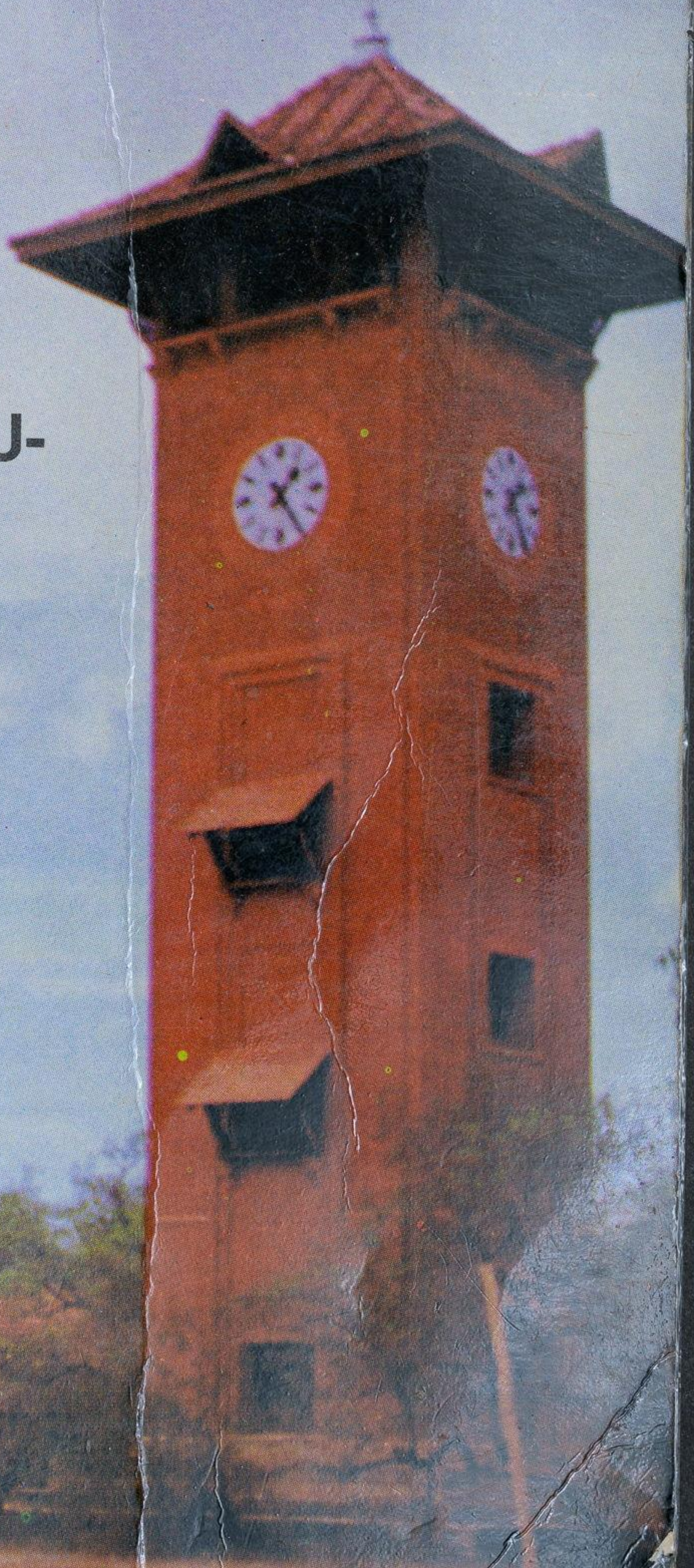


**VANACHARBU-  
WOODLAND**



**D.A. Devapiriam**

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## VANACHARBU - WOODLAND

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*"The city streets will be filled  
with BOYS and GIRLS  
playing there"*

*(Zechariah 8:5)*

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D.A. Devapiriam

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*Dr. D.A. Thejus*  
Editor

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## FOREWORD

After reading the booklet, "NARAIKADU", a reader suggested to me that I should write something like this about the VANACHARBU. I thought it was an excellent idea, but felt that I was not competent to write it. Sometime later I decided that if I waited for such a person to come along it would never be written. Another reason for me to write this was that I am the only person in the family who knows the Vanacharbu well. I had lived here from the beginning and had experiences both the Vanacharbu upbringing and responsibility as an Annachie for ten sets of boys during my years as Junior and Senior Annachie and as head of Vanacharbu. In addition to this, on the home side I held direct responsibility for education and games.

This is the story of the Vanacharbu written so that anyone who wants to know about the men's side of the family and what it was like could read it, as I hope many would like to. When I first wrote this there was no thought of printing it. But when people read the first draft, they thought it would be good to have it printed. Help was given by several people, especially Dr. Kiruba Sittie and David Cook Foundation, who went through it and made some valuable suggestions.

Most of those who will be reading this story are now scattered throughout India and overseas. For them, this will bring memories of their childhood, their home and school life, and what our father has done for us through this Family. The Father of our childhood is still our Father, and living for Him will give joy to Him and Ammai and brothers and sisters who served the Family, especially Vanacharbu.

D.A.Devapiriam

June 1987

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AMMAI  
ACCAL  
ANNACHIE  
A.V.  
  
BALA SANT  
  
BANDY  
  
FAREX  
  
H.of P.  
KANJI  
KAVAL  
MARGOSA  
  
PANDAL  
  
P.S.S.  
  
SITTIE

## GLOSSARY

AMMAI	: Mother
ACCAL	: Elder Sister
ANNACHIE	: Elder Brother
A.V.	: Ananda Vanam. A place 23 Km from Dohnavur Fellowship for boys in training.
BALA SANTHOSHA	: Name of the swimming pool, meaning "Youngster's Joy"
BANDY	: A wooden spoked iron rimmed two wheeled wooden cart pulled by two bullocks. A smaller sized cart is manhandled.
FAREX	: Tinned babies milk food. The container has a bonny baby on it.
H.of P.	: House of Prayer
KANJI	: Gruel of porridge
KAVAL	: Watch ie., of gardens, fields, etc.
MARGOSA	: Neem. Its seeds are collected every year by the family members and sold. From it medicinal oil is extracted and neem soap and other products are made from the oil.
PANDAL	: Shade made with coconut palm leaves in the open space.
P.S.S.	: Parama Suha Salai. Dohnavur Fellowship Hospital.
SITTIE	: Mother's sister. Western women missionaries are called 'Sitties'.

S.S.L.C.	: Secondary School Leaving Certificate ie., School Final Certificate.
S.S.S.	: Suba Saythi Salai - name of the 'Good News Hall' in Dohnavur Fellowship.
STHALA	: Place (compound). Names of the Sthalas. Vistara (expanse), Sunthira (moon). Kathirava, Arunothia, Usha, Aruna, Athava (all meaning -Sun), Tharisana (Vision), Sthothira (Praise).
THEVAR	: A caste that usually does the watchman's job in the country side.
UPPARIHAI	: Name of the Dohnavur Fellowship clock tower.

#### NOTE :

For readability sake, administration parts of VANACHARBU, though important, are left out, but is still in the original and can be read if wanted.

For more information about the Dohnavur Fellowship Boys' work read Dohnavur Fellowship books ie., "Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur" by Bishop Frank Houghton. Chapter 24 : "Thaamarai Mottukalin Nesi" (Tamil) by Thyaharaj Ananda - Chapter 21 : "Though the mountains shake" by Amy Carmichael. Page 134 : "GOLD CORD" by Amy Carmichael etc.

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# I

## VANACHARBU - WOODLAND

### SET UP :

Coming north from the House of prayer we reach the Moongate which was built into the old compound wall built by Ammai. Passing through it, we enter Vanacharbu (Woodland). From its name one can deduce why it is called by that name. When it was bought, there were more trees, mostly Vahai, than on any nearby lands. In the passage of time many died and were cut down. But many new trees of different varieties were planted, mostly by those in Vanacharbu during their stay there. Boys aged seven and up needed a place to live. Vanacharbu was felt to be the right one. It was bought in 1927.

Going through the Moongate we see two buildings to the left. They are the east-west rectangular buildings with only wire netting for their walls. They are the Vanacharbu weaving sheds with about ten hand-looms. Turning right there is a long building built into the compound wall, the western half being a part of the sewing room, and the eastern half the general store for Vanacharbu and south of it is the main Vanacharbu, sewing room, named Siranthamanai. Going north and turning eastward we see a structure facing west, shaped like the capital E without the middle line. This is the Sunthira Sthalam. Behind it, is the Vanacharbu dining hall. And just behind the old compound wall the Vanacharbu kitchen is attached.

Coming back to Sunthira and looking west we see the seventy five feet Upparihai - the clock tower. There the Vanacharbu ends and Jeevananda begins. Coming back to the road and going north we see another moongate flanked by two long buildings. A few meters further another moongate is flanked by two pillared halls. These are Vanacharbu

school rooms. Again going further north a few metres. there is on the eastern side a north-south rectangular building facing west, with another structure at its southwest side, facing north. This is the Kathirava Sthalam.

Standing in front of the Sthalam and looking west we see the Vanacharbu well, which is adjacent to the Vanacharbu lane. This is the only lane left and kept as a momento of the old time. It separates the Vanacharbu from the Tharisana Sthalam, where some of the married members of the Family live.

Returning to the main road and going north a few metres we come to a dead end. On our right side is the Aruna Sthalam, built like an E without the middle line. The central part faces south and the wings face each other. On the left is Athava Salai, a garage changed into living quarters. Southwest of it is the Athava Kirahana which is five rooms long.

Going to Athava and turning south we walk ten metres or so to the Pattarai (Carpenter workshop). It has a Binding Room on the west and a tiled floor east of the work hall for the Vanacharbu hair cutting.

North of Pattarai and attached to it is the Kerosine tanker shed for the Vanacharbu lanterns. These were filled each Saturday. South of the Pattari and a few metres from it is the Maniarai (Watch room) sealed with large wire netted glass paned windows. Only a road separates it from the Vanacharbu well.

Coming back by that road to Kathirava and walking northeast of it we come to Usha Sthala. It is different from other buildings. It has a large stone pillared hall with four small houses attached to it - two on its wings and two behind. It faces south with a big open space at the front with two full-sized volleyball grounds. Just east of it divided by a wire fence, is the Arunothia. It is built on the same pattern as Usha, but with brick arches instead of stone pillars.

All Sthalas have the same facilities such as drying sheds, pumps and flush-out in the same pattern of Sunthira. the whole Vanacharbu is about 300 metres long and 300 metres wide, but not in geometrical squares.

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Once I took an undergraduate, studying arts in one of the British Universities, round the compound. When we came to Vanacharbu and especially to the schools he exclaimed, "How beautiful are the buildings and the whole setup". He wanted to know who planned all the buildings and were they professional. He said the same about the whole setup and even sketched the Moongate and its background.

## II BALASTHALA TO VISTARA

### 1. BALA STHALA :

When a baby is brought to the Family he (or she) is taken to the Bala Sthala, unless ill or very delicate in which case he is kept in Parama Suha Salai, our hospital. In the Sthala he is given to one of the Accals, who may have several other babies to mother. These Accals have dedicated their lives to the family and the children. On the 6th of the following month he is brought to the House of Prayer at the "Praise Meeting" and is dedicated to God, our Father.

Most babies when brought here are not "FAREX" looking babies but weak and frail and sometimes very ill. Once a baby girl was brought to the House of Prayer for dedication. She was so frail I thought she would not survive for long. When I imparted my thoughts to my wife, who knew about these matters, she said, "Don't fear, she will not only survive, but thrive," and gave a few examples. Outwardly I accepted her statement, but I was not convinced and had strong reservations as to the baby's survival. About a year later my wife pointed to a "FAREX" looking plump baby and said "This is the one I told you about a year back". Even with all the care the babies receive from doctors, nurses and Accals some die. We feel it is the best for them that Our Lord and Father has taken them to himself.

### 2. VISTARA :

When the boys are between the ages of one and two they leave for Vistara (expanse). It was built for boys coming from Bala Sthala and leaving Vistara for Vanacharbu at the age of seven or eight. As the name implies it is a spacious place with plenty of open space and buildings with large rooms. They are with Accals, each responsible for five to eight of them, living in separate rooms. Accals have younger sisters to help them.

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A Sittie and a Senior Accal are the heads of Vistara. Here they are taught Scripture stories about our Lord Jesus, songs in both Tamil and English (many English ones written by Ammai), housework, how to help others, swimming in Bala Santhosha and many other useful things. They have swings, slides, and trees for climbing. Some are bright and some are not so bright, some are very intelligent and a few are dull; most are enterprising but a few are not; some have strong character and some are not. There is every kind of boy. (But from hindsight we see some truth in the saying "Bright at five and dull at thirty and not bright at five but bright at thirty and afterwards.") Usually they are the same when they grow up as they were when they were young, although it is not easy to predict a boy's future from his childhood.

The boys are taught to be self-reliant from childhood. Up to the age of six they are, for all purposes, under women. At the age of six they are sent to Vanacharbu school to study in class 2. From the age of seven or eight men have the responsibility of raising them. Even after they leave the family and go out into the world and get married and have children of their own, many still have happy memories of their childhood in Vistara and love their Accals. Before Vistara was built, the boys went to Square and then to Love, joy and peace and Zoo (now polygon) and hand workroom before going to Vanacharbu.

### 3. MOVE TO VANACHARBU :

The move from Vistara is a big one for the boys at age seven or eight. It is not only a change of place, but a change from care wholly by women to care given almost by men. In the first ten years 1927-1938 the heads of the Sunthira Sthala were women - Arulai Accal and Premalu Sitties with two or three Sitties living there. During 1958-1972 first, one married couple, Mr & Mrs Burns, then, another, Mr & Mrs Trehane (all missionaries) were the heads of the Sthala. But Rajappan Annachie was the real working leader of the Sthala for many years. From 1938 to 1958, and a few years after 1972, it was run by men.

The usual time of the change over is just before the beginning of

the academic year. The boys know the move is coming. Their possessions, a New Testament, Perinba Geetham, Christmas and Coming day presents etc., are few. They are put into one of their Christmas bags. On the afternoon of the move, all gather to have a good-bye meeting. After prayer and last advice from Accals, they move to the eastern "Green Gate." Here the separation comes. The class, with a senior Accal or Sittie leaves Vistara while the Accals stand and watch them go. They walk by the Jeevananda path to Sunthira. The whole Sunthira, awaiting their coming, welcome them joyously. The welcome is sealed with thanksgiving and prayer. The senior who came with them then returns to Vistara.

