief Guest for the celebrations held on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

K Rajeswari, District Social Welfare Officer, Thanjavur was the Chief Guest at the New Year Celebrations at Thanjavur centre on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021.



## Republic Day at all centres of Sevalaya



The 72<sup>nd</sup> Republic Day was celebrated at various centres of Sevalaya on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

R Lakesh, alumnus of Sevalaya, who is at present Process Engineer at Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Hyderabad was the Chief Guest at Kasuva Centre.

Lt Col S Ramesh Kumar was the Special Guest. Homage was paid to late T M Vadivelu, Ex Serviceman, who was

training students for March Past during Independence Day and Republic Day for many years.

A blood donation camp was also organised by the Alumni Association, in which 58 units of blood were donated by staff, alumni and villagers.

R Parvathi, Tahsildar, Ambattur was the Chief Guest at the celebrations at Ambattur Centre. At Eraharam Centre,

## Valedictory function



The valedictory function of *Bharathi Ula* month long programme conducted by *Uratha Sindhani* an NGO taking Bharathi to schools was held on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

Sevalaya was among the three organisations which were honored for the services to spread Bharathi among the younger generations.

S Kanchana, Head Value Education, Sevalaya received Prize and Shield at the hands of L Ganesan, Former member of Rajya Sabha.

S Saradha student of Sevalaya sang a song of Bharathiyar, N Jagan delivered the prize winning speech. Both were awarded ₹1000 each as cash prize.

V Saminathan, an organic farmer was the Chief Guest.

J Manimaran, Inspector of Police was the Chief Guest at the celebrations at Sunguvarchatram centre. In Sevalaya's Head Office at Alwarpet, the flag was unfurled by the Chief Guest Srinivasan, Secretary of the Residents Welfare Association of the apartments where the office is located.





# Pongal celebrations across all locations



*Kathiravan Ezhilmannan, USA*

On 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021, Pongal festival was celebrated at Sevalaya at all centres. The celebrations were streamed online.

At Kasuva and Thanjavur centres, traditional celebrations were held, where pongal was cooked in the open area in earthen pots on a mud stove.



*Kasuva*

Prayers were offered to Sun God. The Chief Guest Kathiravan Ezhilmannan (Columnist Thendral Magazine, USA) and an alumnus of Indian Institute of Science joined the celebrations online from USA.

The other Chief Guests at respective locations were P V Sathish AHS



*Tenkasi*

Cardiac, MGM Hospital, (Kasuva), E R Vivekanandhan, Assistant Engineer, O&M, TNEB (Thanjavur), V Rajabarathi, Advocate (Madurandagam), D Balakumar, PG Assistant, Vallalar Higher Secondary School (Eraharam), S.Saraswathy, Librarian (Uthiramerur) T B Aarokiyasamy,



*Thirubuvanai*

Government High School, (Mambakkam), V Geetha Proprietor, Sri Kaligammal Enterprises PIPDIC (Thirubuvanai) P Vinoth Advocate, High Court (Ambattur), K L Subramaniam Petrofac Sharajh (Ravanasamudram) participated



*Uthiramerur*

through video conference and conveyed their wishes. At Kasuva centre, students presented a colourful programme which was streamed online. Books were distributed as gifts to staff, who celebrated their birthdays in January.



*Mambakkam*

Students of Stds X and XII who scored above 80% were presented Tabs, donated by Dhvani foundation, a Bangalore based NGO which aims to strengthen and professionalised the NGO sector. Earlier various competitions like rangoli,



*Eraharam*

games like musical chair and slow cycling were conducted for the village youth in 84 villages in which 1314 people participated. 252 participants awarded prizes at respective locations.

15<sup>th</sup> January 2021 Mattu Pongal was celebrated at Kasuva campus. The 70 cows in Gaushala were



*Ambattur*

bathed and decorated.

The Chief Guest were T R Tulasiraman, Sri Sendhil Agencies, Tiruvallur V Natrajan Sri Kumaran Textiles, Tiruvallur M Vimal Kumar Jain, Padmavatt Motors, Chennai Sri R Vijayanarayanan, R K B hospital, Tiruvallur T Ramachandran Veterinary Doctor participated in Gaupooja.



