

INE

THREE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS EVENTS

On 6 October (one day late, as 5 October was a Sunday and many of our members would not be present) our young Hindu vocational trainees joined our own members to organize the service of honour to Sarasvati, goddess of wisdom. As in past years it seemed appropriate to hold the service in our Library. The service was a simple, dignified and moving one.

Also in October some Satyodayans joined a group at Lewella to go on pilgrimage to Our Lady of Madu - Fr Paul, Noeline, Amara, Leela and her son and daughter-in-law and their two children, Jinandani and her husband with their two children, Jinandini's mother and mother-in-law, Jean and her sister and mother. It happened like this. From about July Fr Paul was asked to preside at the Sunday Morning Eucharist in the Sinhalese language at the Jesuit Centre in Lewella. The Eucharist is a celebration of community, so Fr Paul introduced the custom of the small congregation assembling there having breakfast together after the Eucharist, each one bringing something simple to share with the others: "join in to share the food together, no matter if you bring nothing. If all come together, food will never run short". And so it happened when one Sunday morning a group of about 40 young people from Mannar came quite unexpectedly to the Eucharist. They too were invited to the community breakfast and – wonder of wonders - everyone had at least a morsel to eat and a cup of tea to drink. The community was gradually built up, and finally suggested that Fr Paul should lead them to Madu. For Fr Paul it was a visit to the shrine after more than 40 years.

On 11 October Romela Shyomi, Sunil Fernando's charming eldest daughter, received First Holy Communion in the Cathedral. Mangala helped Sunil and Deepthi, Sunil's wife, to decorate the altar and the main aisle on the previous evening, working into the small hours of Saturday. Everyone thought the flower arrangements and the general decor were exquisite. Happiest of all was Sunil's mother, Romela's grandmother. "I won't be here" she said "for Romela's wedding. So I want to be present at her First Holy Communion."

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Recent publication of Satyodaya: ***The Plantation Sector and the Peace Process***, by Lalith Abeysinghe and S. A. Ramya. 16 pp. Rs 30/=.

DIARY

25 August: Thirty six youth from both plantations and villages, who completed the Leadership Training Programme 2003, received their certificates in the Seminar Hall.

31 August: We are informed by email that we have won the 6th prize in the "Stories of Sustainability" contest conducted by Swiss Development Cooperation in those countries of Asia, Africa and Latin which received community development aid from Switzerland. Ours was the story of Craigingilt and we entitled it, "Home at Last".

08 September: The Nawalapitiya group of CARE International conducted a full-day seminar for their members at Satyodaya.

10 Sep & 21 Sep: A full-day Awareness Programme on Human Rights was held at Satyodaya for teachers in plantation schools. The Programmes were conducted by the Centre for Human Rights of the University of Peradeniya in collaboration with Satyodaya. The Programme set itself the objective of creating awareness of human rights among the plantation people, especially the youth, by making plantation teachers aware of the subject and motivating them to spread awareness of human rights through their students in the whole plantation community.

On the 10th 35 teachers and on the 21st 63 teachers participated in the Programme. The resource persons were Dr Navaratne Bandara, Mr Sangaran Vijesandiran, Dr Induwara Gunaratne and Lalith Abeysinghe. Each participant was awarded a certificate of attendance.

19 Sep: Satyodaya has 30 per-schools with 56 pre-school teachers in the field areas of its work. A programme was held in order that the teachers could discuss among themselves with the help of Lalith, Field Programme Coordinator, and the Satyodaya field workers the setting up of a Pre-school Teachers Welfare Society. All present agreed that such a society could powerfully promote the sense of community among the pre-school teachers and be of assistance to them in times of financial difficulty.

28-29 Sep: A 2-day Programme was held at Satyodaya by the Vocational Training Authority, Gampola.

06 Oct: The Annual Sarasvati Pooja had to be held yesterday, Sunday, but as many members would have found it difficult to be present the ceremony was held today in the Library, Satyodaya's "seat of wisdom". Mr Saravanamuttu, a leader of our Craigingilt Housing Scheme and a strong supporter of Satyodaya, conducted the service which concluded with the usual "Pongal" (distribution of sweetmeats) to all present.

10 Oct: Rohan begins the exhibition of his digital paintings, Silent Shades, at Alliance Française, Kandy (cf. pp. 6-7).

11 Oct: Mr S. Liyanage, a retired officer of the Mahanuwara Sevaya of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Cooperation, conducted a media training Programme in collaboration with Sunil Fernando, our Audio-Visuals Units colleague: 15 participated.

12 Oct: Sixty members of the Association of Families of the Disappeared held their meeting at Satyodaya.

14 Oct: Eliyas Kareem and Athula Edirisinghe (Fr Paul's former students) donated to us two high speed sewing machines in full working order.