Though the change is a big one for the boys, not everything is new to them. The Annachies who had taught them last year and the sets they had known in Vistara and in school are there. The Sunthira makes the newcomers feel at home.

Their Annachie takes them to their rooms, tell them all about Sunthira; and the Sunthira boys want to know the latest news of Vistara.

When they come to Vanacharbu an Annachie is assigned to a set of five to eight boys and is expected to be their Annachie until they take a job. But often for various reasons they have two or three Annachies before they become independent.

Some of the newcomers are sad, a few are in tears, some do not show their feelings outwardly and a few seem really to enjoy the change! Sometimes, after a few days, a few boys from each group exchange their emotional roles! But in a few weeks time they settle down to the ways of Sunthira.

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## SUNTHIRA STHALA AND UPWARD

#### 1. SUNTHIRA SETUP :

The Sunthira Sthalam as was stated before is built in the shape of the letter E without the middle line. The block facing west is a long north-south hall, divided into five rooms by wooden structures, which were later removed, making it into one long Gothic Hall. Each room is for five to eight boys. On either side of the hall is a room for Senior Annachies. Each of the two walls of the hall have each four Gothic arched doorways and five Gothic windows without shutters. The hall has two verandahs, one at the front and the other at the back. The boys sleep on the verandahs and in the hall. To keep out the sun the verandahs have folding screen that can be put onto the roof when not in use.

On both wings of this Gothic hall are two structures that face each other. Each is built into two houses for two to live, making a total of four houses. Later when the married couples (both couples did not have children) came they lived in the northern building. Of the two southern rooms the westernmost is used as a dispensary. The other has an organ and is used for singing class and for Vanacharbu choir. The easternmost room of this house is Rajappan Annachie's room.

There is plenty of space behind the building where there are pumps. Here flowers and fruit trees are grown. The drying shed for boys is there, with wooden poles hanging in rows, one for each boy's own use. Behind it is the latrine. A wall divides the two. First we had pits dug and then bricked pits and finally flush outs. A stonebuilt water channel drains water from the school area and divides the drying shed from the main part of the Sthala. In front of the main Buildings there is enough space for the boys to play and a few trees to beautify the area.

## 2. SUNTHIRA - ROUTINE :

At 6.00 a.m. a whistle is blown by the leader and the whole Sunthira get up, fold their night clothes and pray in their own place. (Seniors get up at 5.00 a.m. or earlier to have their quiet time etc). Then each group stands in a row near the backyard, clean their teeth and bathe, using cold water from their two buckets. After putting on their work shorts, they come together as a group to have prayers, led by their Annachie or one of the boys. Then to their house work.

The Sthala Annachie (leader) apportions to each set (usually four or five sets) what they should do, the senior set having more work than the juniors. Each Annachie in his turn divides the work into the number of boys he has, and each boy is responsible for doing his own work. The boys are encouraged to help one another but the responsibility of the work is the boy's and not anyone else's. Each week work is changed in rotation, giving everyone a different type and amount of work to do. By this they are taught to be self-reliant and to do what has to be done well and in time whether they like it or not. Very few dislike work, but they gradually get accustomed to it. This training goes on without conscious thought until the boys get jobs. It gives great dividends in later life when they go out into the world without much help from the family, and also to those who serve the family here.

At 6.50 a.m. boys have daily inspection of four or five sets of 40 or more boys. He (or she) sees if they are dressed neatly and are tidy. Their rooms, drying shed and toilets are also inspected. Annachie and boys take pride in a clean person and well-kept things and a well-ordered life.

At 7.00 a.m. the half-an hour Bible reading or devotion begins for the seniors and juniors. Each in the senior group has his own Bible or New Testament to read. Then they gather together with the leader, who is usually the head of the Sthala or a senior Annachie, and discuss what they have just read and how it applies to their daily life. They close the time with individual or combined prayer. The junior group also has a

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capable person, a senior, who reads and explains spiritual matters to them. The time is enlivened by songs chosen by the boys.

If it is a school term the time table after the Bible reading is as follows :

8:00 - 12:00	- Morning session (with breakfast 7:30-8:00)
12:00 - 12:50	- Lunch and play
1:00 - 2:00	- Nap
2:00 - 4:00	- Afternoon session
4:00 - 5:00	- House work
5:00 - 5:30	- Free time
5:30 - 6:20	- Games
6:30 - 7:00	- Dinner
7:00 - 7:30	- Free time
7:30 - 8:00	- Evening prayer

The evening prayer is the small family get together time. The Annachie and the boys sit in a circle. They share news of the day, or the Annachie may tell them stories or interesting happenings in the world. After the Daily Light has been read by the Annachie (or by one of the boys) and explanation given where necessary and advice imparted when needed, they have prayers. And then to bed, each in his own appointed place to sleep.

If it is a holiday, the routine is somewhat different. From 8:00 - 9:30 a.m. in the morning, the boys do outdoor work. All Vanacharbu rubbish pits are cleared and the dry leaves taken to the gardens. They have a break from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. when they have the mid-morning kanji and are free after that, except for the senior classes who do the dining hall. The seniors flush the whole floor and wipe it with cloths. Then comes the eagerly looked-for event. Swimming! Then lunch at 11:30 a.m. or 12:00 noon, free time till 1:00 p.m., rest from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. and up at 3:30 p.m.

to bathe, do housework for one hour and then free again till 5:30 p.m. After 5:30 p.m. the same routine is followed as in the term, unless there is some special event to break the routine.

### 3. SUNDAY TIME TABLE:

After breakfast the boys take Sunday bath with scented soap. From 8:00 to 8:30 a.m. they go for a walk or to see senior Sitties and senior Accals and their own Accals Coming day rooms. To the first half of the Suba Sethi Salai at 9:00 a.m. Tamil service at 10:40 a.m. Going for walks at games time. Dinner at 6:30 p.m. singing at 7:00 p.m. in the House of Prayer. Family special days each have their own time table.

### 4. KATHIRAVA - ARUNOTHIA - USHA - ARUNA - ATHAVA :

Vanacharbu is divided into juniors and seniors. Sunthira is considered juniors, and Kathirava upwards, as a whole called Suria, are seniors. When, at the age of twelve or thirteen they move from Sunthira to Kathirava Sthala, they become the most junior of the seniors. Except for minor changes, like getting up earlier, working longer hours, and so on, Kathirava has more or less the same set up and time table as Sunthira. But the big difference is this: the boys begin to assert themselves more, each in his own way. Individually, in class, and in the Sthala, they have more responsibilities. And with it more freedom, though to outward appearance it is not so evident, as they have to do what is given to them to do and cannot shirk their work and responsibility in the name of freedom. This way they learn, unconsciously, to live with others and at the same time be responsible for their actions. Each boy is expected to do housework, field work, study, and play games within the group with less supervision, but they are still personally responsible to the seniors. The setup is such that few consciously considered these things. As everyone is an individual with his own individual makeup, each one's reaction is different. Some are happier by themselves but want to be part of the group without having responsibility for the group. A few are self-sufficient, but happy to be part of the group and don't shirk responsibilities. Everyone wants freedom as he sees it. All do not see freedom in the same light. Their views may be in opposition or even

clash. Some want others to serve their interests, likes and dislikes, and rarely do their part for others, class and family. This attitude is self-defeating. They are frustrated and some become bitter. Nearly all pass through these phases in their lives sooner or later. But for a few it is never ending, it seems. At the Kathirava stage, all these characteristics begin to come into prominence.

Before Ananda Vanam came into being in 1964, the boys stayed in Kathirava from three to four years. At this stage they think out more for themselves (not necessarily rightly) and are more independent. Their growth in these things varies, for everyone is different. When Ananda Vanam was opened, and Arunothiya and Usha closed, their stay in Kathirava was up to post S.S.L.C., when they did their one year service to the family. During this year of service, their fitness and ability were assessed, and suitable training or higher education decided upon, and places found. From 1971 - 78 the boys left Kathirava after doing SSLC, and from 1979 - 81 after doing 8th standard. The last set left in 1981 after 7th standard only.

Before Ananda Vanam was opened the boys moved to Arunothia where they finished their SSLC and one year service for the family in Dohnavur Fellowship and then went on for further study or service. By the time they moved to Usha or while in Usha they would be in training, or working in Dohnavur Fellowship, in one of the departments, or would be moving into the world to make their own living. In both these Sthalas, housework and fieldwork go on if they are still in training. They do a man's fieldwork, even though still in their late teens. They are now at a time in their lives when they want to work and to run their own lives, but are not fully able to do so. It is not an easy period in life for themselves or their Annachies (or parents).

From Usha they move to Aruna. their work in Dohnavur Fellowship is on the home side with boys, teaching, Parama Suha Salai, sewing room, weaving, workshop, agriculture, farm and office. Senior unmarried Annachies live in Athava. Most of them have responsible positions.

Each Sthala or two or three Sthalas combined had a senior

Annachie. If an Indian, he usually had a set also; if missionary, none. In 1976, Aruna and Athava moved to Bethel.

### 5. DINING HALL AND KITCHEN :

Food for 100-200 people in the Vanacharbu was prepared by the Vanacharbu kitchen. For many years the kitchen was attached to the dining hall. The chief cook was an elderly convert, helped by Vanacharbu 14 - 15 year olds. Later, the kitchen was shifted to the south behind the compound wall and attached to it. It was connected to the dining hall by a walled passage with two doors. One on each end, with two raised platforms at its sides, lengthwise, in the enclosed space between the two doors. Food was put there to be taken by the Vancharbu to the dining hall. The kitchen was run by a senior convert with the help of junior converts and our sisters. Annammal Accal was the chief cook in charge from 1942 - 1976. She retired when the seniors left for Bethel. She was in a class by herself. She always wanted to do the best for the men and boys. Vanacharbu kitchen was considered the best (at least one of the best) in Dohnavur Fellowship. Her cooking was the standard by which others were measured.

For meals Vanacharbu was divided into seniors and juniors, which is different from general division. Seniors were the ones serving the family in Dohnavur Fellowship and were of age 20 or older. For breakfast they had iddli or dosai as their daily menu, except on Mondays when they had kanji or uppuma, and idiappam and appam about once a month. This was general way of things, and not necessarily rigid routine. At 5.00 p.m. seniors had tea with banana and other eatables. Juniors had cold rice or hot kanji for breakfast. Lunch and dinner was the same for both, but seniors had extra dishes. On special days both had special breakfast. Once a month, different sweetmeat was made for all. Ammai's birthday feast was held east of the Upparihai. Each kitchen prepared food for their own Sthala.

When we were many, juniors had 3 sittings at breakfast between 6:30 and 7:45 a.m. Senior of the junior batch had first sitting. Lunch began at 11:30 a.m. and ended at 12:45p.m. Juniors batch had first

sitting. Dinner began at 6:30 p.m. and ended at 7:30 p.m. Seniors come when convenient, but had to leave before the last batch finished. Seniors had their meals in the eastern part of the hall. Though it is called 'Mel Panthi' (upper sitting) their part of the sitting was twelve to nine inches below the western part of the hall. Each senior served himself. Juniors had their breakfast and dinner in the open space under the sky, west of the hall, unless it rained, when they had meals inside the hall. Lunch was always in the hall. On special days, ie., leaders coming day, weddings, etc., all men were invited for lunch, and special food was served. Even on that day we had three sittings, Juniors, Intermediates, and Seniors. Lunch was served on silky banana leaves. It was a happy get-together, and a great day for the Vanacharbu men. It is now completely forgotten! Discipline was strict; hearts were light.

Juniors food was served by a senior Annachie, who was sometimes helped by a junior Annachie. Each class and each person had his own place to sit. (All sat on the floor). All used bell metal bowls and plates and brass tumblers. Except on feast days when banana leaves were used. They were polished daily with ash and earth. On Saturdays, they were taken home and polished with tamarind or soap nut which gave them extra brightness. The dining hall had cement shelves built round the walls, 18" high from the floor. Each boy had his own place to put his bowl etc., in a set pattern -plate behind, bowl middle, and tumbler front. The first thing that strikes the eyes of a newcomer is the bowls, plates, and tumblers all in a row, shining brightly. Many have commented on this with surprise, pleasure, and admiration.

Two or three of each batch, in rotation, wiped the floor clean after the meals for the next batch. The last one, the seniors of juniors, cleaned the food vessels. After scrubbing them they are shown to the senior who checks to see that they are clean and bright. They are then wiped with a clean cloth and put in the connecting passage room. Sisters put the food in the passage room, and the first batch take them out to the dining hall or to the front steps of the hall as needed. The last batch, then put them back into the passage room, to be taken by sisters afterwards.

The number of students diminished until we had two batches, and finally one. When the seniors left for Bethel in 1975, juniors (Kathirava) had their meals in their own Sthala. Servant women carried food from the kitchen to Kathirava. The last nine boys left Ananda Vanam in May, 1981.

The dinner bell, a 10" and 1/4" thick, was hung outside the dining hall. When rung with an iron rod, all except for seniors, came running from Arunothia, Usha, Kathirava and Sunthira, each at the appointed time. Even when told to slow down, it was only for a few days that they adhered to the advice! It was fun!

The Vanacharbu were and still are grateful to our sisters who really served their brothers well. Looking back, we appreciate their service more. The food was good. The well-to-do guests thought so, too, even when they were served the daily ordinary food. Old boys speak of Annammal Accal and the sisters' cooking in glowing terms to their wives. It may be that not only food was good, but food always taste better when young than in later life!

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## IV EDUCATION

### 1. DOHNAVUR AND OUTSIDE :

In the early days of the family cultivating character, honesty, hard work, service to others, and knowledge were more important than getting certificates. Loving God and becoming His children was the object of the upbringing. Educating the whole person-spirit, mind and body was the objective. A fixed time for developing each one of them was set apart. Even though this development tried to be practical, by no means was it wholly successful.

Education begins from one's birth, but formal education from the age of one and a half in Suhananda. At the age of three boys move to Jeevananda (dedicated in 1936) to join first the kindergarten section, and then at the age of five to the class I section. For class three, boys went to Vanacharbu (boys school) and girls to Jeevalia (girls school). These steps were regularized in 1936. Before that schooling was experimental. From 1948, the boys went to outside government - recognized schools and girls from 1950.