*Thanjavur*

The Chief Guests appreciated Sevalaya's service in taking care of dry cows.

They donated rice, jaggery, bananas and agathi keerai to the cows and calves in Gaushala, cakes for children and sponsored a festive lunch on that day.



# Swami Vivekananda's Birth Anniversary celebrated across all locations

On 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021, all centres of Sevalaya joined online to celebrate the Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

The Chief Guest Swami Vimurtanandaji Maharaj (President, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Thanjavur) joined the celebration online and blessed the children for a bright future.



Thanjavur

The other Chief Guests who visited the respective centres of Sevalaya were S Gandhi, Chief Manager LIC of India, Thiruvallur (Kasuva), Swami Samahitanandaji Maharaj, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Malliankaranai, (Vadanallur), Reliable Lion S Chandrasekar, Founder, Reliable Education Institution Kadayam,



Thirubuvana

(Ravanasamudram), Dr P Indiragandhi, Asst. Professor, Kundavai Nachiyar Government Women's College, (Thanjavur) V Kasthuri, Head Mistress, Panchayat Union Middle School (Mambakkam), M Mathimohan, NSS Program Officer, Hindu Higher Secondary School (Madhuranthagam), S Dhanaraman, Vallalar Higher Secondary



Madhuranthagam



Uthiramerur



Swami Vimurtanandaji Maharaj



Ambattur



Eraharam



Kasuva



Tenkasi

School, Kumbakonam, (Eraharam), N Srinivasan, Correspondent, Swami Vivekananda Higher Secondary School, Puducherry, (Thirubuvana), and S Chandrasekar, Asst Accounts Officer, Engine Factory, Avadi (Ambattur).

The Chief Guests in their speech spoke

about Swami Vivekananda, his life and his message and advised the students to make use of the opportunity provided by Sevalaya to know more about the great leaders and imbibe their values.

At Kasuva centre, students presented a colourful cultural programme, which

was streamed online. Earlier various competitions like essay writing, oratorical, quiz, drawing, and recitation of quotes of Swami Vivekananda were conducted online. Out of the 1215 students from 38 districts of Tamilnadu who participated, 105 students were awarded prizes.



## Shaped by Sevalaya -Lakesh Ramadas

The New Year began on a happy note for Lakesh Ramdas, one of Sevalaya's alumni, when he got his appointment letter from a reputed US based company Beckman Coulter India Pvt Ltd to join as a Process Technician. At present he is working as Process Specialist with Dr Reddy's Labs.

Lakesh, a native of Ramagiri, lost his father when he was 6 and his mother admitted her two sons in Sevalaya's hostel. Quiet and reserved Lakesh became extremely attached to his class teacher, S Mariyammal. "She took very good care of me. I enjoyed her classes and started doing well in studies. I scored 80% in Std X and 81% in Std XII Board exams," he says.

Lakesh was interested in sports. He was the first from Sevalaya to get a prize in athletics 400m race and in 100m in zonal games. He was a part of the handball team that went upto the divisionals. "Even now I do not miss any chance to participate in all sports activities in my



place of work," he says.

Lakesh fondly remembers the training conducted by a group of students from IIT during his school days. "That sowed the seeds for my future. They talked about the importance of education and advantages of studying in premiere institutes like IIT, which motivated me to apply for IITJEE the next year," he recalls.

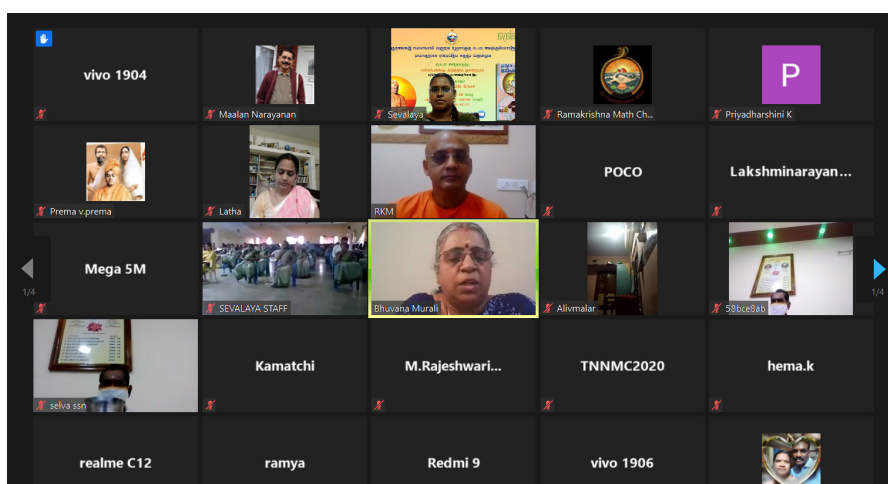
After Std XII, he did Chemical Engineering from Venkateswara College of Engineering. His first job was with Biocon where he worked for 3 years and had the opportunity to work with people from different parts of India. In addition to Tamil and English, Lakesh has now mastered Hindi, Kannada and Telugu plus a little bit of Marathi. He is learning German which will open many new doors

