



“ ... the first consignment [of footwear], which was mainly the Satyodaya contribution, was delivered to the schools in Trinco last week ... ”
- Joey Caspersz, 16.02.2005

The schools were St Mary's College National School, Methodist Girls College, Sri Shanmuga Hindu Ladies College

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Kandy 20000
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Satyodaya

Centre for Social Research & Encounter

BULLETIN

No 201: April 2005

Dedicated to the Memory of
Marshal Namalwakege Basil



[23.03.1942 - 5.04.2005]

Devoted Brother, Friend, Co_worker, Satyodaya's Legal Advice Officer

edited by Mangala Fernando

printed by
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DIARY

- 31 Dec : A Satyodaya team, led by Lalith and Murugan, goes to the East Coast for tsunami relief work.
- Jan 14 : Kandy Market Hawkers' Society meeting was held with the participation of more than 75 of its members. The matters pertaining to ownership of the members' trading cells in the Kandy Market were discussed.
- Jan 8 : Course-end examination of the Leadership Training Programme 2004 was held: 41 Participants from both estates and adjacent villages faced the examination, which covered multiple disciplines such as Sociology, Economics, Political Science, Developmental Studies, History, and the National Question.
- Jan 10 : A Team leaves Kandy for Satyodaya's tsunami relief journey to Batticaloa town.
- Jan 14-15 : A team of seven members of Satyodaya leaves for tsunami work in Galle and Matara in the South.
- Jan 17 : "Saraswathi Puja" was held in our Library. This is a traditional Tamil offering held annually to invoke the blessings of "Sarasawi Devi", the goddess of education. All our members participated in this ceremony and a special vote of thanks should go to Ms Sagadhevi and Ms Parmeshwari from Galaha Area (our residential lady vocational trainees) for their role in decorating the library and its entrance with Tamil decorations.
- Jan 20 : A training programme was held on "Hela Govithana" (a traditional style of organic farming) with the help of MONLAR (Movement for National Land and Agrarian Reform) for 20 farmers representing our 6 Areas.
- Jan 22 : The certificate distribution ceremony of the Leadership Training Programme 2004.
- Feb 5-9 : Fr Paul goes North (to Jaffna and surrounding villages and to Mullaitivu) to see how the Northern Tamils are coping with the damage caused by the tsunami.

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Scenes of the Tsunami Displaced, now sheltered in the camp set up at the unused Sinhala School building in Batticaloa



The pre-school set up in the camp: note the beautiful furniture gifted by the Burgher Association of Colombo and the two teachers, themselves displaced and whose devotion impressed us greatly



Waiting for the shoes to arrive



A displaced family



Two touching scenes of the displaced

We are now thinking of what we have still to do in the tsunami-affected areas. We cannot do what the big international donors can do – for housing, rebuilding the infrastructure of roads and bridges and so on – but we can do what the big donors will not do: work in friendship with those who have found no room in the lifeboats of the big donors and allowing the victims themselves to be the authors of their own rescue and rehabilitation.

x x x

Our Friends
at home
and abroad



help us to help
the victims of
the tsunami

The “Satyodaya contribution” (see the last page) is really the contribution made to us by Satyodaya’s friends and donors in Canada, USA, Australia, France, Sri Lanka, to whom we, like the tsunami survivors, say “thank you”.

Among our donors was a Grade One child from St Edward School, Tennessee, USA who sent the tsunami children the following message:

Dear Tsunami Survivors: We are praying for you. We are sending money to help you. Try to stay strong and have faith. From: Dakota Cartwright & Family, 1st Grade, St Edward School, Nashville, Tennessee.

The most recent donation is from Mrs Vilma Ghouse of Brisbane, Australia, whose assistance comes to us through Dr Edward Schokman, a friend of Satyodaya ever since its inception in 1972.

BASIL OUR BROTHER IN NAWALAPITIYA

On the evening of 5 April 2005 Marshal Namalwakege Basil died in the hospital at Nawalapitiya. On April 9 several members of Satyodaya joined Basil’s wife, Mary Manuel, their three daughters and son to go with Basil on his final journey to St Mary’s Church in Nawalapitiya and from there to the cemetery.