In the beginning, English was given much importance, since it was thought to be the door or window to wider knowledge, and was the teaching medium. The 3 'R's and history (mostly European), geography, and nature were taught. At that time this was considered a very good education, since literacy and knowledge of English was very low. Anyone able to read and write in any one language was considered a literate person. By this the D.F. is 100% literate from the beginning (In India in 1931 the literacy among men was 15.6%, women 2.9%. In 1941 men 24.9%, women 7.3%. In 1951 men 25%, women 7.9%). Though the schooling was not recognised by the government, it was helpful for getting jobs during that period. In the late thirties, all government recognised subjects and textbooks were gradually introduced and Tamil became the teaching

medium. During all this time, Bible study took a major and prominent place.

To get a job other than manual labour government-recognised certificates were becoming a necessity. Therefore boys were sent to outside schools in 1948. From what has been previously stated, one can see how the educational policy in the family had been gradually changing and finally, except for government recognition, we followed the government syllabus and standards in our schools. Because of this, going to an outside school, though a big step, was not a break from the past. Ammai was not against it and was even for it. She wanted things so safeguarded and arranged that character traits such as honesty and so forth should not suffer but be strengthened.

The teachers who taught in the Vanacharbu school were of good quality. Of them, who taught at various times, were thirteen overseas missionaries, most of them Cambridge graduates. The classes were small, about 10 to 15 students. The school had classes from 3rd standard to school final. But the school was not a government recognised school. So we had to send our boys to government recognized schools to finish their S.S.L.C. As the recognized schools took only students who had finished 7th standard into 8th standard, we only had classes up to 7th once we began sending them to outside schools.

In the 50s and 60s we sometimes had between 130 to 150 students studying from class I to post S.S.L.C. and training at one time. As day scholars our boys went to Walker Middle School (later Walker Higher Secondary School), Valliyur, Tirukurungudi and Kalakadu. We were also able to send our boys to eleven boarding Higher Secondary Schools, seven Colleges - Arts, Engineering, Medical - and twentyone institutes for technical, nursing, laboratory, pharmacy, and other courses.

For boarding schools we had C.S.I. schools (in Idaiyangudi, Ittamozhi, Nallur, Mudalur, Tuticorin, Surandai, Sathankulam, Megnanapuram and the Lutheran one in Vadakankulam). In some years we had boys in all these schools at the same time, three or four boys to a school.

Except for one, all our boys went to Walker High School before going to other schools. When our boys went there in 1948, it was a middle school. In 1981 it became Walker Higher Secondary School. After a year in Walker school, they went to boarding schools. When Walker became a High school boys who were physically not fit or troublesome continued there instead of going on to boarding school. Finally we had other boys also studying up to S.S.L.C. It was a day school and those who studied here had no change on the home routine, which included an hour of study in the morning and one and a half hours in the evening after dinner. The S.S.L.C. students had extra time in the evening if they needed it. Until 1972, no one from this school failed their S.S.L.C. examination.

As it was only a middle school when the first batch joined 3rd form (8th standard) they were sent to Valliyur to a Lutheran High School as day scholars to do their 4th Form (9th standard). Sometimes they walked and sometimes they went by bus. Until Walker became a High School we sent the boys whom we felt would not fit into a boarding school to Thirukurungudi and Kalakkadu Board High Schools, where they walked both ways.

The first group that went to the Walker school in 1948 - 49 to do their 3rd Form (8th standard) and to Valliyoor to do their 4th Form (9th standard) and the next group that did their 3rd Form in Walker Middle School in 1949-1950 were the first to go to Idaiyangudi as boarders in 1950. Twenty were in the group. Devapiriam Annachie went with them and stayed in the Boarding master's room for a year. The year before, Devanesan Annachie and Devapiriam Annachie went to see Idaiyangudi and Ittamozhi, the schools recommended to us by Rev. Bardos (Devathondan Annachie), and selected Idaiyangudi. A few years later Nura Sittie and Devapiriam Annachie and a sister went to several schools to select good ones for boys and girls. Next year 1951-52, another group was sent there with Nesan Annachie. They rented a house and used it as a hostel for that group. One of our boys who had left school did the cooking. The previous set was boarding there. Next year this group joined the boarders for the year 1952-53. Another group went to Vadakankulam with Rahava Annachie, stayed in a rented house, and began boarding next year. In 1953-55

two groups went to a Sawyerpuram. Like the two previous ones, they lived in a rented house. Turantaran Annachie was in charge of them for these two years. Sawyerpuram hostel had all the home facilities which the previous two did not have. From 1955, all went direct up to boarding school without Annachies living with them. But they had old Fellowship boarders to help them.

As time went on these students went direct to the new schools without older boarders. However they had head masters or principals who knew our boys well. Their first head master in Idaiyangudi was Rev. Swaminathan. Three of the B.Eds (Bachelors of education), later all of them head masters, were Messers J.S. Alagiah, J.E.P. Sittther and Paul David, all fine and practical Christians. The three B.Eds and I made a group. The head master was a fine man, strict disciplinarian, but just and loving. Our boys were his personal responsibility. Later all the head masters to whom our group went took the same line, taking responsibility for all the boys on themselves. They had exceptional love and care for them, even though some misbehaved badly. It all began with Rev. Swaminathan.

Each group differed in ability and behaviour, and each boy was different. Some were bright, some dull, some took life in their stride, some were disgruntled, some looked at the bright side of life. Some did not. They were just like other boys in other schools, but with a difference. Though they occasionally quarrelled with one another, with a few exceptions, they stood solidly together against others and were also loyal to their head masters and their schools. Also, their knowledge of the Bible was much better than others.

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## V GENERAL

### 1. PERIOD 1950 - 1984

In the 50's and 60's, discipline was strict, work hard, games tough, spirit adventurous, independence and enthusiasm high. It was also a time of opportunities in many spheres; mostly in education and in jobs. Each boy had a different reaction to Vanacharbu. Some found it hard. Some were rebellious at times. To many it was just like any other home. The reasons were that some were weaklings and others had strong character or were too individualistic etc. At least the strong see the reasons for what is happening, but weaklings rarely see the reasons and they are the most difficult. Generally, our boys have done well after they have left the Dohnavur family. Some of these who had only S.S.L.C and training have gone on to degree and post graduate courses. Those who had degrees now have M.D and doctorates. Many are well off in the world and some are in responsible positions. Many now look back to their home in Dohnavur family with gratefulness and pride and say it was the training they had here that made them what they are, and that it was their happiest time in their lives, though to some it did not look that way at that time.

### 2. POST S.S.L.C. :

After writing the S.S.L.C. one has to serve the family for a year before going for a further course or job. Training and jobs have never been very easy to get and this year gave time to assess each boy and find a suitable training or job. The help given to the family was appreciated and the boys learnt the self-discipline required to do steady work. In the 60s two or three days a week Thyahan Annachie had English classes in the afternoons for the boys, and in his absence Devapiriam Annachie taught, which was worthwhile for those who attended the class. The class improved their English in many aspects. On the days they didn't have

English lessons they did field (garden) work - digging holes, planting trees, loosening the earth, hoeing and dressing the land, planting vegetables etc. In a month they became proficient in every kind of digging and gardening. It was hard work, but enjoyable. One of these groups, the first, was taught carpentry in the afternoons, two or three days a week. Finally, each one of the boys made a stool by himself without much help from the instructors. Whatever work was needed to be done they were available, and we are proud of them.

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## VI GAMES AND SPORTS

### 1. ORGANISATION AND FIELD GAMES :

South of Parama Suha Salai was a wide expanse of land. Its area was from Suba Saythi Salai in the east to the bus stand hotel in the west, and from north road which divides Parama Suha Salai from the field to the main road in the south. At one time it was the playing field for 120 to 150 people of the age of 7-60 and above every evening except Sundays. There were two 100 x 50 yards fields, four small football and hockey grounds, four standard volleyball grounds plus two other smaller ones. Though the games in the evening were only 60 - 70 minutes duration, in the lives of Vanacharbu it loomed larger than the 60 odd minutes or so.

In the early days, though we had outdoor games, there were not many organized, competitive games. But the germ was there already. The need for organised games was felt by the European Annachies who at that time were all keen sportsmen, most of them Cambridge graduates!

On July 31, 1935, all the Vanacharbu, except Sunthira, gathered in Tholan Annachie's house in Tharisana. He was just recovering from an attack of polio, which had semi-paralised his one arm and one leg permanently. But such was his will power and enthusiasm that it never hindered his playing games to the full. It only pushed him to greater activity. Devasamathanam Annachie and Tholan Annachie explained all about the "House system". There were to be three Houses; namely, Walker and Ragland, two missionaries who influenced Ammai greatly, and Hemingway, a collector who stood loyally and helped Ammai in her difficulties. The first house members were from Alpha to Zetas, each house having 15 members.

The colours for each house were as follows: Orange shirt and Olive green veshtie to be the colour of Hemingway; sky-blue shirt and

dark brown veshtie, Walker; and light green shirt and dark green veshtie, Ragland. Then there was called "green shirt", (usually olive green.) Sunthira played games wearing shorts and without shirts. When they went to Kathirava at the age of 12 or 13 they joined the House. Anyone who played hard and put his mind to it could get his green shirt. Half colours have the house colours stitched to the green shirts. To get a half colour, one has to show some skill at least in one of the games. To some, skill comes naturally, and to others by diligent and hard practice. Full colours were awarded to those who had a great deal of skill, enthusiasm, and determination to play to the end and to win. Though all do not get full colours, all can get green shirts. Later veshties were discarded and shorts worn, only shirts showing the "House colours".

In the senior school hall of pillars, Walker House shields were hung on one side of the hall and Ragland on the other. (Hemingway House was discontinued after a year and a special permanent shield was hung in memory of it on the eastern wall). When a House wins the shield, it is transferred to its side of the hall.

As the house system was new to us and several new games were introduced it was decided to have European Annachies in the House to advise, organise and play, for a few years. Aran Annachie went to Walker, Tholan Annachie and Devathondan Annachie to Ragland and Devastira Annachie to Hemingway. Though we did not fully grasp all that was said and explained at that time we knew it was a great moment for Vanacharbu, a new era for field games. Hockey, football, baseball, volleyball, athletics, cross-country running, and swimming were the field events. Later the Regatta replaced swimming. It was also explained to us how captains and vice-captains for each game are elected.

Each house was given a room in the senior school and was named after its patron, whose photo was framed and hung on the wall. The procedure of electing captains is as follows: The head of the games department informs the Houses of when a particular games season will begin. The dates for election of the captain and vice-captain are also given. On the day of the election, houses gather in their respective rooms at 1.00

p.m.. Each member is given a slip of paper in which he writes the names of the captain and vice-captain of his choice in that order, and hands it over to the one (usually an old boy) who presides over the election.

After collecting everyone's ballot a member of the House reads out the names while the one who presides over the election writes them on the blackboard. As each name is called, a number is put next to it, 2 for the captain and 1 for the vice-captain. There may be several names. The one who gets the highest votes becomes captain, and the next highest vice-captain.

Election times are not always smooth running. For instance, if it is thought that two are qualified for captainship, the pre-election period is somewhat ruffled. When the election is over, the captain plans the strategy for the coming inter-house matches, such as who should play, in what position, and so on.

By the date of the match, the captains finalised their plans. On that day of the match they called in their teams at 1.00 p.m. to their respective House rooms. With the help of one or two old boys the captains gave instructions to each member of the teams as to what he should do or not to do. If it was a baseball game, the pitchers were told to whom slow balls should be delivered, to whom fast balls be pitched, and what a poor striker should do. The final meetings were very quiet, for they did not want their strategy and tactics to be known to the other House.

When the day of the match came, the whole Vanacharbu was tense with excitement. The House members all ran to the field at 5.00 p.m. Here they practised to get into their stride for the coming fray. At 5:25 p.m. the referee blew the whistle, and all except the players left the field. The linesmen took their positions. The referee tossed the coin and the winner had the option of side or kick off, or start of play, as the case may be. The players got into their places. Their supporters from each House situated themselves near the sidelines of the field. The whistle was blown at 5:30 p.m. sharp and the game started. The supporters not only cheered but also criticised, advised, and encouraged not only the team, but individuals, as they thought fit.

Hockey and football were an hour duration, with a break of 5 minutes at half-time. Volleyball has 3 sets of games; baseball 9 innings, which were played on two days. The House winning the best of 3 sets in any game was the winner and the shield for that game went to it for that year. Matches were always tense. Sometimes tempers flared up, but it was always exciting. The whole Vanacharbu came and saw the matches.

## 2. CROSS-COUNTRY RUN :

The first cross country run was in 1936. Juniors on January 2nd; Seniors on January 3rd. We practised for this event for many weeks. Seniors twice a week ran several miles through the surrounding countryside. They ran through wadies, fields, roads, and villages. As it was the rainy season, everything was slushy and the little wadies had water running strongly and the going was hard. Juniors also had to undergo this kind of training, but it was not half as tough. Aran Annachie and Devathondan Annachie were always in the forefront during this type of tough training.

The senior cross-country run was from Naraikadu, which is 2900 feet above the sea level and 9 miles from Dohnavur Fellowship. (see Naraikadu booklet for more information) was run only once. After the hard practices, done twice a week in all kind of weather and on different terrains, we had a dress rehearsal run from the foothills. Before the runners were chosen they were checked by the doctor and some were disqualified. From those qualified runners for each house were chosen. Ragland 6, Walker 7, Hemingway 7. Only the first 5 runners' points from each house were taken into account. Competition for places in the team was intense. The date of running was fixed for January 3rd 1936, Friday. The plan was for the party consisting of runners, manager, Aran Annachie, and 3 more Annachies to leave Dohnavur Fellowship on January 2nd at 2 p.m. On the 3rd two Annachies from the forest would be posted, one just below the upper crossing of the river called "Upper river", and the other at the lower crossing of the same river, called the "Rest river". Two Annachies from Dohnavur Fellowship were also posted one at the foothills and the other at Malaiadiputhur, if the runners needed help.

We took with us food for supper and sweets such as laddu, athirasam, coffee and tinned milk for the next day's breakfast, for it was thought that sweet things gave energy. The journey to the forest on that January afternoon was pleasant and happy. We were billeted in Jewel House. We had an early supper, and after prayers, went to bed early.

When we got up the next morning, January 3rd, we first cleaned and tidied the place. Then we breakfasted on laddu and athirasam and washed it down with coffee with tinned milk, and water and nothing else! Some wanted to take a few laddus and athirasam home, but decided against it, as it would hinder running and will be a dis-service to the House!

