



# Sewa disha

*A quarterly newsletter from Sewa International Australia Inc Apr - Jun 2008*



## *Understanding the Mechanics of Life with Gandhi*

In our hi-tech, state-of-the-art age, one often tends to question Gandhiji's views on industrialization and use of machinery and dismiss him as an eccentric faddist. But let us see what he had to say on the subject and then pass our judgement.

Once, during an interview on this very theme, Bapu pointed to his spinning wheel and said, "It is quite wrong to say I don't believe in machinery. This spinning wheel is a beautiful piece of machinery." But he judged all machines and in fact he judged every form of material progress by what it contributed or took away from life.

Ahmedabad, the city of mills, was the place where Gandhi chose to make his ashram. The ashram was a sort of a collection of huts built very simply and without any sense of architectural design or anything like that; and yet, there were so many trees around, many fruit trees, and many flowers, that the place looked extraordinarily beautiful. And it was on a very high river bank. If the factories of Ahmedabad had a disturbing influence on the lives of the people then the ashram provided them with a natural instinctive beauty. The hum of his spinning wheel on one

side of the river was so different from the dark gaunt mills on the other. There was a great contrast between the industrial life in India which the English brought into the country, and the very simple rural life, which Gandhi wanted his people to live.

I want simple machines, not big monsters which nobody can possess," said Gandhi. "My ideal is a machine which anybody can have. With me man comes first. What is good for man is good for Gandhiji; what is not good for man is not good for Gandhi. But how is one to judge as to what is good and what is not?"

In the course of a discussion with late G. Ramchandran, Gandhiji was asked many questions on his views about machinery and industrialization. One such question was "When you exclude the sewing machine, you will have to make exceptions of the bicycle, the motor car etc.?" "No, I don't," said Bapu, "because they do not satisfy any of the primary wants of man, for it is not the primary need of man to travel with the rapidity of a motor car. The needle on the other hand, happens to be an important thing in life - a primary need."

The fragrance of flowers spreads only in the direction of the wind.  
But the goodness of a person spreads in all directions. -Chanakya

The Mahatma's classic answer is even now taken as an original approach of Gandhiji for eliminating poverty. A question related to this was put forth to him, "Are you against machinery as such?" Mahatma replied, "How can I be against machinery? This body itself is a most delicate machine," and preceded, "What I object to, is the 'craze' for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour' till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of hunger. The force behind it all is not the feeling or intention of doing good to others by saving them from doing work, but greed. I am a determined enemy of all machinery that is designed for exploitation of people."

Gandhi's idea was not to finish off all machinery but to keep a control on its use instead of abusing it. Further it was man, and not the machine, that should be the master and should dictate the terms. Besides, for him, human labour was all important. Bapu says that he would welcome an improved form of a plough. "But if by any chance one man could plough up by some mechanical invention of his, the whole of the land of India and control all the agricultural produce and if millions had no other jobs, then they would starve, and being idle, they would become dunces." Did this mean that he opposed all the great inventions? Gandhiji's response was, "I would prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all. There is a difference between one invention and another. I should not care for poisonous gases capable of killing masses of men at a time. I also have no consideration for machinery which is meant either to enrich a few at the expense of the many, or without reason to displace the labour of the people. The machine should not be allowed to cripple the limbs of man."

### ***The Romance behind the Singer Sewing Machine***

*Take the case of the Singer Sewing Machine. It is one of the few useful things ever invented and there is a romance about the device itself. Singer saw his wife labouring over the tedious process of sewing and seaming with her own hands and simply out of his love for her he devised the sewing machine, in order to save her from unnecessary labour. He however, saved not only her labour but also the labour of everyone who could purchase a sewing machine.*

M. K. Gandhi



## **DID YOU KNOW..?**

Bananas contain three natural sugars - sucrose, fructose and glucose combined with fibre. A banana gives an instant, sustained and substantial boost of energy. But energy isn't the only way a banana can help us keep fit. It can also help overcome or prevent a substantial number of illnesses and conditions, making it a must to add to our daily diet.



**Anaemia:** High in iron, bananas can stimulate the production of haemoglobin in the blood and so helps in cases of anaemia.

**Brain Power:** 200 students at a Twickenham (Middlesex) school (England) were helped through their exams this year by eating bananas at breakfast, break, and lunch in a bid to boost their brain power. Research has shown that the potassium-packed fruit can assist learning by making pupils more alert.

**Constipation:** High in fibre, including bananas in the diet can help restore normal bowel action, helping to overcome the problem without resorting to laxatives.

**Morning Sickness:** Snacking on bananas between meals helps to keep blood sugar levels up and avoid morning sickness.

**Ulcers:** The banana is used as the dietary food against intestinal disorders because of its soft texture and smoothness. It is the only raw fruit that can be eaten without distress in over-chronicler cases. It also neutralizes over-acidity and reduces irritation by coating the lining of the stomach.