It was only after Basil’s death that we came to know his other names. When we asked him how we should write his name on an envelope, he said with a grin, “Just say, Basil”.

Basil lived, because he could afford no better, in a small house, very difficult of access, on a steep hill, off the beaten track in Nawalapitiya. It was Upali Cooray of the Revolutionary Marxist Party, who pointed him out to us when one day in 1980 we went past the Nawalapitiya Post Office. Upali said, “There’s your man”. The Movement of Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE) had begun in Colombo the previous year, sponsored by Satyodaya, in comradeship with several persons like Upali. Soon after, we introduced ourselves to Basil. A comradeship in the struggle for peace-founded-on-justice began immediately and continued for twenty-four years until it was time up for Basil, somewhat prematurely, to leave us.

But persons like Basil never die. They live on in those who while he lived shared his life and its ideals. His achievements were many and varied. He had direct experience of the ways of the law as Interpreter to Judges and Attorneys in the Courts. On his own he acquired much legal knowledge. He used the knowledge and the experience to help thousands of poor people to obtain redress from injustice. He was Legal Advisor in the Satyodaya Sub-Centre in Nawalapitiya. He maintained, though never in great comfort, a united family. He resolutely opposed all ethnic chauvinism and worked continuingly for inter-ethnic equality and justice. He inspired all in his household and circle of friends with his own spirit of selflessness and service, opening the doors of his humble dwelling to anyone who wanted food for the day and a sleeping place for the night, hiding his many bodily ailments

from everyone, always with a word of good cheer on his lips, looking forward to the day when every tear would be wiped away and a smile appear on every poor child's face.

Satyodaya has many friends and allies as it continues on the uphill road to a society of freedom and justice for all. But it knows that it will always be hard to find a friend so trustworthy and an ally so unflinching as Basil.

- Fr Paul Caspersz, sj

DIARY

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- Feb 14 : Three monthly IMPACT stock taking programme was held. All the activities so far done were identified and evaluation.
- Feb 18 : Three Jesuit novices from Kelaniya came to Satyodaya for an exposure programme of one month. They stayed at three estate centres with the people to get firsthand experience of the life of these estate brothers and sisters. Bro. Emmanuel stayed at Sogama in the Pussellawa Area, while Bro. Anton and Bro. Thiranjala stayed at Craingingilt in the Kandy Area and Coolbawn in the Nawalapitiya Area respectively. They completed their programme on 15 March.



Jesuit Novice Thiranjala Weerasinghe addresses the assembly at Meepitiya, Nawalapitiya on Women's Day, 8 March 2005. With him at the head table were (from R to L) (Ms) B.A. Sumanawathie, Secretary, Satyodaya Legal Unit; (Ms) S. Kamalawathie, President, J-Lanka Society; (Mr) Ranjith Nanda Perera, an Officer at the Kandy Prison.

TSUNAMI RELIEF & RECONSTRUCTION

Our Special Blue Bulletin on Tsunami 2004 reported on Satyodaya work up to the end of January 2005. We shall not report on that work again here.

On 5-9 February, Fr Paul visited Jaffna & Mullaitivu in the North. On 1 March 2005 the *Daily Mirror* carried his long article, Travails in the North in the Aftermath of the Tsunami.

On 4-5 April six of our members proceeded to Batticaloa with 120 pairs of shoes and 240 pairs of white socks for the school going children who were given temporary shelter in the unused building of the Sinhala Maha Vidyalaya. Most of the children were from the settlements of the Burgher families at Dutch Bar and at Uppodai. The children were of course overjoyed to receive the new footwear. In the Sinhala M. V. we also heard harrowing stories of how the tsunami wave, in certain places like a wall 30 feet high, crashed upon their houses, often leaving only those who spoke to us to tell the tale. It was difficult to keep a dry eye as we heard them.