The night was very cold and the morning bitterly cold. Since we were young (17-19), we did not think much of it then, but walking barefoot on the rough and broken stone path was very painful in that cold. I am sure if we had worn shoes, or the climate warmer many would have done better than they did.

After prayer we came down to the Forest House. The starting place was the big Mango tree in front of it. Two seniors had gone down, one to the Upper River and the other to the Rest River. We were given sweets to suck on the way, but very few did. The starting time was 8.00 a.m. Runners stood in pairs and in a line. Final instructions were given. All were quiet and tense. There were no smiles, just an unpleasant feeling in the pit of the stomach.

We were started in pairs, the slowest first with a gap of one minute between each pair. At 8.00 a.m. sharp, the starter, Aran Annachie snapped "go" and the first pair started off. When the last pair was started off the starter himself started coming down, with a gap of 50 or more meters. He cycled from the foothills to be in time.

After running 100 meters or so, the unpleasant feeling in our stomachs faded away and our only thought was to reach Dohnavur Fellowship at the shortest possible time. To some, running with bare feet in that cold on a rocky broken path was very painful. But to others, it did not matter much. Only two or three walked or stopped on the way. One of

the most annoying things was to have a fast runner who started late pass by leaving us a long way behind. But the most exhilarating moment was when we ourselves overtook the slower ones, leaving them behind! By the time we reached the plain we began to feel tired, but we did not walk or stop, for if we did it would have been difficult to get running again. So we ran and ran. When we reached Malaiadiputhur, our flagging spirit rose and a new energy seemed to move us when we saw our Housemates cheering us to greater effort. When we neared where the bus stand is now, we forced ourselves to run faster. Once we reached the Jeevananda field, we went flat out or it seemed to us!

The finishing line was northwest of the Upparihai (there was no Upparihai then) and parallel to it and the northern Margosa tree. The timekeeper, Tholan Annachie, was at the post with his stop watch. The writer sat at the desk with the list of runners before him, his pen poised over it, to jot down the time given by the timekeeper. The whole family was there, cheering the runners. It was great.

The runners, after crossing the finishing post, being dead tired, just stood at ease or sat down on the ground. Their thoughts were, "I've finished the race successfully, and I've done my best for my House. What is my time and rank". It took some time to get the final results. When the writer gave the results to Devasamathanam Annachie, the clerk of the course, all were silent and expectant. He then announced the result of the race. Distance run: 9 miles (14.5 Km) Winner's time: 1 H 5 Min 55 Sec. Each person had a different reaction. The winners, naturally, were elated and jubilant. But the others consoled themselves that they had done their level best for their House and hoped for better luck next time.

The rest of the day was a holiday for the runners. The Vanacharbu had special food for lunch - rice and chicken curry. It was a festive time. But the runners could not do justice to the lunch. We were too tired. By evening we felt better. But when we got up the next morning, our whole body ached, especially our legs. We could hardly walk, we were told the best way to normality was to walk. We did that, but found it hard and painful at first. It took several days to get rid of the stiffness. But, alas, this

was the first and last of the senior cross-country run. For various reasons, it was discontinued. But it was a memorable day in our lives.

The junior cross-country run was from where the big Tamarind Tree was, about 400 mt. east from the Foothills. The juniors' average age was 13. The team, consisted of 7 from each House. They got up at 5.15 a.m. had quiet time at 5.30 a.m. and had breakfast of cold rice at 6.00 a.m. They left Dohnavur Fellowship at 6.30 a.m. after prayers. Three Annachies went with them. A senior, Devapiriam Annachie, was in charge and also as time-keeper and starter. He also had one person to help him and one to stay in Malaiadiputhur to watch that the dogs, which were kept for hunting, didn't go after the runners.

The distance was about 3.75 miles (6.25 Km). The time was 8.00 a.m. and finishing was more or less like the seniors, but on a lesser scale. The timekeeper cycled fast to check the time with the finishing time-keeper. The runners had only the forenoon free. The first junior cross country run was in 1936. Its time was 26 minutes and 14 seconds. The last run was in 1963 and took only 20 minutes and 47 seconds. All were sad to see the cross country run discontinued.

### 3. ATHLETICS 1936 - 1963 :

Athletics was closely linked with other outdoor games. The first one was held on March 10-11-12 of 1936. We had 1, 1/2, 1/4 miles, 220 yards and 100, 110 yard hurdles and 220 x 4 yards relay races. And long-jump, high-jump, cricket ball throw, shot-put and tug-of-war, (the yards later changed to metre). And Jeevanandha (Kindergarten) and toddlers race, also number of events: seniors 12, juniors 8, sub-juniors 6, old boys 3 or 4, Jeevanandha toddlers etc., total of about 14 to 16 events.

Practice begins in November. On the first day, equipments are brought to the field from Vanacharbu Pattarai (workshop). They are then daily put in the Bethel, then a generator engine room.

The first couple of weeks or so, practising is not enthusiastic but desultory, for there is no competition to enthuse one. But the last seven to ten days before the sports event is quite different. The running track is cut,

starting and finishing points are marked and 100 yards lane are marked with strings. Races are timed and there is a sense of purpose in everything done and practised.

A few days before the events, the names of all the participants and in what events they are in are handed over to the clerk of the course. Four typed copies are made and stuck on cardboard - one for the clerk of the course, who is also the announcer, one for the time-keeper, one for the writer at the score board, and one extra. Tracks and lanes are renewed and whitewashed. Flags are stuck at intervals around the running course from where the runner start, number plates are driven. The score board, table and stools are put inside the oval. The spectators area is cordoned off. In the first two sports years, pandal was put on the western, the finishing side, for spectators. Each person knows what he is to do, either as an administrator or as a participant. All is well organized, all is well set for the sports.

Sports are held for 3 days, usually in the first week of January. By 4.45 p.m. all have arrived, for the first few years, the whole family was there for the three days; but later, the sisters came only on the final day, because that had all the exciting events. Participants could be seen wearing their respective house colour shirts mingling with the crowd. The three officers - clerk of the course, starter, and time-keeper were there in their six coloured shirts. Assistants, writers and point makers are at the desks by the score boards. The message runners are inside the oval track, which embraces the two senior grounds. There is no opening ceremony. There is no need for it. All are keyed up. At 5.00 p.m. sharp, the clerk of the course blows the whistle, and announces through the megaphone the events and the names of the participants. The participants run to their starting place. If it is a running race, the runners pick the track number in which he is to run from a bag held by the starter. In the first two years all starts were from a gun, later from a flag brought down smartly. When ready, the starter signals to the timekeeper with a flag. The starter always has a whistle to call back the runners if there is a false start. As spectators are on the western side of the finishing side, the cheers and shouts are loudest there.

There are several people at the finishing post to identify the runners in their order of coming. The timekeeper writes down the names and times of the runners coming in. The message runner takes it to the clerk of the course, who reads out the result through the megaphone. The runner then takes it to the writer who enters it, and the scorer puts the cumulative scores on the board for all to see. Each day has fixed items.

The third day was always an exciting day, and events started at 4.30 p.m. Tension and excitement was in the air; we felt it perceptibly. That day decided the winner. One of the most enjoyable and looked for event was the children's races. Jeevanandha children, class I & II, did the 75 yards and the kindergarten 50 yards.

Classes I & II are easy. They are shown where to start and where to finish. Each one is put in a runner's lane at the starting place of 75 yards. The procedure is explained to them. The starting whistle is blown and off they go. They have to be stopped by their accals at the finishing line. Otherwise, they will go on running!

The runners names are read by the clerk of the course in the order they finished. They run to their place, mighty pleased with their performance.

The Kindergarten children's race is quite different. Sisters take them to their starting place and explain to them what to do. The sisters are also at the finishing point to coax them and tell them when to stop. When everybody is ready, or we think they are ready, the whistle is blown. But what happens? One or two run, a few walk, and the other simply stand and gaze. A few even begin walking back to their accals. This brings much laughter. Gradually, all are made to run the race, with the accals and sitties at the finishing points to coax them to finish the race. The Kindergarten children's reaction is quite different from their seniors. When the race is done, they run to their accals. To them this is the race, not running down the string lanes. All this brings much laughter and loud comments from the spectators especially from the sisters. It is one of the star items of the day.

The last event is the tugofwar. If this is cancelled, the 200 x 4 yards

relay is the last event. One can feel the tense excitement pervading the whole place if the last item is going to decide the winner, which sometimes is the case. There is much cheering start to finish from nearly all, till throats are sore. In a few minutes the result is announced through the megaphone, and the scoreboard shows the final result. The winning house is jubilant. The losers are not so happy, but hope for the best next year.

#### 4. SWIMMING :

We had swimming competition only once, December, 1935 and January 1936. To hear one cannot swim is news in the Family. We swim in the wells, in the tanks (lake) and in the Forest pools. So it was not difficult to have the swimming competition. As we had been accustomed to do in all the swimming events for fun, we needed only to polish them by practice, except for long distance events, which needed more strenuous and longer practice. We had these practices in the well and in Malaineri tank.

Events held on December 28, 30, 1935 and January 11, 1936 were in God's Garden well. Spectators including sisters filled three sides of the well. Several events were held on each day at midmorning. Some of the events were objects such as plates were thrown into the well, and one had to dive or jump and retrieve it on the first try. Or rubber ball is thrown into over the wall and one had to catch it while jumping into the well, diving from heights of 10 feet or 20 feet. The pole fight took the spectators by storm. It was a real fight. One needed toughness, endurance, balance and art. A long pole was placed across the well, tied firmly at the ends to the pegs driven into the earth outside the well. The object was to knock the other fellow into the well with the rubber pillow. At the word 'Go', each tried to dislodge the other. Some were so involved in beating the other down, they lost their balance and fell into the well. Others were so careful to keep their balance, their striking did not have much punch and were dislodged by the other fellow. A few pairs were well matched. They dodged the strikes by bending back and got up at what they thought was the right moment and struck the other fellow down. It was great fun to watch. To the uninitiated, the beating seemed dangerous. This event was a knock out system.

The final fight was a gruelling one, for both opponents were tough, clever and determined. It was not a draw. Who was the winner? The author! A special citation of this pole fight was made by Tholan Annachie on the 20th Anniversary celebration of the HOUSES on May 12th, 1955, when the author was awarded a six coloured shirt the only person to get it, for service rendered to the games.

The obstacle race was the last one in the well. One had to pass through car tyres hung two feet above water level, go under a pole in the water, go up a ladder, and so on. It was an interesting race, one which needed skill and toughness, but it did not evoke the excitement, and enthusiasm and cheering that the pole fight did.

Events in Malaineri on December 3, 1935 and January 5-9th, 1936 were held in the late afternoon. All were races: The whole Family sat on the eastern bank. 100 yards freestyle; 50 yards back stroke; 50 yards freestyle and half a mile. Two poles stuck into the bottom at the north end of the lake for the starting point, and the finishing point which was at the south, near the small temple.

Eventually swimming was discontinued because of cold and flu during the season. It was replaced by the regatta a few years later.

### 5. REGATTA AND BOATING :

The regatta was held each year from 1939-1960 with a few breaks. Devanesan Annachie (John Edward Risk, Ex-Navy) had been to Kerala in the mid thirties where he saw men using dug out canoes to carry commodities from one place to another on the back waters. He thought of the lakes near home. Four dugouts were bought and brought to Dohnavur Fellowship. The boating technique was new to us and there was not much enthusiasm for it at first. But gradually we became interested by the actual boating and the Annachie's enthusiasm. We were, singly or in pairs, able to row from one end to the other end of Malaineri or Sengulakurichi lakes with pleasure.

Then a big breakthrough came. Devanesan Annachie had made six light boats in our pattarai (workshop). The framework was of light

teakwood, covered with strong tarpauline and made waterproof by green paint. The boats were light and could be carried by two 15 or 16 year olds. Each could seat two rowers easily. They were real beauties. Single and doubleblade paddles were made of fine teak. A small plot was purchased near the east bank, south of Malaineri tank. A shed was put up with corrugated asbestos roof. Inside were doubledecker racks supported by pillars. The old dugouts, the six new ones and the two dinghies were put on the racks, and the doors were locked.

The first regatta began on January 20, 1939 and lasted 4 days. Until the last regatta in 1960, the whole Family were spectators on all four days. The regatta was unique. It had everything to attract an audience. The full tank, velvety green rice fields east and west of it, mountains to the west, the sun shining brightly over the lake, or just sinking over the mountains, making the clouds into many colours. The regatta was very popular with the Family, as they enjoyed watching the skills of both individuals and the teams. It was exciting to see boats overturned and the occupants frantically straightening them and climbing back into them.

A few days before the events, distances were measured and stakes driven for the starting and finishing lines and for the obstacle race. The senior's distance was 880 feet and the juniors 810 feet. The starting line was on the north and the finishing line was on the south, near the small temple. The events were the straight races, singles and pairs. In the relay race, one had to hand over the baton to the other person and not throw into his boat. In the obstacle race, one had to zigzag several obstacles and go through several narrow spaces between the stakes with low crossbars over them. To achieve this one had to bend low and shoot through without using the paddles.

Then there was the most looked for, a free-for-all event that always brought laughter from the onlookers. The final event was the transport. Each house had three boats, one rower to each. They had to transport a certain number of juniors to a small island 30 meters or so in the shortest possible time.

Different skills were needed for different races and as everyone

was intent on winning, there was naturally a few mishaps. These added spice to the races. There were cheers from the shore, and if the race was a close one there was much excitement, especially if it should be the deciding race of the regatta. The excitement was intense. People from nearby places also came to see the regatta thamasha and enjoy the fun. And there was no doubt the family enjoyed the whole thing immensely.

But the regatta was only a part of boating. If there was plenty of water in the lakes and there was a holiday, Vanacharbu went boating. The sunnier the day, the more enjoyable the boating was, for one can also have a swim with pleasure.

Sunithra and Vistara boys were taken in the boats by the seniors. Jeevananda girls were also often taken one or two at a time in the boats by selected seniors. Some girls at first were not enthusiastic about it. After a few trips they clamoured for more and longer trips. They enjoyed dipping their hands in the water or bent to the side to see the ripple made by the boats. Because of this there was always a danger of capsizing, and a few did not know how to swim. Silver fish sometimes leaped into the boats and this was exciting. Some caught them in their hands and wanted to keep them, and some threw them back into the water, a few were frightened of it!