**Stress:** Potassium is a vital mineral, which helps normalize the heartbeat, sends oxygen to the brain and regulates your body's water balance. When we are stressed, our metabolic rate rises, thereby reducing our potassium levels. These can be rebalanced with the help of a high-potassium banana snack.

**Heartburn:** Bananas have a natural antacid effect in the body, so if you suffer from heartburn, try eating a banana for soothing relief.

**PMS:** Forget the pills - eat a banana. The vitamin B6 it contains regulates blood glucose levels, which can affect your mood.

**Depression:** According to a recent survey undertaken by MIND amongst people suffering from depression, many felt much better after eating a banana. This is because bananas contain tryptophan, a type of protein that the body converts into serotonin, known to make you relax, improve your mood and generally make you feel happier.

## SEWA ACTIVITIES

### *Book Bank Project of Seva Bharati Meghalaya*

Seva Bharati Meghalaya is starting its new project "Book Bank" to help poor & needy students from remote villages of East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya. Quick Heal Antivirus Company has provided financial assistance for this project.

It will provide the text books recommended by MBOSE to the poor students of class VIII, IX and X. In this educational year (Feb 08 to Nov. 08) total 120 students will get benefited through this Book Bank.

Thirty villages from Pynursla block of East Khasi Hills District have been selected to search for poor & needy students. 200 forms have been distributed among the students of Class VIII to Class X. Filled forms will be accepted till 28th Jan 2008. The final list will be prepared till 31st Jan 2008 and the book distribution ceremony will be held before reopening the schools i.e. in 2nd week of Feb. 2008.

Some of the projects supported by SEWA Australia are

**Nele** — Boys & girls rag pickers projects at Bangalore

**Maitreye**— Girls Gurukula at Moorkaje Taluk near Mangalore

**Prabhodhini** — Boys Gurukula at Hariharpur in Karnataka

**Sewa Dham** — Boys hostel at New Delhi

**Aruna Chetana** — Mentally retarded and physically challenged children's project at Bangalore.

**Karunya Hospital** — An exclusive Cancer hospital in Kerala.

**Saraswathi Vidya Mandir** — Tribal girls school at Chattisgarh State.

**Tribal Projects** — Tribal boys & girls school projects at Bhopal.

**Sharanalayam** — Aids affected children rehabilitation centre in Coimbatore.

**Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram** — Tribals areas in Bhopal are supported & rehabilitated through Light-up a child's Deepavali.

**Jana Kalyan Samithi** — A Student exchange programme at Nasik.

Details of these Sewa activities will be provided in upcoming issues- so, stay tuned!

## LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE



Lift operator : "Right you can get off now, beta (son)".  
Boy : "How dare you call me son"  
Lift operator : " Well , I brought you up,

How did your mum know you hadn't washed your face?  
I forgot to wet the soap!



## *MAKING A WASTELAND GREENER - TREE PLANTATION*

Protection of the environment has been the foundation stone of Indian culture. Our spiritual heritage teaches us that respect for nature is precondition for peace and harmony in life. The first lesson in sustainable and peaceful development we learnt was to see sacredness in everything in nature.

### **VRIKSHO RAKSHATI RAKSHITAH**

Ancient Subhashita says, “You take care of trees- they take care of you” – the message being if the younger generation preserves the nature – the nature preserves you.

### **Forests – Then and now**

10,000 years ago, the Earth was covered by approximately 14.8 billion acres of forests. The world’s forest area has now shrunk to 8.6 billion acres as a consequence of human exploitation... most of which occurred in the last 50 years. In 1800, there were 7.1 billion acres of tropical forest worldwide. There are 3.5 billion acres of tropical forest remaining.

### **Exhaustion of Forest resources**

Due to excessive demand of fuel wood, fodder, timber and non-wood forest product, the forests are continuously degrading, causing loss of ecosystem, erosion of biodiversity, reduction in carbon sink capability, climate change, floods, drought, desertification, and damages to watershed, silting of reservoirs, estuaries and rivers, change in hydrological regime etc. Sustainability of forest eco system is an essential component of the environmental conservation efforts and any degradation of forests will have an adverse impact on items as water resources, agriculture, biodiversity environment, climate and human health besides the subsistence living of tribes and other communities living in an around forest areas.

### **Species Extinction**

We lost 100 species every day- 4 species per hour, due to tropical deforestation. At current rates, 5-10% of tropical forest species will become extinct every decade. About 50%<sup>^</sup> of all mammals and 25% of all bird species in peninsular Malayasia will become extinct by the year 2020.

