

The association of women bearing the name of Vishnu

There is in Trivandrum, a premier institution for all the struggles for emancipation of women and feminist concerns; It is an NGO whose name is difficult to catch for an average French, Sreevaraham Vanitha Samithi (SVS). Translated into usual French, this means "the association of women in the name of Lord Varaha", Varaha is one of the many avatars of the Hindu God Vishnu.

This NGO name is not due to any religious affiliation but only for being situated close to a Hindu temple dedicated to the God whose uniqueness is to have led a fight to 1,000 years to save planet Earth. Quite a symbol!

This charity association was created in 1913 by women of the high society of Kerala but acquired the true status of association only in 1957. Thanks to powerful political support in the early days, the association obtained a long-term lease of the State on a very large plot on which the current facility was built gradually.

First there was a clinic in 1957, and then pre-school classes and a handicraft training center. The school was built in 1961 as well as the children's theatre, which officially opened on February 28, 1969, just 50 years ago.

Grafted on these activities of local social services, is a community-cum-school library that combine sa mobile library, meant mainly for home-bound elderly women.



A view of the front of the SVS / photo credit: Dominique Guizien

Today's activities of SVS

A training and production centre

Throughout the year, women from poor neighborhoods (30 women per batch) come to learn artisan production techniques, in order to make their livelihood. Trainings extend from 2-3 days to 3-6 months. The normal cycle of progress for these women is trainee, then paid worker, and for the more gifted of them, entrepreneurs or even trainers, in a gradual process of empowerment. The crafts are very varied: bookbinding, fabric painting, mural painting, glass painting, metal embossing, manufacturing of soaps, detergents and lotions, decorations for Christmas and weddings, production manufacturing of candles, soft toys, thermal cooker, manufacturing of bags and file board, jewelry and beads works. There are also trainings in food craft, nutrition, catering etc. In fact, several women have taken up catering business for big and small events from their homes.



A part of the production of jewelry



Beads works



Painting on fabric



Folded paper picture



An elephant trunk ornament in embossed metal



Some of the trainees



The main trainer (left), a former trainee, next to one of her trainees, a future trainer.

A private school group

On these premises, kids are in school from the age of 4 years up to the age of 10-11 years, with an average of 25 children (boys and girls) per class. To complete this school equipment, there is also a creche which welcomes children from 2-3 years. The pride of SVS is its library but over time its documentary fund has dwindled and SVS would need a boost to level its books collection.

A Neighborhood Center for social activities

In addition, SVS continues its activities in the areas of health, culture and awareness through programmes of seminars and conferences aimed at the empowerment of women. It deals with health, violence against women, waste management, water preservation, energy management, use of solar energy devices, foodconservation and cookery. « Health camps » are organized for women and their children, but are also open to all public. Ayurveda massage sessions, learning of nursing home care, courses of life skill education for young girls, the importance of human values, education and personal development complete this social offer.

A theatre

The children's theatre is 50 years old and had a heyday which witnessed the passage of the great stars of Indian music, dance and drama. It was also a neighborhood facility often hired out for family festivals and weddings. But with the years passing, this exceptional facility has much decayed, due to lack of funding available to carry out routine maintenance. Therefore it remains a magnificent 600-seat theater room that dramatically needs financial help for maintaining its role of a community centre for culture.

To learn more about SVS:

sreevaraham vanitha samintha

<https://www.freeofme.com/groups/view/36149/sreevaraham-vanitha-Samithi>