Once we had a week's boating in the Tirukurungudi lake, with its ideal and beautiful setting, mountains on the west (on a clear day Jewel house could be seen from the road running east of the lake) rice field in the west coming right to the edge of the lake, large sheet of clear blue water with small waves dashing against the edge of the lake, bright sunshine bathing the whole scene at day time and after dusk, stars sparkling and the moon with silvery light riding serenely across the sky with its beautiful reflection on the lake was the setup in which the week's boating was spent.

There is a small rocky mound on the north side of the lake. Two army tents were pitched south of it for those who kept kaval at midday and night when the boaters were away home. Two dinghies, each capable of carrying 4 or 5 people were there. They were propelled by two oars attached to the side on a swivel mechanism and worked by one person sitting on a fixed bench, or could be sailed. Each boat had a mast in the

centre.

The canoes and the dinghies made their journey from Malaineri one bright morning, travelling southward, passing through the channel. When they could not go any further for lack of depth they were manhandled 30 meters by senior house members and old boys to Sengulakurichi, and from there they were rowed to Kotchupothai channel, and from there they were handled upto Tirukurungudi lake.

The whole week was so organised in a way that everyone in Vanacharbu had at least 2 or 3 hours stretch a day there, at least once in two days. The whole week was made into a semi holiday for all Vanacharbu. There were two shifts, forenoon and afternoon upto 7.30 pm and the parties interchanged their time on alternate days so all could have moonlight boating and swimming. We went boating idly, or raced each other or explored places or bathed. Sunthira had their share and Jeevananda children were not forgotten. They all had their full share in this gala season.

Waves higher than in the other lakes, rocked the boats more and this in turn made children enjoy themselves more and wanted more trips than could be provided. They had trips in dinghies and boats. Including the two dinghies, there were about 10 -12 afloat at one time. To many outside spectators- and there were many - it was a novel sight. When the week was over, the boats were taken back to Malaineri by the same process they had come to Tirukurungudi.

6. MARGOSA : (Neem seeds collected and sold for making neem oil, medicine, soap etc).

Once in July, 1948, there was a Margosa seed gathering competition for the two houses. It was of two weeks duration. Result : Walker 121.25 measures, Ragland 121.25 measures. Extraordinary.

#### 7. OUTSIDE MATCHES :

There were matches galore from 1936 to the mid-fifties. Volleyball, football and hockey were the games. We had volleyball matches

against the Eruvadi and Dohnavur villege teams. They were the usual winners. We rarely did well in volleyball. With football we shared the honours with outsiders. We played against Eruvadi, Dohnavur village, Nanguneri, St. Xaviers' college scouts, and St. John's college, Palayankottai. Except for the last one, all matches were played on our grounds. During that period Nanguneri had a good team. St. John's college, Palayankottai, hearing of our matches and doing well wanted to have a crack at us and invited us for a match on the college ground. We accepted the invitation, and on August 22, 1936 we went in our van in high spirits, we found they were putting their first eleven in. Their average age was twenty, while ours was 18.5 years. We had Devasamathanam Annachie and Devastira Annachie in our side while they had two of their staff playing. It was a well contested match. But we lost to them by 1-5. We certainly could have done better, perhaps even won the game, had it not been that we were playing house and outside matches for the past few months and were not on par physically. All the same, it was a fine game. We had a social dinner afterwards. The principal, Mr. Bennet, an Englishman, presided over the function. Finally, we had the team testimony meeting. When all these were satisfactorily ended, we got into our van and returned home not in a depressed mood but certainly not in the exuberant spirit we had gone in the morning.

In Hockey we were the winners always or nearly! It was always against the Dohanavur Village, except once, in late twenties, when a friendly Deputy Superintendent of Police, an Englishman, brought a police team, arranged by Dr. Murray and played against our seniors on our ground. The Village team had teachers, under graduates, graduates and even University players when they were on leave, and a few local players were also included. Whether we played on our grounds or theirs or had their referees or ours, it did not make much difference to the outcome. We still went on winning. Usually, except for the few locals, their playing of the game was artistic. Our winning was by toughness, speed and determination. From the first whistle we ran very fast, and more or less the whole time, and also we took any beating physically or otherwise and

played the game to the last at the same pace we began. In the last part of the game players ran 25 yards, we literally ran 75 yards in the same time taken by them, often winning goals coming in the last 10 or 15 minutes.

Once, when the author had been to Sengaltheri trip with a set of boys a letter came to the Forest to him saying they were expecting him to come and captain the match on the same day, otherwise several best players would not play! Finding the situation thus he and the party started very early in the afternoon from the Forest, reached home half an hour before the match, and played in the match and scored a goal. The village team had on its team college and University players. But we gave them a good drubbing on that day.

Though all matches, football and hockey, were played in a relentless spirit, it was always enjoyable and at the end friendly. Two examples : When hockey matches were too frequent. I asked a teacher player "Matches are too frequent, between us. Why don't you arrange matches with others?" He replied, "Playing with you is always tough and hard, but always enjoyable and friendly. Whatever match we played we ended with three cheers. In the late sixties we were watching a baseball match. A relative of a Parama Suha Salai patient was sitting beside me, seeing the match with much interest. He asked me "Where are the old players. I had played football against you when I was young." I said, "Only a few are here, others have gone out. Why do you ask me this"? He replied, "The present players are quite different from the ones from those days. The present players talk much, but are not so tough or such good players as the older ones. Off the ground, the old hands spoke little and one thought they would be an easy prey and not much to be feared, but inside the ground the change was impressive. They were tough and fearless. They neither cared whether they were hurt nor we. They were determined to play hard and win".

#### 8. HOUSE DAY :

Once a year, House day was held. We had out door rag sports, indoor fun games, mind twisting and mind testing activities too many to enumerate. All Vanacharbu participated in that day. The whole family

were spectators for the outdoor activities, which were held in Jeevananda field, and indoor activities held, during the day. Once senior sisters were invited for the night function. The family sometimes took part in the indoor activities.

In the evening, a special dinner was given to which all the Vanacharbu were invited. After dinner we gathered in the senior hall. Speakers, representatives of the house, made prepared speeches both in English and in Tamil. Colours were awarded to those who had earned them. New house members were welcomed and there was a send off for the seniors who had become old boys. The whole celebration ended with a prayer by the leader (man) of the family. If this was a 10th or 20th anniversary, it would be celebrated for more than a day. The whole atmosphere of these occasions was festive.

### 9. EPILOGUE :

Devasamathanam Annachie (Godfrey Web-Peploe), Tholan Annachie (Norman Burns), and Aran Annachie (Ian Gill) were the founders of the Dohnavur Fellowship House system, from 1940. Tholan Annachie, Devanesan Annachie (John Edward Risk), and Sirappan Annachie (Philip England) were the heart and soul of the houses and games. But special mention should be made of some : Rahava Annachie, Piriadas, Navamithiran, Raj, Sathiajeevan, Sahaja, Darmasadhu, Rajamanian and of course, Siratha Annachie, who according to his abilities, was everything one wanted of a man.

When the boys left for boarding school in 1950, we could not do all the things we had been doing. But the basic structure was strong and enthusiasm high. After the opening of Ananda Vanam, there was a great drop in everything. Since 1971, the houses became a mere shadow of the past years, gradually fading out and finally ending in 1976. The boys games went on until 1981. When the last group left Dohnavur Fellowship to go to Ananda Vanam that year, it put an end to organised games.

## VII HOLIDAYS

### 1. OUT DOOR WORK :

Outdoor work was an integral part of the holidays, and an important one. The Sunthira work from 8.00 a.m to 9.30 a.m. Kathirava juniors from 8.00 to 10.30 a.m. and seniors till 11.00 a.m. Post - SSLC worked in the term from 8.00 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. and from 2.30 p.m. to 4.00 when needed.

There were various kinds of work. Every Sthala swept its Mu' tram (ground surrounding the house) daily and dumped the dry leaves in the rubbish pit. They were cleared two or three times a year during the holidays. Each Sthala rubbish pit was allotted a garden. Sunthira did the clearing of these pits. They carried the rubbish (dried leaves) on their heads in baskets. It was necessary to clear the pits and put the dried leaves in the gardens to make compost manure.

Carting by bandies was done mostly by the Kathirava. For many years they were iron rimmed ones, but in July 1963 a tyre bandy was given to Vanacharbu. Four to six boys handled a bandy. They carted manure, dung and silt from lakes to gardens. Sixteen year olds with two or three bandies at a time made five to six trips to Sengulakurichi, carting sand to anywhere it was needed. It was very heavy, hard work.

### 2. SPADEWORK :

Spadework digging and hoeing with trench-spades started with Sunthira seniors or Kathirava juniors. Kathirava seniors and upwards used the man size spades. They worked mostly in the gardens. They hoed, weeded, dug holes for plants, dressed and prepared the land for planting or sowing. They dug trenches for compost manure and processed yearly. Gathering peas and peanuts was done when boys could

be spared. The seniors worked like professionals, often doing a better job than the workmen, and in 3/4 of the time. They could do any type of fieldwork.

### 3. OUT OF ROUTINE :

The foundation for the Mani arai (watchroom) and the two western most houses in Tharisana were dug by the Post SSLS's. In the year 1953, Post SSLC boys dug half the foundation for the Kamaneri threshing floor. It had to go down to the soft rock (chukkambarai) and because of the uneven level from 0.75 metre to 1.5 metre deep. The trenches were around the 3 metre x 3 metre square plots, so that the foundation could support the concrete floor. The next year the other half of the threshing floor was dug by the next set. When the threshing floor was finished the whole family came to its dedication.

Deepening of Kamaneri tank was given twice to Dohnavur Fellowship by the government, and once for Sengulakurichi. Kathirava, Arunothaya and Usha did the work, although part of it was done by outside contractors.

We started from home at 7.00 a.m. and reached Kamaneri at about 7.20 a.m. Taking out spades and baskets from the barn took about 10 minutes. Workers were divided into groups, each under an Annachie, to do their allotted tasks. As the work had to be measured, a small mound was left in the centre of the measured rectangular plot. Some dug, others carried the dirt in baskets on to the bund. Some times their roles were exchanged, diggers carried, carriers dug.

Between 8.00 to 8.30 a.m. two hefty boys brought gruel from Vanacharbu Kitchen in a big pot holding about 16 litres. It was tied to a bamboo pole and slung over their shoulders. The non descriptive gruel was sour. When the break came at 9.30 a.m., we trooped to the threshing floor to have our gruel refreshment with a piece of pickle. To us, Annachie and boys, who had worked very hard in the sun, it seemed like nectar, very refreshing.

Back to work after 20 minutes, until 11.00 a.m. or 11.15 a.m. The

work materials were brought back, checked, and put in the granary. After that we went to the big well for the long awaiting swim. After the heavy work in the hot April sun, it was most enjoyable and refreshing. After half an hour or so in the well, all started back home.

We worked five days a week for five weeks. When the holidays ended and the boys returned to school, the Post SSLC and Annachies including missionaries, went on with the work allotted to us during the evening games time.

There were several diggings in Kamaneri. The first one was in 1947. When we completed the digging, we had a grand dinner in the Sunthira muttram for all the men, and a note of appreciation came from Ammal saying, "Sabash". This made a fitting close to the first Kamaneri digging. Another digging was in the late fifties when we had trouble with the Thevar caste which was usually used as watchman. He was from that caste. As he was usually drunk at these times it made him difficult to cope with work, because of this we always went in groups and found it exciting, but, perhaps, not so to the leaders!

Climbers can be divided into three groups. Those who climb to any heights (and there are only a few of them) those who climb, but not too high (there are many in this class) those who do not climb, or if they do only to the lowest branches. Until Ananda Vanam came into being, Vanacharbu of the age of fifteen to eighteen used to gather tamarind pods when the season was on. Higher climbers, always very few, climbed up to the highest branches and shook them to make the ripe pods fall; the second type did the lower branches, and the rest gathered the pods from the ground and put them in sacks. The sacks were then taken to the Inbarai. The whole compounds would be gone through two or three times a season.

Crows and storks used to make nests in some of the highest branches. In the 1930s they had to be destroyed, and it was a job for highest climbers. They climbed to the highest branches, ~~destroyed~~ destroyed the nests, and brought down the eggs and young ones. They enjoyed doing this, but certainly not the others.

The roads (paths) from Aruna Sthala to the Bungalow, from Arunothaya to Tharisana, and to the building office were made of soft rock (Chukkambarai). It was done by Vanacharbu. It was tough, hard work and there was a proper method of doing it. The width of each path had to be marked, and the whole length of the path had to be dug two inches deep. Soft rock and scrambled rock had to be carted and dumped near the path. First, the small rock had to be paved the whole way - a foot from each side - and then scrambled rock put over it. When it was levelled and sloped to the sidelines, water was poured until it was soaked. Then it was left for the whole day to settle. The next day more scrambled rock was spread over the whole surface, and over it red earth, and over it white sand, brought from Sengulakurichi was thickly spread. When this was done, water was again poured over the path to drench it. Finally, a 0.91 metre diameter stone road roller was rolled over it several times, dragged by 17 year olds. When finished the road looked beautiful, and to ride a bicycle on it was a pleasure, especially during the rainy season, as the soft rocks do not hold water and make it slushy, but firm.

As the work was done only during the holidays and when water was plentiful it took several years to finish the project. But was such a thorough work, it is still usable after 25 years later. In the early thirties, there was no road on the northern bank of the Sengulakurichi tank. Vanacharbu did the first one! All the above work was done by boys between the ages of 14 - 18, with their Annachies working with them.

#### 4. SWIMMING

The holidays were looked forward to and the most enjoyed event was swimming. All the Vanacharbu participated in it. The school age boys swam every day except Saturdays and Sundays. Those who worked in the family swam two or three times a week. A gift was given to build a small swimming pool, named, Bala Santhosha, for children up to the age of ten. There, by the age of 7 or 9, all the boys and girls learned to swim. Before Bala Santhosha was built, swimming was taught in the wells, not exactly an easy way for youngsters to learn swimming. From the time, they came from Vistara they swam in the wells and lakes.

We have many wells in the family. The sisters used the wells in the God's Garden and in Parama Suha Salai. The ones in Vanacharbu, Sunthira and Arunothaya gardens were used by men and boys. The Vanacharbu well was out of use for a long time because of lack of water. These wells have two purposes, for agriculture and swimming.