of opportunities in his work field. He has travelled to different parts of India with friends and is looking forward to the experiences and challenges he will be facing in his new place of work from April. He visits Sevalaya regularly and supports the organisation contributing towards different activities.

"Sevalaya also gave me opportunities to participate in various competitions and cultural programmes. The yoga I learnt and the numerous books (especially books of Vivekananda) I read at the Library at school shaped my life.

What I am today is entirely because of Sevalaya," he adds gratefully. Sevalaya wishes Lakesh all the best for his future endeavours.

## Joint book review sessions with Sri Ramakrishna Math



Sevalaya and Sri Ramakrishna Math conduct joint book review sessions online, every Saturday.

The first book taken up for review is *Vetrikku Viththidum Asiriargalae* (Teachers who sow the seeds of success) – a compilation of 71 essays on teaching, inspiring teachers and

education related topics by various authors, including monks of Sri Ramakrishna Math. The book is compiled by Swami Vimurthanandaji Maharaj, President, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Thanjavur.

Every week 4 essays are taken up for review. The reviewers include staff,

trustees of Sevalaya, teachers from other schools, Swamiis from the Math and journalists. The speakers share their views on the essays and their thoughts and experiences related to the topic.

The session commenced on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. Each session starts with an introduction by Swami Vimurthanandaji Maharaj. S Kanchana, Head, Value Education, Sevalaya, introduces every speaker and Swamiiji delivers the concluding remarks.

Nearly 100 teachers from various schools join online to attend the sessions.

Many new thoughts and ideas on education are generated by these sessions which is sure to bring about positive changes in classrooms.

# Two teens' vision transforming 40 Sevalaya kids

40 Sevalaya children have access to tablets and internet and quality tutorials in Science and Maths, thanks to the benevolence of a bunch of Texas-based teenagers of Indian origin.

Early 2020, Aaditya Ganesan, a 9<sup>th</sup> grader from Westwood High School in Austin, Texas and his friend Nikhil Devaraj volunteered to tutor 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> graders in Pearson Ranch Middle school.

School, their alma mater. "We thoroughly enjoyed the bonding we developed with the students and we always looked forward to the sessions", recalls Aaditya.

When COVID-19 kicked in, they switched to online. Then it struck them: why not online tuitions to children anywhere in the world? From their parents they learnt that tuition classes were expensive - and not affordable by many. Educationist Tutoring Organization was born on 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2020. Later, Aniruddh Mishra and Brian Jeon joined the executive team of the organisation that today serves over 1,500 students, supported by over 200 content curators and 700 tutors, from US, India, UK and Australia.

Sevalaya was among the three Indian schools selected for tutorial support this academic year. Sevalaya – Educationist wanted to make the most impact and their vision is "For students by Students". And ensure high quality education is accessible to all. This was in alignment with Sevalaya and hence educationist wanted to establish partnership with Sevalaya. A reality check of the tuition practices in places like India opened their eyes to two hurdles: lack of access to technology and not knowing English blocking access to quality tutorials. That set their objectives: make technology more accessible and English more widespread. Educationist has made available 40 tablets, with internet connectivity. This paved the way for Tamil tutors teaching English.

A major task was scouting for Tamil speaking tutors. Besides friends and social/print media, the team put up banners in all Indian grocery stores and restaurants, reached out to several Tamil schools and localities with significant Tamil population across the US.

