



# LOVE ALL, SERVE ALL

## Kone supports Skill development



Inauguration of Skill development programme at Sevalaya's Community college, Ambattur From L to R: M Sai Kiruba, DGM, HR, Rufus Davidson, CSR Lead, M P Saravanan, Director HR & CSR fro Kone and Sevalaya Murali

A skill development programme was inaugurated at Sevalaya's Community

College at Ambattur on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2022. This programme is being supported

under Kone's CSR initiative.

Chief Guest, M P Saravanan, Director - CSR & HR Kone Ltd, gave very meaningful advice on acquiring knowledge and skills and practice to improve on them with dedication, in his address to the students.

Sai Kiruba DGM HR, Kone, also stressed on practice making a person perfect and encouraged students to use the opportunity being given here at the Center.

Rufus Davidson, CSR Lead, Kone was also present at the function. Over 50 students, who enrolled for the course, were also present.

## Sevalaya wins Green Award



G Mohan, Technical Director, GIB, Presenting the Green award to Sevalaya Murali and Bhuvaneshwari Muralidharan

Sevalaya won the 'Green Award' at the Green Ingenious Business Pvt Ltd (GIB) launch event on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2022 at GRT Convention Centre in Chennai.

Sevalaya was recognised for its green initiative for planting 30,000+ trees in around 40+ villages of Tamil Nadu and its service to the underprivileged people.

## Pooja for board exam



All the students of Sevalaya who were to write the board exams in May 2022 along with their teachers participated in the special pooja arranged at Pakkam Sivan Temple and Anjaneyar temple. The hall tickets were placed at the feet of the Lord and pooja performed to seek divine blessings for all students to do their best in the upcoming exams.

## Bharathi - Chellammal set to re-enter Kadayam

Please see report on pages 2 and 3

# Bharathi - Chellammal set to re-enter Kadayam



The momentous journey of the Chellamma Bharathi Statue began from the home of the sculptor on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2022. The Rath Yatra was flagged off by Uma Bharathi, Mahakavi's sister's great-granddaughter along with popular artist J Jeyaraj and wood sculptor Appar Lakshmanan.

The yatra was filled with joyous celebrations and warm receptions accorded at various locations along the way. Several luminaries, VIPs, fans of Mahakavi, students, and the general public have participated in the functions organised at different Sevalaya Centres and other locations. Everyone has expressed their joy to see this new initiative which also helps spread the very

socially relevant messages of Mahakavi during the journey.

School children have been enthusiastically participating in cultural events and competitions at various places. Silambam, a form of traditional martial arts, which was a favourite of Bharathi who had proclaimed to the Youth to strengthen their bodies, has been performed in many locations.

Some of the highlights of the journey include the very rousing speeches by Sevalaya Founder Muralidharan and other dignitaries who have given glimpses into the writings of Mahakavi Bharathi.

As the yatra proceeded through various routes, thousands of followers paid floral

tributes and respects to the illustrious couple. Festive cultural events marked the Rath Yatra stops at each place.

On the fourth day, it was an emotional moment when the Rath Yatra visited the home of 94-year-old Lalitha Bharathi, the granddaughter of Bharathiyar. She was helped up to the feet of the statue and Bharathiyar's great-grandson Rajkumar Bharathi and all members of the family paid rich floral tributes to the couple's statue. Indeed, the sentiments continued at the Mahakavi Bharathi Illam at Triplicane, where resounding drum beats welcomed the Rath Yatra with large number of students, guests, donors, well-wishers present at the venue. The Chief Guest was Kizhambur Sankara



Subramaniyan, Editor, Kalaimagal. K Mohan, Chairman, Gandhi Study Centre sang a song composed by Bharathi and encouraged the students gathered to sing along. A very devotional welcome was accorded to the Ratham at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and at Sri Ramakrishna Mutt Mylapore where refreshments were served to the students and staff accompanying the Rath.

