

Profile of V.Muralidharan, Founder & Managing Trustee, Sevalaya

V. Muralidharan, an alumnus of Indian Institute of Science and TCS, is the Founder and Managing Trustee of Sevalaya. Muralidharan had a long stint with TCS from 1987 till 2009. He played a leadership role as the South Zone and GDC Quality Head and contributed immensely in getting ISO and CMM certifications for many of the TCS Delivery centers. His rich experience in Project management and Quality management gained from his TCS days, coupled with his passion for serving the underprivileged, translated into his secret of success in nurturing Sevalaya as a leading NGO.

What is Sevalaya?

Sevalaya is a charitable organization head quartered in Chennai and doing charitable activities in Chennai, Thiruvallur, Kanchipuram, Chengelpet, Tenkasi, Trichy, Thanjavur, Tirunellveli districts in Tamilnadu and in Thirubuvanai at Puducherry. Sevalaya runs free school, medical centres, mobile medical services, community colleges for skill development of rural youth, organic farming, gaushala sheltering dry cows and homes for the orphan and destitute children and senior citizens. All services are rendered free of charges without any discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, religion, language and gender.



Sevalaya's School at Kasuva Centre in Thiruvallur District boasts of distinction of 100% or near 100% results for the past 16 consecutive years in the Std X Public examinations. Pupils graduated to Std XII exams for the last 10 years and the results have been equally creditable. The school has also achieved All India Award by TCS-Educational World Award committee-2006, being adjudged the BEST among 25,000 schools in innovative and quality value education.

What inspired Muralidharan to conceive and implement such a project?

It was a poem of Mahakavi Bharathiyar that he read at the age of 11 that gave the inspiration to dedication towards public service. The poem '*Vellaithamarai Poovinil Iruppaal*', wherein Bharathiyar has exhorted that a real *Saraswathi Pooja* is to provide

education to at least 1 poor child, laid the seed for Sevalaya in the mind of Muralidharan. More inspiration were drawn from Mahatma Gandhi's ideology that "India lives in villages and can grow and prosper only if villages at grass root level grow and prosper" and Swami Vivekananda's school of thought that "God comes in the form of roti to a poor and hungry man".

Sevalaya took shape when Muralidharan finished his Engineering degree from Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore and joined Tata Consultancy Services in 1988. His subsequent post graduation in Gandhian Thought from Madurai Kamaraj University has enabled deep avenues for rich growth of Sevalaya.

Sevalaya came into being on 29th May 1988 but the planning and preparations, including mobilizing funds began much earlier. As a student, Muralidharan along with his friends introduced a manuscript magazine, Ragamalika, which served as a forum to voice his thoughts on social evils and its remedies. In addition, Muralidharan and his friends formulated Vivekananda Association, a voluntary welfare organization catering help to orphanages and blind schools. It's worth mentioning that Muralidharan played a significant role in creating an audio library for a school for the Visually Challenged in Bangalore when he was a student of Indian Institute of Science. He also conducted regular week end classes for children in the slums in Srirampur, Bangalore. The first six months expenses of Sevalaya were met out of the savings of Muralidharan. In addition he personally makes financial contributions to the institution every year.

TCS as a corporate as well as its employees and partners have played a key role in the growth of Sevalaya. TCS has donated several computers to Sevalaya which has contributed towards the IT literacy of its inmates. Employees and partners of TCS have contributed towards purchase of land, construction of various class rooms, sponsorship for the livelihood of various inmates as well as volunteering in teaching and various other social activities. Several leaders from TCS including Mr. Ramadorai, Mr. Mahalingam and others have visited Sevalaya and shared their support for its cause. Currently, the Sevalaya Board comprises of some of the leaders who have had distinguished career with TCS and are proud members of FORTRESS too.

The journey so far

- Sevalaya has transformed Kasuva and 40 surrounding villages in the remote area of Thiruvallur District in Tamilnadu in the last 32 years.
- Child labour has been completely eradicated and villages boast of 2000 students in the Sevalaya School, about 500 alumni pursuing higher education in colleges.

- The institution has produced more than 1000 software engineers, bank officials, college lecturers besides many qualified electricians, carpenters and plumbers.
- Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiar Community Colleges functioning in 8 locations, 7 in Tamilnadu and 1 in Puducherry provides vocational training to rural youth in 10 different courses – Air-Condition and Refeigeration mechanic, Bakery, Basic computer applications, Beautician, Electrician, E Publishing, Lab technician assistant, Nursing assistant, tailoring and Tally. So far, about 500 students have passed out and got placements in reputed establishments or have started their own business.
- Alcoholism in the villages adjoining Sevalaya, Kasuva centre has been considerably reduced.
- The Medical centre at Sevalaya's Kasuva centre, provides free medical care for the residents and the villagers. On an average about 150 villagers get free medical help every day from the Medical centre.
- Sevalaya also takes medical care to the doorsteps of the villagers in 80 villages in two districts viz., Thiruvallur and Kanchipuram, through 2 welllequipped Mobile medical Units
- Besides Sevalaya, Muralidharan is instrumental in conducting Eye/Dental checkup camps and cancer screening camps in collaboration with leading hospitals in Chennai, facilitating early detection of disease and cure.
- Muralidharan has started taking a special initiative to introduce English medium as optional to benefit rural children which will help their higher studies effectively.
- Muralidharan was instrumental in Sevalaya engaging in relief and rehabilitation work, after any natural disaster like the Chennai floods of 2015, Gaja Cyclone, Kerala floods. Be it immediate relief like arranging food for affected in camps, supply of household items, smokeless stoves, provisions, restoration of livelihood like distributing sewing machines, fishing nets etc and construction of more than 25 homes for people who lost their huts in floods, Sevalaya has been doing continuous work in collaboration with various Corporates. Under the guidance of Muralidharan, Sevalaya rushed to provide relief in the wake of Cyclone Gaja in Thanjavur district and the floods that washed away Kerala. 15 houses were constructed and handed over to the beneficiaries in Kerala, who had lost their homes in the floods. New homes were also constructed and handed over to 5 poor people who were rendered homeless by Cyclone Gaja.

- Sevalaya has also been actively involved in offering support to the people affected by the loss of jobs, livelihood due to COVID – 19 pandemic. Sevalaya has also donated ventilators , PPE kits to Govt Hospitals in 5 districts and provided food and essential supplies to tens of thousands of people, with support from corporate, individual donors and associations.
- A burning ambition within Muralidharan is to start a rural university absolutely free of charges to cater to the dreams of higher education of meritorious poor and destitute children.

In conclusion, Muralidharan's passion and life time commitment has resulted in Sevalaya serving the poor and transforming them into an equitable, happy and fulfilled society with an improved quality of life.