Footwear to a Burgher child in Batticaloa: wearing a cap is Mr Sonnie Ockersz, the President of the Burgher Association of Batticaloa

WELCOME VISITORS

- Fr Guy de Fontgalland, Director of the Leo Marga Institute, Bandarawela
- Mr Francis Paiva, Fr Paul's long time friend, now living in America
- Mr Christopher Perera, Fr Pauls' nephew, now resident in Australia
- Fr Egerton Perera, from the Catholic Chaplaincy of the University of Peradeniya
- Bro. George Fernando (Assistant to the Director of Novices), Novices Anthony Pratapraj, Assisiyar Emmanuel and Thiranjala Weerasinghe, all from the Jesuit Novitiate in Kelaniya.
- Mr Srilal & Mrs Collette de Silva
- Fr Benedict Saverimuttu, sj, Director, Centre for Social Concern, Hatton
- and hundreds of our estate and village sisters and brothers who came here for various reasons and whom we are here to serve. The number is so great that we cannot list all the names.

SATYODAYA EVALUATION 2005, COMMISSIONED BY DIAKONIA

Diakonia, one of our donor partners, attached to the Swedish Free Church Movement, commissioned an external evaluation of our programmes. Mrs Mallika Samaranyake, a consultant and a specialist in The Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID) was the resource person in the programme and she was assisted by Mr W. Mediwaka, Mrs Padmini Muthucumarana, Ms Wasanthie Thenuwara, Mr W.L.C. Lekamge, Mr Rambodagedara. The evaluation was made over a period of one month. The evaluation team visited one field location in each of our 6 Areas. Gurukelle in Galaha, Pavement Hawkers in Kandy, Coolbawn in Nawalapitiya, Sogama in Pussellawa, Opalgala in Matale, and Kumarapurawatta in Kegalle. At the time of writing, we await the evaluation report.

- March 8 : International Women's Day is celebrated at the Satyodaya Sub-Centre at Meepitiya, Nawalapitiya.
- March 15 : Satyodaya published a Special Bulletin (now called the Blue Bulletin) on Tsunami 2004. Anyone still wanting a copy may apply.



At Batticaloa: children want to go to school but had lost their footwear to the tsunami Satyodaya through the help of its friends tries to make good the loss.

- Mar 19 : Preschool Teachers Training Programme was held with the participation of 30 preschool teachers. Now all the preschools in our working places are conducted by the Preschool Teachers' Society established by the preschool teachers.
- April 4-5 : A team of six from Satyodaya went to Dutch Bar, Batticaloa, chiefly to be with, and assist, the Burgher communities who were badly affected by the tsunami and the displaced who were sheltered at the Sinhala Maha Vidyalaya buildings.
- Sixteen Plus meetings were held frequently here at Satyodaya to better organize their work. During the period under review two 3-day residential programmes were held on 28 -30 January and 25 - 27 March. In addition, a number of one-day meetings were also held on 28 January, 6 March, and 19 March.

Jan-April : PMC (Project Management Committee) meetings of the IMPACT [Intermediary Management Partner Agency for Conflict Transformation) programme were held three times during the period: 19 January, 11 February, and 19 April. During the meetings the work of Impact was critically discussed and future work was planned.

WHITHER SATYODAYA?

Since its inception in 1972 Satyodaya has always engaged in self-criticism. Our focus or our strategy has consciously gone through three different phases. The history of Satyodaya shows these three phases were as follows:

- i. From 1972 to about 1980, the period when Satyodaya worked for the people
- ii. From 1980 to 1996, the period when Satyodaya worked with the people
- iii. From 1996 to date, the period when Satyodaya follows the people who have taken the lead.

Satyodaya tries to perform the service of a mediator who links two parties: the people and those who want to help them. We are a part of a bigger People's Movement and we contribute with our expertise, contacts and links.

At Satyodaya we follow one vision. Following it has been our constant effort and every member here is following it or is learning to follow it. The vision is that Satyodaya is no more than a carpet, or even only the dust under the carpet, on which the people find their way to inherit the earth, which was theirs from the beginning.



Building work in progress for a new storey on top of the old dormitory

We believe our endeavour is not the only alternative to the existing systems which crushes the poor and the destitute. But we want to be one of the best in which poor and marginalized people's liberation is the goal and their values are protected.

These days, once again, a period marked by critical contemplation of our vision has come. We talk about this in many of our forums here. A sincere option for one of three alternatives has to be taken:

- Be just another NGO?
- Be somewhere between an organization and a Social Movement?
- Be a integral part of a People's Movement owned by people?

We opt for the third alternative. However, we know it is a radical alternative, not easy to achieve.