Recalls Aaditya "This was a program requiring months of tutor testing and tutor planning. Along with the tutoring,



From L To R: Nikhil Devaraj, Aaditya Ganesan, Aniruddh Mishra

the Educationist team has also worked hard to provide tablets and internet connection to the students".

The teachers closely monitor the sessions and guide the students in case of any difficulty to connect or download the homework that the tutors have sent.

"The tutors also taught in Tamil, to help our children to understand. When there were some network issues they created a Whatsapp group for the children. Their communication skill has also improved. The tutors are very friendly with the students".

**B Rajeshwari, Teacher & Coordinator of the sessions**

"It's really great! An entirely new experience. The team is enthusiastic and eagerly call us to know about the classes. This is in fact a tremendous effort by Educationist and the tutors. The experimental learning makes children happy with the activities. The children feel happy to learn as they feel the tutors are like their brothers and sisters and friends".

**A Hindumathi, Teacher**

**Here is what two students have to say**

The session taught me a lot in science. I am very eager to attend the session. The trainer cleared my doubts in the same class. The content of the class was shared to me before the day. The presentation of the class is interesting to watch and understand the concept easily.

**Abinaya sree, VII std**

I am very happy to participate in the online volunteer class. Actually I like science subject very much. The class makes me happy. The trainer taught me very interesting facts about light, shadow, energy, electromagnetic waves etc. I can relate the class to my day to day life.

**Dhivya, VII std**

**Here is the view from the other side, provided by Aaditya and Nikhil**

"We believe that all of us can take small steps and "each one - teach one" creating a highly educated society over a period. These sessions have been beneficial for our tutors also. Being able to connect with a student half way across the world has allowed for our tutors to gain new perspectives on life and understand the world through multiple lenses".

"We have partnerships with 2 other NGOs in India in addition to Sevalaya: Nanritam from West Bengal and Spark A Change from Mumbai. We also partner with 3 Indian Business schools to provide the tutor pool", Gayathri Venkat sums up the current India operations.



Aaditya Ganesan conducting online classes



# Ssh! You are not the wife of your husband!

It was realized that the Satyagrahis will be imprisoned for a long time. It was decided to close the Tolstoy Farm. Phoenix Farm from where Indian Opinion was being published became the base of operations of the Satyagrahis.

While preparations were still being made for running the struggle, a fresh grievance came into being which offered an opportunity for even women to do their bit in the struggle.

This was the scenario. Many married men came to South Africa from India, while some Indians contracted a marriage in South Africa itself. There was no law in South Africa for the registration of ordinary marriages in India and the religious ceremony was sufficient to confer validity upon them.

The same custom ought to apply to Indians in South Africa, and although Indians had settled in South Africa, the validity of marriages solemnized according to the rites of various religions of India had never been called in

question. But, Justice Searle of Cape Supreme Court gave a judgment on March 14, 1913 to the effect that all marriages were outside the pale of legal marriages in South Africa, with the exception of such as were celebrated according to Christian rites and registered by the Registrar of Marriages. This terrible judgment thus nullified in South Africa at a stroke of pen, all marriages celebrated according to the Hindu, Musalman and Zoroastrian rites. Thus many Indian women in South Africa, in terms of the judgment, ceased to rank as the wives of their husbands and were degraded to the rank of concubines, while their progeny were deprived of their right to inherit the property of their parents. This was an insufferable situation for women, no less than men, and the Indians in South Africa were deeply agitated.

Government did not appeal against this judgment, notwithstanding a plea by Gandhi. Indians decided to offer a stubborn Satyagraha, irrespective of

the number of fighters. The women in Tolstoy Farm were invited to join the struggle. They were informed of the risks incidental to such participation. They would have to put up with restrictions in the matter of good dress and personal movements. They might be given hard work in the jail, made to wash clothes, and might even be subjected to insult by the wardens. But the ladies were all brave and feared none of these things. One of them was pregnant and six of them had young babies in arms. These ladies were all, with one exception, Tamilians.

These ladies entered the Transvaal at Vereeniging without permits, but they were not arrested. They took to hawking without licence, but still the Police ignored them. It now became a problem. The women had somehow or other to get arrested. Now, Gandhi decided to take a major step. What was it?

(To be continued.)



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