The East farm well is in two parts, connected by a tunnel. One can imagine what fun it was for the bathers to go through the tunnel playing "catch me if you can"! The Arunothaya well had a tree growing near it. The swimmers climbed up to 6-8 metres high and jumped into the well where the water level was 5 to 6 metres below ground level. Once a party of guests came to see the boys swim. When they saw the high school boys climbing the trees and were told that they would be jumping into the well from that height they did not believe it. But when they saw them jump from that high branch, you should have seen their eyes pop.

The average time for a group to bathe was about 30 to 40 minutes. The Sunthira was in two groups - seniors in one well and juniors in another from 10.30 a.m. It was a must that two Annachies should be with each group when bathing. Kathirava juniors swam from 11.00 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. and seniors from 11.30 to 12.00 noon. Those who worked in other parts of the family swam from 11.30 to 12.15 twice a week.

The April and September holidays were the hottest. Swimming, therefore, had two purposes during these season. First it was a most enjoyable recreation. Second, it cooled the body and invigorated it. But to the bathers there was no difference between the hot and cold seasons. It was the same to them! Long live swimming.

## 5. PICNIC :

### Excursion-cum-picnic :

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. This also applied to our boys. But they were anything but dull. All did not agree with the setup and the way the boys were raised in Dohnavur Fellowship, but I have not seen nor heard of their doing any better. They may have, I do not know. This does not imply all was perfect, far from it. There was always much

room for improvement. But now many of the old boys have said they are grateful to the family, for their upbringing, which they say was the basis for their success! Anyway, there was no time to be dull. If anything, sometimes the days were overcrowded.

Our picnics on January 26th and August 15th were small outings. The main picnics were during the April/May holidays, and to a lesser extent, in September. The Rest River was the best and most sought after place for picnics. Other picnic areas were the Boundary River, the Lotus Tank at the foothills, the Nambikoil side, Tirunkurungudi tank, Kotchupottai, and Karungal Kasam. The children liked to picnic in our gardens or at nearby places.

All these places had water where we could bathe, and in most cases have a swim. This was their main attraction, besides the beautiful settings. For moonlight picnics, Tirukurungudi tank and Sengulakurichi channel - when it was dry and the sand white and fresh were the favourite places. In fact Tirukurungudi tank was the favourite, for not only could we have moonlight picnics on the rocky mount at the northern edge of the tank, but we could swim in the clear, warm water with the silvery moon shining over us.

Describing the picnic at the Rest River will provide a general picture of the kind of picnics we had, although every party, Sthala, place had its own variations. It was an exception not to have a picnic during the April holidays and the boys were eager to know the date which was usually announced a few days before the outing.

Preparation for the picnic had three parts : personal, class, and Sthala. The kitchen workers prepared rice, usually two kinds, tamarind juice mixed and curd mixed. They also provided goodies, jaggery, coffee powder, a pot to make coffee, and bananas and other fruits, if any. The rice was divided into enough portions for several people. Then each portion was wrapped in a banana leaf to keep it fresh, and the whole secured by wrapping it in cloth and tying it with string. All these were put into baskets and put in a safe place in the dining hall the evening before the picnic.

The evening was a time of excitement for the sthala. They wanted to know what food they would have for the picnic and what they were to carry.

Both groups and personal preparations went hand in hand. A boy could take a bag, tumbler, a water bottle, or anything he fancied as long it was okayed by his Annachie. As a class, they took bathing shorts and the clothes they were wearing.

Sthala things were apportioned by each set Annachie, and he to each boy in his set. So from the Sthala Annachie to the youngest boy each had his own responsibility, according to his age and ability. There was not much sleep that night. The rule was that no one should talk after night prayers. But one could hear hushed whispers here and there when they thought their Annachies were asleep. The Annachies, knowing the excitement of that day, were not over strict about enforcing the no talk rule.

At 4.30 a.m. the next morning, the boys were woken by the Annachies, though only a few needed waking up. Then came personal prayer, washing the face, changing on to day clothes, and group prayer. Then to the dining hall for a breakfast of cold rice. After breakfast, each took on his responsibility, whether carrying the food basket or anything else that was apportioned to him the day before. Each Annachie was responsible for his set and for whatever was given to him by the Sthala Annachie. All then assembled in the front muttram (space) where everything was checked.

Before starting, Sthala Annachie Rajappan, prayed for the day. They were reminded not to make a noise until they had passed Parama Suha Salai or reach the bus stand. The Sunthira took the bugle with them (Before the Upparihai bell and House of prayer chimes rang out the hours Williyar Annachie gave the bugle call punctually at noon for the Family to check their watches and clocks). When they reached the Sengulakurichi tank, an Annachie sounded the bugle, making the boy's spirits soar. They walked faster and the talk became louder and vivacious. They went in small groups of four or five. If one got tired of one group, he would move to another one where he was welcomed as an additional listener or talker

or news giver.

All were excited. When they got past the Foothills, the talk became less and the change of loads more frequent, but excitement did not diminish. As they neared the boundary, they could hear the running water. It made them think of what was before them, and their minds were fixed on reaching the Rest River as soon as possible so they could spend more time there. As they neared the River, many ran ahead to wait for the rest of the party.

The rest river is more or less midway between Dohnavur Fellowship and Naraikadu. We could ford the river at two places - by the bridge, and 50 metres north of it, it has an ideal place for a picnic. About twenty to forty youngsters could enjoy the picnic at one time. The centre of attraction is the pool. To the east of it is a huge, high boulder. To the north are boulders, small and big, from where we could jump and dive. And there is a beautiful, one meter high waterfall northeast of the pool. The western side is lower than the north, where the forest comes to the edge of the pool. The southern end is the lowest, as the river flows out of the pool at that end. The pool, a natural one, has no geometrical line, but is about 50 x 50 metres. It is wholly open to the sky and sun. Sometimes it is warm sometimes it is cool, but it is always refreshing. 20 metres south of the pool there is a flat boulder on which 10 - 15 people could sit. It was the centre of the picnic, where everything was kept and where seniors were. The river runs west of it in a rift and the 2 meters fall from it makes a shallow pool, where a few bathed and played. There is a gap of 1.5 metre between it and the high eastern boulder. This space was well suited for cooking, as the boulders protect it from the wind and rain.

The first thing everyone wanted to do when we reached the picnic area was to have a swim. Permission was given and all changed into swimming shorts and ran and splashed or dived into the pool.

When they had enough or the leader called them to leave the pool, light refreshments were distributed.

Until lunchtime, activities were varied. The Sunthira group

might go sight seeing in the forest with an Annachie. If Kathirava, juniors went with an Annachie. If seniors, three or more in a group may go for a longer walk. Some played chess, draughts, or chequers. Some were always in the pool! But all had to be back in time for lunch. A whistle was blown to call them back.

Lunch was the main picnic meal. There were several ways of eating it. The most usual one was to give a bundle of rice to several boys. Groups could be seen having their picnic lunch all over, but always on a rock in or near the river! Each group divided the pack and had a full meal, which was very tasty with coconut chutnie, pickles, and water from the river to mix the rice. The meal took more time to eat than it did at home! As the lunch was a very heavy one and the sun hot, the afternoon activities were less, and some even napped under the shade of a rock or a tree.

When the sun went down the stir of more activities was evident. Some boys were appointed to make a fire in the gap in the dip between boulders in order to make coffee. To the new hands this was a mystery, to the old hands, it was a routine matter and they took pride in teaching the greens. Firewood? No lack of it. But if it rained and it sometimes did, it needed the expertise of the old hands to make the fire and keep it going. Where were the others? Many were in the pool again. Except when eating the pool is always occupied by some.

When the coffee was ready, the whistle was blown and all crowded on the flat boulder or nearby rocks for the final snack. This snack was made up of left overs from the meals, plus coconut and jaggery. Inveterate bathers went in again for the last splash in the pool. But it was time to get ready for the return home.

When the time for departure neared, each Annachie checked his group's things and the overall readiness for the departure was ascertained by the leader. Another saw that no trace of their stay was seen. Before leaving, all gathered on the flat boulder or nearby rocks. The leader thanked our Father for the wonderful day and asked his blessings for the return journey home. Everything was checked again when they reached home. All returned refreshed and happy, as if there were no care in the

world and they looked forward to the next one.

#### 6. SENGALTERI : (1945 - 1977 WEDNESDAY to FRIDAY)

Dohnavur to Sengalteri 22.50 Km, Sengalteri to Netterikal 14 Km, Netterikal to Naraikadu 8 Km, to Dohnavur 14.50 Km.

How does it feel to be the last of anything that strikes one's imagination and emotion? The writer has been both, as a leader, at the beginning and at the end of the Sengalteri trips from 1945 to 1977. The first expedition was adventurous, exacting and without many facilities. The final expedition, because of long experience, usually went off smoothly and had good facilities. But the leader had somber thoughts, as he knew that this was to be the last trip.

The Sengalteri trip was made by 16 year olds. After 1951, it was a post SSLC event. After writing the SSLC, the three day Sengalteri trip was greatly anticipated. The trip was usually done in the April holidays. Sometimes it was doubtful whether the trip could be managed, and gloom and disappointment descended on the class. But when permission was granted from the Kallakkadu Forest ranger and by the District Forest Officer, and they were told that there would be the trip, the excitement and joy were great! Then things began to move. Everyone was provided with an army knapsack to put their extra clothes, a New Testament, and personal effects, in Rice, jaggery, tea, and fruits were the foods we took. We also took one blanket each, two lanterns, one trench tool, one pot for making coffee, and match boxes. These were carried by two coolies who accompanied the party. (If European Annachies came they brought their own food).

The party consisted of a set of eight to twelve boys, their Annachie, and a Senior Annachie. In 1971, when the last trip was made, there were sixteen boys, two Annachies and a man paid to show the way from Sengalteri to Netterikkal. We all started after prayer, from west farm at 3.00 a.m. in three bandies (more if necessary) that went via Kallakkadu, picking up the watchman with the bungalow keys, to about 2 miles beyond it. The bandies waited there until evening to bring back the coolies who

returned home after leaving their loads at Sengalteri Bungalow. From there we walked up to Sengalteri, arriving about 9.00 a.m. The first thing we did was to have some refreshment. The day was spent in sight seeing. This included cardamom estates, forest, and bathing in the river. Several times Annachies came from the forest to Sengalteri or Netterikal to join us. Any addition to our party was always most welcome. If it was a moonlit night we were outside, wandering or sitting, chatting and enjoying the scenery, the plains and mountains before going to bed.

We got up early the next morning and had our quiet time and breakfast. The bungalow was then tidied up and cleaned. After prayer, we set off to Netterikal. The forest between Netterikal and Sengalteri was dense, but the path was usually in good condition. Reaching Netterikal at about noon, we bathed in the dam, walked through the water tunnel, went sightseeing and had our lunch, which was brought by two garden men from Naraikadu.

At 2.00 p.m. we left Netterikal and reached Naraikadu via Manjolai at about 5.00 p.m. There was always a party in Naraikadu to welcome the hikers vociferously. It was always a happy get together. After spending the night and part of the next day in Naraikadu, our party left the forest with much regret. Those who made the trip always enjoyed it immensely, and the happy memories were indelibly imprinted in their minds.

#### 7. FREE TIME :

Free time was spent doing gardening after morning and evening housework, and playing outdoor games or indoor games such as chess, draughts, checkers, etc. Reading was done mostly at noon or in the evening. We also made decorations for Christmas and other occasions. Now and then we put on shows of several kinds, usually for senior Annachies' coming days. In Sunthira the initiative came from the Annachies and they got the boys involved. In Kathirava and above the boys themselves took the initiative to do everything although their Annachies helped them. Practising for Parama Suha Salai Christmas, the children's service and the morning carol rounds were the most enjoyed

free-time activities.

#### 8. MUSIC :

Music was part of our life with no exception. During our free time we were encouraged to learn musical instruments (like the harmonium) to practise on whatever they wanted. We were encouraged by the leaders to acquire knowledge and musical skills. We were told a test was given to those who were encouraged by the leaders. We were given a test on the Sthala organ. We were given a mathanam Annachie in our choice. Several parties were formed with music, with names like 'Sthala' and 'Sthala' passed could now play the organ. They were allowed to learn the organ and they could play the Sthala organ.

By the late forties, many of us could play the organ with musical activities. Play of new tunes and harmoniums flourished. Then there were violins, one clarinet, one homemade flutes, one triangles and cymbals in churches.

Besides playing the organ, Tamil or English, was played by many.

#### 9. FILMS :

In the early days, films were not often shown it was

free-time activities.

### 8. MUSIC :

Music was part and parcel of the Family, and Vanacharbu was no exception. During the late thirties, we were given the opportunity to learn musical instruments. Instruction books and a small organ (harmonium) to practise on were given to us. The first generation had to do whatever they wanted to like improving themselves, getting wider knowledge and music etc for and by themselves. But they were encouraged by the leaders. Many of us wanted to learn to play the organ. We were told a test would be given before we were allowed to play the Sthala organ. We were tested by Piria Sittie, presided over by Devasamathanam Annachie in 1938. We had to play one song given by her and one of our choice. Several passed the test and each was awarded a Golden Bells with music, with name, and date entered by Piria Sittie. Those who had passed could now play the Sthala organ. Since that time everyone was allowed to learn the organ at certain age. Then they were tested before they could play the Sthala organ.

By the late forties there were about eight to ten young men who could play the organ well and three of them very well. It was a time of great musical activities. Playing simple classics was in vogue, and composing new tunes and harmonising them and Nesappattu, and psalms flourished. Then there was the male choir. We had four organs, four violins, one clarinet, one concertina, two piano accordions several homemade flutes, one piccola, two autoharps, two drums, tambourines, triangles and cymbals etc. At present, many of our old boys are organists in churches.

Besides playing musical instruments, our singing, whether in Tamil or English, was also considered good. Even now it is appreciated by many.

### 9. FILMS :

In the early days of the Family we had magic lanterns. Though not often shown it was very much looked forward to by the Family. Dr.

T.H. Somerville once showed slides of his climb to the Everest in Peranandha in 1925.

Movies were first introduced by Devanesan Annachie in the early thirties. The first one was an 8 mm hand-turned, silent movie, but it was a wonder to us to see people, animals, and vehicles moving, walking, and running. We also had epidiroscope. This was very useful for teaching purpose. About the middle fifties we were given a 16 mm talking movie, a present from Meivara and Meileela Sitties. It opened the world to us, its peoples, events, and nature. To us it was education, sightseeing, entertainment, and relaxation. We got the films from the embassies of other countries and from Tamilnadu government. They were shown once a week in the Jeevananda in the summer and autumn holidays.