The Rath Yatra stopped at several schools and colleges along the way in all the 22 districts of Tamilnadu covered so far, where students displayed their oratorical talents in reciting from the works of Mahakavi. Warm respects were paid to the statue of Mahakavi and Chellamma by staff and students in thousands at each school and college.

Prizes were distributed to the winners of competitions. Hon'ble Ministers, Hon'ble Members of the Legislative Assembly of Tamilnadu and Hon'ble Members of Parliament, numerous Senior Government officials, businessmen, Local leaders (Panchayat and people's representatives), Lions Club committee members and the Public too gave warm welcome with garlands for the Rath Yatra at villages and other places along the route.

At Puducherry, where Bharathi had spent 10 years, Honourable Minister for Transport, Adi Dravidar Welfare, Art & Culture, Chandira Priyanka garlanded the statue and highlighted the values of equality of respect for women as written by Bharathi in her speech. K Lakshminarayanan, Honourable Minister for Public Works, Tourism and Civil Aviation, visited the Bharathi Memorial House and welcomed the statue stating it was an honour to pay respects to the great couple. He greatly appreciated the initiatives of Sevalaya to promote the values of Mahakavi.

The Rath Yatra was received by the Head Priest of Manakula Vinayagar Temple too where the poem composed by Bharathi is engraved on the temple premises.

As the journey continues through Tamil Nadu, covering 23 districts, towards Kadayam, the momentum is building up for the historic occasion of the installation of the statue being planned on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at the Chellamma Bharathi Learning Centre to mark the 125<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary of Bharathi and Chellamma.



*Puducherry Transport Minister Chandra Priyanka with little Bharathi's and Chellamma in front of the Rath*



*Sevalaya Murali presenting Memento to Puducherry Public Works Minister K Lakshminarayanan at Bharathi Memorial*



*Dharmapuri MLA S P Venkateswaran flagging off the Rath from Dharmapuri*



*Uthiramerur MLA K Sundar with students in front of the Rath*

# Page Pierre Foundation sponsors staff quarters



Page Pierre Foundation, Switzerland sponsored \$90,000 for the construction of Staff family quarters comprising of four

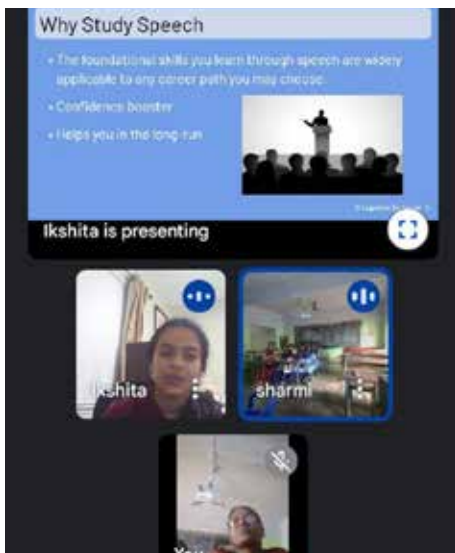
houses (Ground floor - 2 houses & First floor - 2 houses) of 3300 Sq feet at Kasuva village near the main campus of Sevalaya.

The staff quarters will be provided to four families.

Page Pierre Foundation has been a staunch supporter of Sevalaya since 2009. Their contribution has been greatly helped in the creation of excellent infrastructure of Sevalaya's Kasuva campus.

The *bhoomi pooja* for the construction of the family quarters was performed on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2022 by Sevalaya Murali and Bhuvaneshwari Muralidharan, Hon. Correspondent, N Annapurna, Trustee, A A Kingston, VP Operations, L N Anupriya, Head Quality and other staff members participated in the event.