14, 15, 21 & 23 Oct: In order to make our Library more accessible to school children around Kandy, Muragan, our Nawalapitiya Area Co-ordinator, conducted a series of programmes in which students of Vihara Maha Devi Girl's Collage, Kandy (where his daughter is a student) were introduced to the Library and made aware of its usefulness. About 250 students took part in these events. We are happy that after these programmes some students have become regular users of our Libaray.

15-16 Oct: CHA (Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies), Colombo held an awareness programme for 40 of their members.

17-19 Oct: The first session of the Satyodaya's Action-Oriented Research and Leadership Training Programme was held (cf. the full report on p. 6).

22 Oct: Harsha Wanninayake, our Secretary and Administrator, submits his final written assignment on "The Problems of Employers and Employees in NGOs" at the end of his one-year course of studies for the postgraduate Diploma in Personnel Management at the National Institute of Business Management.

01 Nov: Centre for Performing Arts, in collaboration with Satyodaya AV Unit, conducted a seminar on the role of artists and journalists in the present socio-economic-political context of the country. About 40 individuals were present. We hope that the Centre will continue to maintain contact with Satyodaya's Audio-Visual Programmes.

On the same day Ms Sandya Muthucumarana (Secretary, FEPCOW [Feed and Educate the Poor Children of the World] Sri Lanka) and family and Ajit Kangara Arachchi (President) deliver three computers presented to Satyodaya by Mr Eric Weinman (Paul's first cousin) and Eric's sisters and brothers. Sandhya (*extreme r in photo below*) is Eric's chief partner in Sri Lanka in his project to help the children in memory of his wife, Eva. Sandhya and party on the one side and Satyodaya on the other took to each other like bread to butter. We hope they will visit Satyodaya again - with or without more computers from Eric.



*K. Babuji, Satyodaya's
computer technician,
receives the computers
from Eric Weinman's Sri
Lankan branch of
FEPCOW*

ACTION-ORIENTED RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING

We acknowledge with gratitude the assistance given to us for this Training Programme by the Italian Catholic Bishops' Conference. On 17 October, we started the training that will be spread out over the next two years. The main aim is to improve the leadership qualities of the youth in the plantation areas and adjacent villages, thus creating the necessary background for the emergence of community leaders from their own communities. Therefore, the participants were selected from those who took part in the introductory meeting held on 10 September 2003. The selected group is expected to participate in eight residential weekend sessions in order to complete the full programme. At the end, they will be asked to write a paper on a selected topic. Some of the papers will be published by Satyodaya's Research and Documentation Unit. Further, the participants will be guided to initiate activities of community development in their own home communities of estate or village.

The first session of the Programme was held from 17 to 19 October 2003 at Satyodaya. Ten of our own field workers also took part in the training session along with the group. The theme of the first session was Human Rights. The classes were taken by Lalith Abeyasinghe (our Chairperson and Field Programme Coordinator), Dr Ramani Hettiarachchi, Ms Sobana Rajendran, Prof. Gamini Samaranayake and Dr Induwara Gunaratne (all from the University of Peradeniya) and Mr Upali Jayasinghe, Asst. Superintendent of Prisons, Kandy.

The participants agreed to meet for the second session of the series from 12 to 14 March 2004.

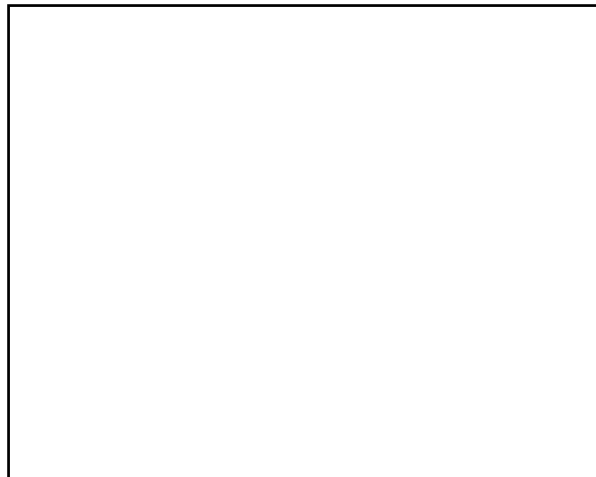
SILENT SHADES

Rohan Benjamin, who joined the Satyodaya team two years ago, held the maiden exhibition of his paintings at Alliance Francaise, Kandy, from 10 to 16 August.

Rohan is a talented painter. He has used computer technology for his paintings instead of the traditional brush. In this his debut, one could easily experience in the 50 creations on view the real power of natural beauty and artistic imagination. The message of loneliness, mysticism, cheerfulness of nature came through to the viewers of what Rohan called his "Silent Shades".

Satyodaya wishes him well.

Rohan Benjamin (centre) in conversation with Dr Mark Amerasinghe and Dr Jacques Souli , Director: Alliance Francaise, Kandy



COMPLETION OF THE LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMME—2003

Our last bulletin (No. 195: August 2003) spoke of the LT Programme—2003. The final stage of the Programme was the awarding of the certificates on 25 August to 36 successful participants.