#### 10. NARAIKADU :

Those who live with children, both young and old, are on duty 24 hours a day. It is the same for many of those who work in Parama Suha Salai. They can be called at any time, day or night. Where can they go for holidays, not only to enjoy themselves, but to rest and recuperate in body, mind, and spirit. We have three Family holiday places, in Naraikadu, Joppa, and Muppanthal. Joppa, in the Cape Comorin, and Muppanthal, 30 Km from Dohnavur Fellowship are places for older people and those who are not physically fit and also for those who have their holidays in the off season or weekends.

For the Vanacharbu, holiday means Naraikadu. The first trip to Naraikadu is generally made when the boys are twelve or thirteen when the sisters are in the Jewel House. It usually lasts a week. From the time they hear this happy news they are excited about going to the forest. They walk all the way from Dohnavur Fellowship to the Forest. While there, they see the whole of Naraikadu, climb many mountains as they are able to, and enjoy their stay to the fullest.

Annachies stay a fortnight, but those who have heavy responsibilities stay three weeks. We usually had three parties going to the

forest during April holidays and two in September. A party consisted of about eight to twelve, including the leader and helpers, who were usually past SSLC boys.

A few comments about Naraikadu : One party neared the Upper river and were very tired. A thirteen-year-old boy commented "why did I come. Next time, 'No'." After a week in the Forest when he came home, he said, ' I wish I could have stayed a whole year". Another, now in the USA, wrote of his time as a helper there, "The two weeks in Naraikadu was like living in a paradise, far away from all undue stress. Those were the happiest days in my life".

Still another also in the USA, wrote "It is truly a lovely place having everything one would expect in a holiday resort. It is a place I will cherish for a long time". (See the booklet Naraikadu).

## VIII ANANDA VANAM

Ananda Vanam was bought in 1963. It was chosen from several sites looked at for this project. It is 23 km north from Dohnavur Fellowship and one kilometre south from Cheranmahadevi crossroads and at the eastern side of the main road. All the trees had been cut down by the previous owner. It is thirty acres with a wadi running through it which is dry except when raining. It has fine white sand, and in some parts, beautiful mica black sand. When it is raining heavily and in a flood, it is capable of carrying off small cattle.

The name Ananda Vanam is given in faith. Now in 1984 we have different varieties of trees, such as Vahai, Margosa, Tamarind, Curry tree, Pandri Vahai, Casuarina tree, Potia, Banyan, Glaseria, Mango, Coconut, Guava, Bamboo, with many kinds of shrubs with beautiful scented flowers and Japanese thorns around the place. It is now a very beautiful place, more so in wet season. The people around us and guests, Indian and others, tell the same thing.

At one time we had 60 - 70 coconut trees interspread with curry leaves trees, but many died of the extreme droughts in 1982-83. We also tried growing rice, brinjals, banana, black grams, green grams, sweet potatoes, and other fruits and vegetables. They did well at first, but lack of steady workers and very little water during the hot season were the chief reasons for not continuing this and improving the land to the full. In the rainy season the well has plenty of water, sometimes only one metre from the ground level, when we do not need much water. But in dry season and in monsoon failures it has very little water. Often crops die and coconut trees also in severe drought.

Ananda Vanam had four buildings. A hostel for the young men was in the middle of the land, which combined the general office, and a

large box room; combined kitchen and food store building; and Narantham and Elim. The last two for the family men.

Each building had one pump, and Elim's always had plenty of water during all seasons. After many years of petitioning and waiting, we had a bus stop, in front of Narantham, near the road. And in 1983 a street light was put near the bus stop. Both were the work of our well wishing government officials.

We also grew Japanese thorn the whole of our boundary. It made a good hedge and a good source of firewood. Inside the hedge, 1/3 of the land was fenced off with barbed wire, three gates led to the houses, tools and cattle sheds inside the enclosure.

Ananda Vanam was a midway point between the families at Dohnavur and the world, at times there were 29 young men aged 16 - 22, living there. But the average was 10 - 15 at a time. Some go for training, a few to high school and others live there while waiting for a training or a job. After getting training, our boys go into the world to make a living. Sometimes they find work themselves and sometimes it is found by those responsible for them. Old boys also helped. From the time they get a job, whether they were fully settled or not, they had to stand on their own feet.

Whether they had parents or not, very few found it easy going at first. Although all of them had more or less the same opportunities from the day they came here or were born here, by the time they left the Family, the difference in education, character and ability of individuals is great, after ten or twelve years, wider. There seems to be no single reason for this outcome. Heredity, upbringing, set Annachies, general policy of Family administration, circumstances, health, their attitude towards them and luck or chance, are all interwoven and not easily separated. Therefore it is always better to have a few plain guidelines in bringing up children than to have many ideas and methods that frequently change. Most of our boys have done well in the world spiritually, mentally and materially. Some did not do so well, and a few did badly. But all began with the same opportunities before them.

Going into the world, all had to begin life at the bottom, and some could not live at the standard they did at home. At Ananda Vanam, midway as it were, between Dohnavur and the world, life was simple and there were not many amenities, as in Dohnavur, like games, films, and social life. So when the boys left Ananda Vanam, they found living in the world not as difficult as the ones who had gone directly from Dohnavur found it. Until 1977, only those who had done S.S.L.C and a year's service in Dohnavur went to Ananda Vanam and did their training there. The whole atmosphere there was to prepare oneself to go into the world. More than 116 boys had passed through Ananda Vanam. They did well in technical, medical or higher studies, but very few did well in high school. Though it did not achieve all we had hoped for from Ananda Vanam it did achieve more or less what it set out to do.

Ananda Vanam was bought in 1963. On October 12th, 1964 Thyagaraj Annachie started living there. After a few years Devapiriam Annachie and Navanithan Annachie took his place. From 1972, Thyahan Annachie and Rajamanian Annachie took over. Navanithan Annachie, Thyahan Annachie and Rajamanian Annachie lived with their families. When Thyahan Annachie retired in October 1977, Devapiriam Annachie took over the responsibility. Because of his major work in Dohnavur he lived there but went to Ananda Vanam once or twice a week. He lived there when Rajamanian Annachie was away travelling to places or on a holiday. But entire responsibilities were with Rajamanian Annachie. On October 12th 1984 Ananda Vanam was closed. The last two left that same week for jobs, and Rajamanian Annachie, Gowra Accal, Ezekiel and Jeremiah returned to Dohnavur. Ananda Vanam's age was twenty years and 3 days.

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## IX

# THE ANNUAL RED LETTER DAYS OF THE FAMILY

### 1. Independence Day and Republic Day :

August 15th, Independence day, the day on which India became independent of foreign rule in 1947. Republic day is January 26th, the day on which India decided officially in 1950 to be a Republic and not a monarchy or oligarchy etc. These are the most important national days of the country. The family celebrates only four national holidays. Independence day, Republic day, Good Friday, and Christmas day.

Independence day and Republic day are celebrated in the same way. A few days before, our four piece band - begins practising "Jana Gana" (National Anthem) and "Athi Muthalai" (written specially for these occasions by Devabakthi Annachie) and a marching hymn. The day before we have the dress rehearsal. Each song is practised several times to make it as perfect as possible. The singers are encouraged to sing lustily with enthusiasm.

The flag staff about 35 feet high and made of steel pipes is at the centre of the northern side of the Jeevananda playing field, and can be seen from afar. On these two holidays the organ is placed on the Jeevananda playing fields, near the flag staff.

The family begins to assemble about 5 minutes to 7.00 a.m. We stand on three sides, facing the flag post. This is one of the few times the whole family gathers together in one place except in the House of prayer. The instruments are grouped behind the organ. One who is to hoist the flag is at his post waiting for the last stroke of 7 of the Upparihai. Everything from start to finish is done in order and in silence, like a well oiled machine.

It is two minutes to 7, but the waiting seems long. Tension mounts. The minute hand is now at 12. In a few seconds it will begin striking. It strikes one, two, three. Before the seventh stroke dies out, the flag goes up the mast, and drummer rolls out one, then two short beats on the drum. Then the other instruments join in playing "Jana Gana Mana", and the children begin waving our national flags. Now all eyes are on the flag; all ears on the band. When the band starts playing the second time, all join in singing "Jana Gana Mana" together. Now the flag is at the top of the post, flying proudly in the wind.

After the "Jana Gana Mana" one of our senior Annachie reads Bible verses. Another prays after the reading. We then join the band in singing "Athi Muthalai". The ceremony comes to a close with all joining in praising the Almighty, the dispenser of India's destiny, in saying "Amen, Blessing and Glory". After a short pause the band strikes out a marching hymn, and the family begins dispersing.

This short and impressive ceremony takes only 15 minutes. If these days fall on a Sunday, only the flag is hoisted and there is no gathering. The rest of the day is spent picnicking at the Rest River in the Foothills, or at the nearby Tirukurungudi tank.

At 6.00 p.m. the flag is lowered. Usually the only one present is the person who lowers the flag! What a contrast between 7.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m.! Perhaps it is symbolic of the world's great empires. They begin with a flourish, pomp and glory and end with not many caring for them.

## 2. EASTER

While Christmas begins six or eight weeks before December 25 the Easter begins only the day before. The Christmas feeling grows and builds up slowly in intensity. But the Easter feeling mounts, as it were, with a jump. The holy week atmosphere is not conducive to the slow growth of the Easter atmosphere. The choir is an exception, for they have been practising for weeks.

Actually, the week before the Holy Week when plans are made for the Holy week's events, and as we hear the Easter song along with the

Good Friday hymns, Easter feelings stir in one, but feebly. But the Saturday before the Easter is when things begin to move with briskness and force. The school children practise for the Easter "Dawn service" on that day. They rehearse the whole procedure to perfection around God's garden. On that day, people collect flowers for the House of Prayer and for their homes for Easter day. Kitchens are busy preparing good things for the Family and there is a bustle about these activities on that day.

Very early on Easter morning when birds begin to chirp, we also get up with them, have our quiet time, a bath, and put on our best clothes. Then each Sthala proceeds to its allotted place, waiting in silence, except for Easter greetings, for the "warning bell" from the House of prayer.

The warning bell is rung at 5.18 a.m. The boys and men gather four abreast at the moongate nearest to the House of prayer. The procession moves to the side of the Cassia house and stops. At 5.25 the chimes begin playing a verse of the "Alleluya, Alleluya" hymn and the procession moves near the crossroads and stops. The assembled sisters fill the whole of the space of the southern and western crossroads. The boys and men come from the north road, leaving the eastern road open for the procession. The choir which used to be men and women, and is now women only, is all in white. It is stationed to the west of the garden moongate and south of the path, about a hundred metres from the family gathering at the crossroad.

When the chimes have finished playing the verse, the leader, in his loudest voice, greets the Family with "The Lord is Risen". The Family, 500 to 800 strong, responds with, "The Lord is Risen". Then, they join the leader with the final "Alleluya" in Tamil. After a few seconds, the choir, starts singing "Jesus Christ is Risen today". The Family then proceeds to the garden by the eastern path, boys and men leading and the rest of the Family following. When they reach the garden, the boys and men stand south of the tamarind tree and the others fill the other space. The choir, after singing "Jesus Christ is Risen Today" and "King of Glory" (or "Thine Be the Glory"), joins the procession singing "Our Dear and Blessed", finishing the last two verses or so under the trees.

When the choir has ended its singing, the whole family joins in singing, accompanied by percussion instruments. The procession round the garden starts, with the boys and men leading. Others with the choir in front a few metres from the men, follow them. The processional songs-Psalms 16, Nesapattu 10, "Jesus our Risen Lord". "And when Jesus comes What Then" are sung by the Family during the procession.

The procession is a slow one, and if the numbers are great, the end of it just begins while the front is almost at the tree! Back around the tree, we sing "Low in the Grave He Lay". At the end of the song, all join the leader in the "Amen, Blessing and Glory and Wisdom". The Dawn service then closes with the choir, singing "Hush! O Hush!" quietly, reverently, and with feeling. When the singing dies out and is quiet the House of prayer chimes begin to play the Easter hymn, and we start leaving the garden. Not a sound or a whisper is heard.

We have nearly always, had the bright moonlight riding serenely in the sky on that day, bathing the "Dawn service" in bright moonlight. The wearing of white, shining in the morning, gives one a sense of other worldliness. The whole service lasts about 30 minutes, making a strong and uplifting impression on one's emotion, and gives a feeling of reverence.

Why the Dawn service? Part of the Family is in heaven and their mortal bodies are laid to rest in God's garden. And we know that their mortal bodies will rise incorruptible with life immortal on our Lord's second coming. How could this be? Jesus Christ, God's only Son, rose on the third day, after dying for our sins, destroying the power of death, as the first fruit of them that sleep in him. And this resurrection power will raise those that sleep in Him on that last day. During the dawn service, we reaffirm the same mighty truths every year.

To the Family, without the "Dawn service" the Easter is only partially celebrated, with a unique part of it missing. To some old boys, the Dawn service is a stronger and deeper reminder of the family than Christmas.

On the first and second Sundays of every month we have communion service in the House of Prayer. Those who cannot attend the service on the first Sunday attend the second Sunday. During the Holy Week, the first service is held on Holy Thursday. The second is held on Easter morning, just after the Dawn service, in God's garden. If it is wet, it is held in the House of Prayer.

Boys used to come after the dawn service to prepare for the communion service. Now sisters do it. Palm leaf mats are spread out, covering the whole ground, and a table is set up in the east side. When everything is ready, the Chimes begin to ring, calling the communicants to the service. Men occupy the area north of the tree. Women the other available space, all facing each other. All are under the open sky, the sun just rising and its rays falling on us, and except for birds singing, all are quiet, making the atmosphere quite different from that in House of Prayer.

What an Easter egg is to westerners (to some Indians also) the sweet rice cake (vivikkam) is to the Family. All other items for the Easter breakfast can and do change, but the Vivikkam is a tradition that is not broken. If it was, something would be amiss in the day's celebration.

The English service is at 9.23 a.m. the Tamil service at 10.40 a.m. and singing at 7.00 p.m. - the same as any other Sundays. But on Easter, the atmosphere is of Easter. Hymns are Easter Hymns. Messages are Easter messages. Both the English and Tamil services begin with the Easter greetings. All instruments are there to make a joyful sound. All come prepared, the family to sing well, the organist and the instrumentalists to play well, and the leader to preach well during the service. Singing service is the last service of the day, and a fitting one. We sing the great Truth and Hope of the "Resurrection" with enthusiasm and with expansive spirit. The spirit of joy pervades the whole day.