## Fluency In English Speaking - course for children



Online training on fluency in public speaking in English was conducted by Cognitive Exchange, a US-based non-

profit organisation, for the students of Std VII. The weekly training session which started on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2022 was conducted every Wednesday by trainer Ikshita Padhi. The students were given tips on how to stand in front of others while speaking, how to face the audience, how to pronounce correctly and how to present the speech with good and clear modulation. Mock competitions were held to assess the students' talent and potential.

The final competition was held online on 23<sup>th</sup> March 2022. R Logeswari got first place while K Priyalatha and K Likitha came second and third respectively. The session was well coordinated by Lakshmi Mohan, the Spoken English teacher, who ensured the effective participation of the students.

## NSS Camp



A week-long NSS camp was held for 40 students of NSS Unit - batch 122, from Avichi College of Arts and Science, Virugambakkam, at Kasuva centre from

27<sup>th</sup> February 2022 to 5<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

The students worked on the organic farm taking care of the flower garden, watering the vegetable garden and de-weeding the farms. They also supported the students staying in the hostel by tutoring them.

Our team really enjoyed staying on the campus and working on the farm. We are happy with the hospitality. We had interesting interactions with the children and elders.

**P E Manoj Kanna, Leader of NSS Batch 122**

## MSW students camp



25 first-year students of the Master of Social Work Programme from the Department of Social Work, Erode Arts and Science College (Autonomous) were on a weeklong Tribal Camp at Gudalur from 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022 to 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2022. The camp was coordinated by the Gudalur centre of Sevalaya.

The students covered 5 villages during the camp. In Puthurvayal, they conducted a health and Hygiene awareness and Snakebite awareness programme for 150 students of Stds VI and VII at Government High School.

The students also conducted a health and hygiene awareness programme for the tribals at Bandipur, Thondiylam, Thenvayal and Melambalam. 100 people benefitted from these programmes.

The students cleaned the Community Hall in the Koovamula Tribal Village. They assisted Sevalaya staff in distributing groceries to the tribals at Bandipur village.

They also conducted a socio-economic survey among the tribal people of Narimula and Thenvayal Tribal Villages.

# VT Shanthi Old Age Home, Dharmapuri: succour for destitute elders



The eight elderly residents of the Dharmapuri Old Age Home are up by 5 am. The official alarm is a noisy squirrel that lives on the neem tree that gives shade from the morning sun. Coffee is served at 6, followed by Puja, a round of yoga and a brief walk. By 7, they work up an appetite for Breakfast.

What has brought them here are similar circumstances. Most of them were farm or casual labourers. One of them, a lady from Madurai, became a widow soon after her marriage. She refused to be a burden to any, and earned her living by working as part time house maid in nearby houses. When old age caught up with her, she took refuge in the Home.

There is one couple from Chennai, who had a house to stay, but their son wanted them to move out. Another resident was a mason, who didn't want to trouble his son and his family.

They often become emotional, and talk to each other and the staff. Ironically, they are consoled only by similar stories of other elders, or even greater injustice.

Television, games such as pullankuzhi and carrom, as also daily visits to a temple a longish walk away, give succor.

The two-story house was donated by V Manoharan, a long time donor of Sevalaya, who is supporting yet another Old Age Home of Sevalaya, currently under construction at Zamin Endathur.

A retired agricultural scientist credited with a handful of improved botanical varieties, he had built this house in his wife's native place, in 2004. Named after his late wife VT Shanthi, the Home became operational early this year, with a capacity to shelter 20. "I am so happy the house is put to good use!", he says, after his latest visit.



## They run the show



From L to R: K Dhanalakshmi, C Muniyamma and K N Thilakavathi

**K N Thilakavathi** had faced many challenges in life. Born in a weavers' family in Narasipathur, Andhra Pradesh, she managed to finish BSc and has worked at her native place and later, as a cashier in a Coimbatore College. In 2014, she lost her father to heart attack, and one year to the date, her mother, at the second surgery for brain tumour.

After a two-year break to take care of her parents and the trauma, she joined Sevalaya in 2017, at the Kasuva Centre.