Satyodaya holds the LT programme high on the list of its priorities as it trains nearly 40 plantation and village youth each year to engage in community development activities. We earnestly hope that those who successfully completed the Programme this year will be in their own communities of estate or village the agents of empowerment of the powerless.

Twenty-Nine of the 36 successful trainees at the Leadership Training Programme 2003

WELCOME VISITORS

08 August : Mr Ahmed Zaneer, a loyal former member of Satyodaya.

10 August : Mr Ton Groeneweg of AMA, Netherlands.

12 September : Mr & Mrs Stephane and Marion Cozon and their two bright children. Stephane and Marion visited Satyodaya twenty years ago and were re-visiting Sri Lanka. The visit gave great joy to us and, we hope, to them too.

14-17 September : Ms Marianne and Ms Gabi, two friends of Mangala Fernando, from Austria, stayed here and took off one day to visit Sigiriya.

04 October : Ms Vasuki and 10 other students from the Eastern University of Batticaloa stayed here while on a study tour of Kandy and Colombo.

14-17 November : Mr Jerry O’Gorman, first introduced to Satyodaya some years ago by Fr Maria Anthony, sj, a former member. This was Jerry’s second stay at Satyodaya and we were overjoyed to have him with us again.

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2004-2007

Satyodaya’s current programme of action covers the 3-year period 2001-2004. Satyodaya is now in the process of drawing up the programme for 2004-2007, as follows:

The focus will be

- i) Basic Facilities as a Human Rights issue
- ii) The Promotion of Human Rights Awareness
- iii) The Journey from a Community Based Organization to a People’s Organization and from a People’s Organization to a People’s Movement

i) Basic facilities as a Human Rights Issue
During the past project period, attempts were made to secure Basic Facilities, such as better housing, hygienic sanitation, safe drinking water, primary health care. Now, there should be efforts to address this problem as a Human Rights issue. Grassroots groups and organizations are now better organized to step into this area.

ii) The Promotion of Human Rights Awareness
We have already launched a programme to train the opinion-makers in the plantation sector, e.g., teachers. The project will now look to work at all levels to create awareness in Human Rights and Peace-Related issues.

iii) The Journey from a Community Based Organization to a People’s Organization and from a People’s Organization to a People’s Movement
Steps will be taken to gather all Area People’s Organizations, such as Estate People’s Organizations (EPOs)/Village People’s Organizations (VPOs)/ Urban People’s Organizations (UPOs), Area Committees, Women’s Committees and leaders of the Sixteen Plus Organization to form a federation.

Actions will be taken to make this sustainable.

OORAGALA

In 1998 the Chairman of the local State Authority (Pradesiya Sabha) allocated the Ooragala portion of the land of Hantane Estate for the settlement of poor, landless rural families living on the land of Hantane estate and its environs. Each family received 20-22 perches (1/8 acre) of uncultivated land. Satyodaya which had been working on Hantane Estate (which is on the hill directly facing Satyodaya) was requested by the 68 families of Ooragala Colony to help them to make their life livable.

Satyodaya had the desire and even the determination to help but lacked the necessary funds. Fortunately, Alex VanArkadie, a Sri Lankan by birth, language and culture, and now Volunteer Coordinator of the Projects Appraisal Group of an international

development group established in Rome in 1982, moved in to consider partnering Satyodaya at Ooragala.

We quote from Alex's letter to us of 18 Nov 2003:

"I voluntarily undertook to visit the colony when I visited Sri Lanka two years ago. On Sunday 11 May 2003, I visited it again with Satyodaya field workers. Walking along a narrow, circuitous gravel track between rows of dwarfy tea bushes we met poor residents of the Ooragala community. Most young families live in makeshift huts and labour on an extent of near-barren land, not far from the renowned Temple of the Holy Buddha's Tooth Relic in the great Kandy City. Many recalled my initial visit and said that they were pleased to see me again and wished to express satisfaction about Satyodaya's efforts to solicit financial help from a foreign donor group to help the community. I was particularly impressed by Mr Edirisinghe, the elder of the community to whom had been entrusted the only key to the drinking water supply scheme.

All in all, as I left Ooragala and their Satyodaya partners, I felt that I had grown wiser, learning immeasurably more that afternoon from among the simplest and poorest than what I used to profess I knew and had gained from the near 15 years seated at my work-desk. Thanks again to Satyodaya for the opportunity.

OORAGALA SCENES

Mr Alex VanArkadie (R), and Lal Perera, Satyodaya Kandy Area Coordinator, at Ooragala

Alex with some of the youth of Ooragala

*Mr Edirisinghe, local elder and caretaker of the water supply scheme,
outside his Ooragala home, with Alex and a Claretian seminary student,
who is on an “exposure” training programme at Satyodaya*