### **Species and their Tropical Homes**

Over 50% of the Earth’s species live in tropical forests. Tropical forests contain 70% of the world’s vascular plants, 30% of all bird species and 90% of all invertebrates. The single greatest cause of species extinction in the next half-century will be tropical deforestation. Scientists concur that roughly 5-10 percent of closed tropical forest species will become extinct per decade at current rates of tropical forest loss and disturbance. With more than 50 percent of species occurring in closed tropical forests and a total of roughly 10 million species on earth, this amounts to the phenomenal extinction rate of more than 100 species per day.

With the advent of Robin Smith’s order of Economy the assumption is that the nature is there to be exploited and hence we can see the degradation of other nature wherein its being destroyed at the rate of about 12 hectares every hour (approx.)

The mind is restless and difficult to restrain, but it is subdued by practice- Bhagavad Gita

## **Tree Plantation in Minto Shiva temple on Sunday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008**

TREE plantation is not a mere ritual performed during spring. The reason for mass plantation during the season is the availability of water and a suitable climate for young saplings to grow roots, feel protected and get nurtured, nourished in a proper manner.

In order to highlight the importance of balance in nature and to inculcate a sense of gratitude towards the nature – SEWA International (Aust) Inc – encourages young and old alike to participate in a mass of activities that develops a sense of responsibility towards Mother Nature.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

Blood Donation is a gracious act that by volunteers & other donors to save lives during October every year to commemorate the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi.

SEWA International in association with Red Cross will be organising a Blood Donation drive in Liverpool & Paramatta blood banks this October. SEWA is also launching the Bone marrow registry drive and an awareness campaign about the modern & simplified process to donate Bone marrow on the blood donation day. SEWA requests everyone to participate & contribute to the success of blood donation.

Some of SEWA International's local projects are

**Sponsor-a-Child** — You can sponsor a child for “One dollar-a-day” and an option to choose the child & place from the available projects with us.

**Managanidhi** — You can make donations on all auspicious occasions which are then donated to a project supported by Sewa.

**Anantharam** — A project to lend a helping hand in moments of grief & distress.

**Clean-up Australia** — Sewa volunteers participate in Clean-Up Australia on 1st Sunday of March every year at various locations in Sydney.

**Plant-a-Sapling** — Volunteers Participate in various plantation programmes with the local councils.

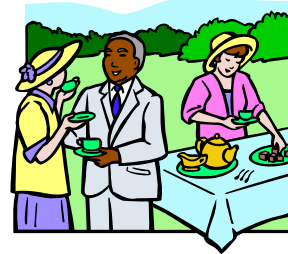
**Streamwatch** — A project supported by Sydney Water where Kids test the pollution levels in Sydney's rivers & weirs

**Blood and Bone Marrow Donation** — Conducted annually during October to commemorate Gandhi Jayanthi in association with Red Cross.

**Seniors Citizens Program** — Catering to the emotional & social needs of Seniors of Indian origin by conducting regular monthly meetings, picnics, educational & entertaining programmes and celebrate festivals.

**Various other fund raising programmes** — Conducted to support the various Sewa projects in India & other countries.

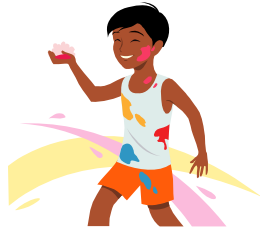
If you would like to be part of the **SEWA Pariwar** (Family), please contact us with your interested area and the nature of support you intend. One of our volunteers will be happy to talk to you.



Sewa International is organising a Tree plantation on the “SEWA DAY” at Shiv Mandir at Minto on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2008. Sewa requests your participation with your family & friends to support the event and an opportunity to serve lord Shiva.

Phone : 1300 00 SEWA (1300 00 7392) or Email : [info@sewainternational.org.au](mailto:info@sewainternational.org.au)

Visit : [www.sewainternational.org.au](http://www.sewainternational.org.au)



# Kid's Corner

## FIND THE WORDS

L A K S H M A N A B X H T O Y  
T Y E W H X X G W J K E S E K  
P Z A M V A C J R T H F A U E  
K X T H D W T R J H J Y R R K  
Y B H O A R A R U D N R H I D  
W X D M S M A V U F R U T J N  
M N A X A A X V O G T B I D Z  
G I H Y R H Y X A V N D M S L  
W Z A V A G L L G N F A U T I  
S N L U T I M R A F A I S K Y  
A A Y L H D X N R S E Y I J S  
U H A K A I K E Y I U M P I P  
A H T A R A H B K N L O T V L  
A M A R O F S K I A H A K K S  
L A F H V W Z O V S N M V R L

AHALYA

BHARATHA

DASARATHA

KAIKEYI

KOUSALYA

KUSH

LAKSHMANA

LUV

RAMA

RAMAYANA

RAVANA

SHATRUGNA

SITA

SUMITHRA

VALMIKI

In everyone's life at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle our inner spirit- Albert Schweitzer