While working in the Old Age Home, she got involved in maintaining the many registers - 33 of them. Counselling the elders who carry so many baggage from their past, has been both challenging and satisfying.

When the Dharmapuri Centre opened in 2021, Thilakavathi took charge as Centre Head. "I have worked in many companies. There I was like a machine. Sevalaya is different. Its like home to me", she says.

**K Dhanalakshmi** makes delicious Sambar.

She is a self-taught cook, who has worked as cook in a Dharmapuri hotel.

She had a difficult life. She lost her father early. The responsibility of six children fell on her mother, a casual labourer. Food was scarce. So Dhanalakshmi stopped studying when in 2<sup>nd</sup> Standard, started grazing goats and cattle, and supporting her mother. She got married at 15, and the couple have four daughters – three of them schooling and the elder one married.

Domestic problems were brewing for

some time, and she soon found herself without a place to stay. She found a solution in Sevalaya's old age home, joining as cook, late last year. "I had negative thoughts, now I feel stronger.

I have the satisfaction of feeding these elders, and a feeling of safety. The good deeds of my ancestors and myself are blessing me now", she says.

**C Muniyamma** stopped studies with 2<sup>nd</sup> Standard. AS the eldest child, there was enough to take care of – cattle, farm, mangos, cotton, and help at home.

She was married off at 14, to a tour bus operator, who passed away a few years back. Muniyamma has been living with her only daughter and her family in her own house 1.50 kms away from the Old Age Home. With her daughter's family growing, now with four children, she wanted to make space for them. So, she shifted to the Home, handling Housekeeping. "I can now give some money to my daughter, give some support" she says. "Here, I get satisfaction and peace", she says.

## When two become one



Rajeswari was born on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1955 in Mylapore, The only girl child to her mother and her three sisters, she grew up with her grandfather Dharmayya Naidu, who took over the responsibility of that precious family asset, as it were.

Naidu was a manager in the Shipping Corporation of India and they lived in a large house on Cathedral Road, opposite New Woodlands. A "black British car" from the office will take Naidu and bring him back. It was a joint family, with three uncles and their families, on the lap of luxury, supported by servants.

MD Chandran, her uncle, was an LIC manager and his young brother MD Sundram was a movie script writer. It was Rajalakshmi's duty to rewrite the scripts in her neat hand writing. She studied in the prestigious St Ebbas School, where the Mothers took a close look at the hair styles, nails and neatness of the pupil.

When she was 16, the family found a

husband for her: Jayagopal. He was born in Mumbai (then Bombay). Then his father got a transfer to Chennai and the family settled in Mint area. Jayagopal worked in the Ration Department. Uncle Chandran visited Jayagopal's office and checked with a friend working there, who guaranteed the groom's character. After their marriage in 1971, Uncle Chandran would pay surprise visits in his car, to ensure his niece is taken care of her husband.

Constant transfers took the family to 11 places in Chennai. "Large staff quarters, everywhere", Rajeswari remembers. The couple lost two sons. Since his retirement in 2014, the couple have been living with the surviving son who studied Leather Technology after BSc. In a chapter the couple would like to forget, they moved out, in 2021, "after he spoke disrespectfully to us". They admitted themselves at Sevalaya's Old Age Home at Kasuva Centre.

Day one was miserable, as the cruel turn of events hit her. The staff gave her courage. The second day, she met Murali – "He is like God Ganapathy, my favourite God", recalls Rajalakshmi. Since shifting to the Dharmapuri Home with her husband late last year, it is Rajalakshmi who fills the visitors welcome board. She is the one who springs to action when Centre Head Thilakavathi needs something. She is a virtual "class monitor" for the group.

She doesn't pull rank or boss over, and hence is acceptable to group. She has the enthusiasm and high energy of a petite a school girl. She has retained some of her English, and speaks confidentially. She has an active mind ("How do you take notes? In short hand", she asked, when peering closely at the note book of this interviewer!).

There is nostalgia, and an occasional wistfulness, but overall, there is commendable acceptance of the roller coaster ride life has given her. The strength comes from the togetherness of the couple.

Rajalakshmi is ever so proud of her husband. "

He took care of me like a daughter. He would cry when I am not well. He has never faulted me. After all, he was my uncle, Chandran's choice", she beams like a school child. Jayagopal gives his unrestrained smile. The couple can read each other's minds, moods. "We only have each other to care of", she says, more in assurance than despair.

A remarkable couple that proves the adage: marriage is when two people become one.

## Dr T M Venkatesan and the gospel of Quality

Dr T M Venkatesan, a prophet of Quality, brought the gospel of 5S to Sevalaya. That was in 2017. "I had my reservations. Sevalaya's location is 50 kms off the city. And there was initial resistance. But I was reassured by the Founder, himself a Quality professional. Any change can only come with top management commitment", he recalls.

He has seen appreciable improvements, later supported by M G Murali, another comrade from TVS on Quality. In Sevalaya, staff commitment levels are good, as is the case in good NGOs, he notes. Once a group of staff, on my suggestion from me visited a Karur school that won an award for 5S. The staff boarded the bus at 4 am, reached the school past noon, studied the systems and started the return journey at 4 pm, reaching their homes past midnight! That shows commitment.

## An exit from life's dead end

K Menaka Ravikumar a receptionist with Borg Warner cooling system India Pvt Ltd, Sriperumbudur, is an alumna of Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiyar Community College, Sunguvarchathiram.

Nearly 6 years back, Menaka, who hails from Tirunelveli, was a happy woman, living with her husband and two children at Aurangabad. She learnt Hindi and was able to manage her small family. A sudden accident leading to her husband's demise completely shattered the family.

"My daughter was studying in 5<sup>th</sup> Std at Ryan International School. She did not know Tamil and I was hesitant to move back to Tamilnadu, not sure how



Once a Principal district Judge, Thiruvallur district Department official visited Sevalaya and asked the staff to get the files of the children for some information. It took the team just a few seconds to retrieve it. Impressed, the official recorded his fulsome appreciation in the visitor's book! No wonder Sevalaya bagged Platinum Award for 5S from CII & QCFI within 2 years.

Dr Venkatesan gives a lot of credit to Head Quality, Anupriya. "Only because of her passion, the Quality movement, starting with 5S has, taken root in Sevalaya. Today, they are doing knowledge transfer to corporates. Team work is the key. Sevalaya can easily get ISO certification, should attempt CII Quality Excellence award. Deming will be



she would cope. I continued staying at Aurangabad, working in a Primary school, trying to make ends meet. But staying alone without any knowledge of the local language Marathi was difficult. It was at that time I came to know Ryan International School had a branch at Mambakkam. I decided to move back to Tamilnadu. I admitted my daughter there. Now she is in Std X "says Menaka.

"But life has been difficult. My main aim is to provide good education to my children. Now my father is supporting me

the next step", assures the veteran who won his Six Sigma Black belt in 2006 and has trained over 500 industries during the last 16 years. A Mechanical Engineer from Institution of Engineers (India) in 1975, Dr Venkatesan has 50 years in industry and Training. He was a first generation entrepreneur. At VIT Business School, Vellore, he won Distinction in MS in 2015 and he says he is 75years young, and successfully completed PhD, in Kaizen (2022),. His next pursuit: A doctoral study in Bhagavad Gita VS TQM.

"God has given me happiness. I have converted every threat into an opportunity, and have lived my life full. At this stage adding value to the needy is my aim in life", he says. His partner at most of his training sessions is his wife Geetha, an accomplished carnatic Singer/ Bhajan singer who enralls Sevalaya's elders every Wednesday evening. At one session in a five-star hotel at Vizag, at the end of a training session on leadership & team building, a lady prostrated before the couple, saying, "I was going for a divorce. After seeing and hearing the two of you, I have changed my mind".

"I seek divine blessings to be associated with Sevalaya, till my last breath", says Dr Venkatesan, who fills his waking hours from 4 am to 9 pm meaningfully, including two hours of walking.

with his pension amount. I had to find a job. I had done a diploma in fashion designing but I could not get a job. While looking for employment I understood that basic computer skills was essential to get some work."

Coming to know about the free computer classes at Sevalaya's Community College at Sunguvarchathiram, she joined the course. In spite of all the difficulties she had gone through, her positive bent of mind, kind and helpful nature endeared her to all. Soon after completion of the course, she was able to get a job in Borg Warner.

"I am grateful to Sevalaya for giving me this break. Life is still a struggle but I am determined to do better. Now I am doing a graduation course through distance education. With a degree and knowledge of computers, I hope to get a better job and ease the burden on my father. "Says a confident Menaka.

She makes donations to Sevalaya whenever possible. Sevalaya wishes her all the best and is sure that her determination and perseverance will help her reach greater heights.

# Champan, Gandhiji and Rajendra Prasad-(7)

(Source: "At the Feet of Mahatma Gandhi" by Dr. Rajendra Prasad)

As days passed, number of ryots coming increased. The existing accommodation was found inadequate.

Gandhiji also felt that it was unfair to inconvenience the host any longer. Hence, a new building was found to conduct the inquiry. The colleagues were taking it easy thinking that as it was late in the evening, they would move the next day and start inquiry after cleaning the premises. But, Gandhiji would not let go. He started moving with the little possessions he had. The colleagues had no other alternative than to follow. Not stopping with this, immediately on arrival at the new premises, he started cleaning it with a broom stick. The poor colleagues had to follow. The building was spick and span and the work of recording evidences could start from the early morning the next day as usual. Gandhiji gave them the lesson that once a decision was taken, there should be no delay in implementing it.

When they had shifted to the new

place, the question arose as to who would cook and clean the vessels. As it was customary in Bihar, each volunteer had brought his own servant. But, the servants would not be allowed to cook as none of them was a Brahmin. They could eat food cooked only by a Brahmin. At that time Dr. Prasad was also subscribing to such orthodoxy. Gandhiji firmly put his foot down, and said that as they were united in one work, they should feel that all of them belonged to one caste.

At least till the work in Champan was complete, there was no question of such orthodoxy. Thus the entire cooking of food was entrusted to one volunteer. A servant was retained for cleaning and other essential services. All the other servants were dispensed with, as Gandhiji insisted on the virtue of self-reliance. It was, of course, strenuous for one person to cook food for a huge team.

However, there was relief when Kasturba Ba arrived and took up the kitchen work with the assistance of Kripalaniji.

By this time, they had recorded about 10000 statements. Besides, the tenants had placed a large number of documents before them. Meantime, a letter came from the Government stating that since Gandhiji had recorded a large number of statements, his enquiry must have been completed. The Government was therefore sending a senior member of the Indian Civil Service who would like Gandhiji to meet him. It was thought that it was due to the pressure of local authorities, the Government had decided to wind up the inquiry.

Gandhiji told his team that since they were in full possession of the facts of the situation, they should prepare a report which would include all the grievances of the ryots—in support of which they had adequate evidence in their possession, so that they might ask the Government to remove them.

To be continued..



*The world will prosper in knowledge and intellect,  
if both men and women are deemed equal.*  
- Subramanya Bharathiyar

Chellamma Bharathi Learning Centre, Kadayam  
Implemented by - Sevalaya

**Sevalaya is building a monument for the great poet, at Kadayam, where he exemplified gender and social equality through action.**

Chellamma Bharathi Learning Centre, Kadayam being built by Sevalaya, with Tamilnadu State Government approval.

Contact: 99414 50444  
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You can donate via



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