Some may say that the emotion and the uplifting feeling and the Easter celebration have very little to do with the reality of Easter. Perhaps this is true to some extent of those who enjoy the celebration only. But to many, it is the confirmation of their faith and hope in the "Resurrection" and it makes them thank and praise our God. And

surely it makes even the indifferent to think about the event and the facts related to it. And a time may come when our Father in His mercy will speak to us through the Easter day or the remembrance of it.

### 3. CHRISTMAS :

It is well said that "Anticipation and the remembrance of any good thing is half the pleasure, joy, and excitement of that event". For the family, Christmas is an excellent example of this.

While Easter joy is reverential and subdued, Christmas joy is lively, exciting, and exuberant. When we hear carol rounds on Christmas eve and morning, we know the Christmas season has begun. This may start six or eight weeks before Christmas.

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During the 40s and 50s, the main choir consisted of men and women of the Family. Devasamathanam Annachie, the family leader, Devanesan Annachie, the next leader, and Piria Sittie, the organist, were the choir masters. Piria Sittie kept the standard of the choir high, and it has a high status in the singing world of the Family. The choir sang to Sthalas at Christmas, coloured lights and joy bells preceding them. The Sthalas looked towards it with hushed anticipation. They also sang two or three songs outside the House of Prayer on Christmas, Easter and other special occasions at the evening singing services. This for various reasons was discontinued in 1961. The sisters only do the Christmas eve rounds to their own Sthalas.

The main Vanacharbu singing practices were for the children's Christmas service in the House of Prayer and the Parama Suha Salai patients Christmas celebration. This may be six or eight weeks before Christmas. Practice was held once or twice a week. We had six to twelve instruments, including organ, violins, clarinet and joy bells. When the orchestra felt that they were ready for combined practice with the singers, we practised in the open space in front of a Sthala. But when there were not so many of us we later moved to Suria hall. The children's service songs were given by the service leader, and the P.S.S. songs chosen by the leader

of the orchestra himself. Usually, these practices start in a desultory manner, but gradually enthusiasm mounts and everything moves towards the final with a swing.

Children's Christmas service begins at least a month before the day when the Vanacharbu orchestra begins practising. The whole programme is typed and sent to all the Sthalas, listing songs and verses to be recited. The responsibility to practise the recitations of the verses by the children falls on Accals and Annachies of the sets, supervised by the Sthala seniors.

The children's service is on the Sunday before Christmas. At 7.30 a.m. the organ and other instruments are carted to the House of Prayer by Vanacharbu boys. They are placed on the north side aisle between the first and second pillars. The chimes ring at 10.40 a.m. and the House of Prayer is filled to capacity. The orchestra accompanies all the songs during the service.

The service starts with a psalm when the children go to the front to put the thank offering, theirs and the seniors, in the plates. Students, Jeevananda up to SSLC, stand and recite verses. The kindergarten children stand in a row, and groups made up of two or three recite verses or a sentence or even a phrase of a passage. They, standing before all, feel very important. It is their Day, no doubt. After each passage an appropriate song is sung, accompanied by the orchestra. For the evening singing service carols, both English and Tamil, are chosen to suit the orchestra and the children. They are sung with joy and enthusiasm. The House of Prayer is full to capacity.

\* \* \* \* \*

At Christmas, the House of Prayer, Parama Suha Salai, and the Farms all have their own decorations, each distinctive, giving the atmosphere of joyous festiveness. For general decorations, we have coloured lights, hung from trees in the compounds and from eaves of houses. The home decorations are very personal and the children join in this exciting activity. Stars are made from various materials, wreaths of many colours

are made of flowers, and coloured papers and tinsels are hung from the eaves from beam to beam. The decorations seem to grow until Christmas day. Home decorations begin seven or ten days before Christmas and then disappear a week after it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Christmas, for the Parama Suha Salai patients, is usually celebrated a week before the 25th. The Parama Suha Salai staff come to other Sthalas for flowers and decorations. All Parama Suha Salai takes part in the preparations. They work in their spare time and late into the nights before the celebrations. Two events stand out on that day. One is the children's singing, verse recitation and message, followed by the present giving. The second is the singing by the Vanacharbu.

For this day, the children learn verses and songs. Every one of them wants to have a share in it. The Accal in charge chooses the verses, songs and actions to fit the verses and messages that will be given on that day. Preparations start at least two months before the event. A month before, she begins selecting the children from classes 2 to 5 to recite the verses. All children learn the songs. It is hard work as the children are young and if a child falls ill, another has to take her place on short notice. But it is an exciting, worthwhile job.

A brother gives the message in the Arokkia Salai and a sister in the Carunia Salai.

When the time to go to Parama Suha Salai arrives children are excited, especially when they see all the decorations! The patients and the staff wait expectantly for their coming. Carunia Salai is the first place they go to. They recite verses, and songs accompanied with percussion instruments are sung with appropriate actions. A simple and straight forward message is then given by a sister. The climax of the function is the present giving. The doctor gives out each patient's present to one of the singers. She, with a staff, goes and gives it to the patient who receives it joyfully.

After Carunia Salai they go to Arokkia Salai, They present the

same programme, although the verses and the songs are different and the message is given by one of the brothers. It is a happy Christmas for the children, patients and the staff.

Singing to the Parama Suha Salai, on their Christmas celebration day had special meaning for the Vanacharbu. It was our own. Choosing the songs, practising them and organising the whole thing took precedence over our other Christmas singing activities. It was the grand finale of the Parama Suha Salai Christmas celebrations.

The whole thing has an aura of its own. On that day, the instruments are carried over and the participants gather at 7.30 in front of a Sthala and then move to Parama Suha Salai and wait there quietly. After the gas lamp is lit and the instruments tuned we ask our Father's blessing. Then we go in, first to Carunia Salai. The orchestra takes up their positions first. Then the choir juniors in front and the seniors behind, with red lantern carriers spread out in front of the singers.

While waiting for the bells to strike 8.00 we notice that the Carunia Salai is profusely decorated; golden tecoma wreaths are strung from pillar to pillar, coloured lights hang from the eaves, and twinkling coloured bulbs sparkling through green shrubs and flowers. All the female patients, their relatives, and the Parama Suha Salai staff sit quietly and expectantly for the programme to begin. The all - male choir in the 50's and 60's had 100 - 200 men and boys, and in 1980 the last time, there were only 20! Their voices deep and strong and accompanied by the orchestra, make a strong impression on the listeners. To give the full gospel we sing Christmas, Easter and second coming songs. The singing is alternated with Scripture readings, and we close the session with prayer.

We then move on to the new Arokkia Salai, Old Arokkia Salai, Vandipettai, bus stand hotel and Bethel. In the last seven years or so we went only to Carunia Salai, Arokkia Salai and Vandipettai. The same programme sometimes with slight variations, is enacted in each place without a bit of enthusiasm diminishing!

Finally we come to the starting place to thank our Father. If it is

raining or too damp, we sing from the varandhas. Parama Suha Salai staff, considerate to us their brothers, have strong, tasty hot ginger brew ready for us, which the doctors and staff serve us after our one to one and a half hour programme. It is refreshing and enjoyable, and a fitting close to the whole programme.

The Christmas morning rounds were done separately, women to their Sthala and men to theirs. Each group had their own programme. Sunthira sang to the head of the compound, to the Vanacharbu kitchen, and to Bethel when Rajappan Annachie was there. The seniors programme was more varied. They got up at 4.30 a.m. Before starting, we asked our Father's blessing, and a verse or two were sung to clear our throats. When satisfied, we about 100 -120 in the 60's to only 20 in 1980, started the rounds - juniors in front, seniors behind and joy bells and gas lamps between the two. The coloured lantern carriers lead the procession and, reaching the place, spread out in front of the Sthala, holding the lanterns above their heads. When everything was ready, the joy bells rang out the chimes. When the bells stopped chiming, two or three carols were sung, accompanied by violins or flutes or piano accordion. If it rained we went out without instruments, singing carols by heart. First we caroled to the family leader, living in Aruna Sthala, then to Athava, Sunthira, Tharisana, Sthothira, Vistara, Parama Suha Salai (Sirappan Annachie), Bethel and to the west and east farms. The last two we sang from Keerthanai and Ananda Geetham in full volume. At the end of the carol rounds the leader closed the time in the east farm with thanks to our Father and all dispersed quietly to our homes.

The easter atmosphere, though joyous, is quiet. The wearing of white by the family seems to enhance it. Christmas, on the other hand, has an exciting, exuberant atmosphere. Though wearing their best, the men are in the usual blue. But to see our sisters wearing their bright and beautiful dresses of every colour and shade on that day is like seeing gorgeous, multicoloured plumed birds, all gathering at one place, and other times most of them flitting here and there in the compounds. The same person may wear different sarees at various functions on the same day! This gives the day the bright splash of colour and accentuates the

excitement and exuberance of the atmosphere.

A fortnight before Christmas, an Annachie and a few workmen look out for a tree! That tree must be straight and tall, with branches spread out evenly on every side. Casuarina is the tree chosen for the Family Christmas tree. On the morning of the 24th it is cut down and brought to the House of Prayer in a bandy with a cement tub. Children gaze at it with joyful anticipation. The tub is placed in the middle of the House of Prayer and the tree cut, and pruned to the right size, is placed in the tub and then filled with sand and the outside draped with a matching coloured cloth. Hidden wires are fastened from the 15 - 20 feet tree to the beams to keep it steady. Then the electricians arrange coloured bulbs on the tree from top to bottom. They also hang red bulbs from the tower on three of the outside walls. All the main lights are draped with beautiful, pale orange tissue paper. The final decorations are done by the sisters.

By 6.15 p.m. on Christmas Eve, there is an atmosphere of expectancy throughout the Family. It is dusk. Each Sthala and each home has its own decorations and coloured lights. The Family coming from all sides of the House of Prayer enjoys the sight. From a distance, they see the red lights hanging from the tower of the House of Prayer. Before entering the House of Prayer, one's eyes are drawn to a sight that makes one's heart beat a little bit faster. The main lights are off and the Christmas tree lights are on, making the whole tree sparkling with coloured lights and enhancing the beauty of the other decorations. Now the House of Prayer becomes alive and the atmosphere is festive! Children coming in gasp at the sight, and their shining eyes are riveted to the tree.

The chimes ring at 6.50 p.m. although most of the Family comes before the ringing of the chimes and sits around the tree, children with their coloured flags in front and grown-ups behind. Just before the carol singing begins, the main lights are switched on, giving enough light to read but not so bright as to dim the Christmas tree. Then there is 45 minutes of joyous carol singing round the Christmas tree.

The week before Christmas, extra activities can be seen in both the West (bullocks) and East (dairy) farms. For Christmas, cobwebs are

brushed off, the buildings are swept and tidied, and floors given an extra scrubbing and cleaning. New, clean, white sand is spread over the surrounding space. The fresh green grass is cut, making it look like beautiful lawn. Cattle also are given their Christmas scrubbing and washed, and look fresh and clean. Perhaps the cattle know it is Christmas and their special day, for they rarely misbehave on that day! On the 24th and on the early morning of the 25th the farms are decorated with banana trees, and elephant grass and flowers. The whole place has a festive look. If it was not for the cattle, seeing the farms on the day, one would have thought, that some fine festival was going on with high functionaries participating.

Christmas day! What "dawn service" is to Easter, the "Farm Service" is to Christmas. At 7.30 a.m. one can see the sisters in their bright coloured dresses coming from the west via Tharisana Sthala to the east farm, there is always a crowd of outsiders to see the sight. Going through the banana tree archway, we come to a rectangle space, south of the building where every group stands in their respective place the leader and the joybells are in the west. At 8.45, at the signal from the leader the joy bells begin playing the chimes. When it ends, the service begins by the leader announcing the song. At the close, verses are read by a senior Annachie and another one prays after the reading. When the next song is sung, we all go in procession to the west farm, men and boys leading.

By this time the group outside has grown bigger to see the procession, and sometimes it had to be kept in order with a firm hand. We sing, accompanied by percussion instruments as the procession slowly moves to the west farm. Men and boys stand at the north of the square, (East of the office, facing south, and sisters at the east, facing west, the cattle shed, and women visitors at south, facing north. When all have come, the leader announces the song. After this song, a scripture passage is read and a short Christmas message given usually by the one in charge of the West farm. Again a song is announced and sung. (All songs are accompanied by instruments). Finally, the farm service closes by all joining in the mighty "Amen and Blessing". Sisters and women guests leave first and men and boys quietly follow after them. This "Farm

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family ever misses

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Service" is a praise and worship service. And what a setting! No one in the family ever misses it, if she or he can help it.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Christmas service is the Central part of the "Day". The House of Prayer, with the Christmas tree in the centre is decorated with many kinds of flowers and creepers, looking very beautiful. Chimes ring at 9.55 a.m. The whole atmosphere, though reverent, is festive. The House of Prayer is packed to capacity. The hymns are well known favourites, stirring one's emotions, uplifting one's heart in praise and thanksgiving for God's wonderful Gift of gifts, His only beloved Son. The message is, of course, centered on God's love for us. We leave the House of Prayer with happy, uplifted, thankful, and grateful hearts.

\* \* \* \* \*

The highlight of Christmas is the present giving. All are agog with excitement. In October, presents for each are decided or chosen and bought. Then comes the wrapping of the presents for each individual in the Family. Each packet is beautifully done in coloured paper, and tied with coloured ribbons. They are then divided according to Sthalas and each is put in separate receptacles. This is done by Sitties and Accals in the Christmas room, from whence a sweet smell emits, intimating that the Christmas season is on.

The present giving takes place on the eastern side of the Upparihai, the clock tower. By that time the monsoon is nearly over, trees and grass are fresh and green. Coloured cloths are spread over the tables, making them into one long table. They are put on the eastern side of Upparihai and front of it. Presents are then brought from the Christmas room and arranged according to Sthalas on the table. Sweet smell pervades the whole place.

While this is going on, seating arrangements are made for the Family. On the 24th at Vanacharbu school desks, tables, and a few chairs are stacked according to their heights on the senior school southern verandah. The Jeevananada desks are stacked in its easternmost room. On

25th, all these are taken out and put there east of Upparrihai, 3 rows on each side. Palmyra mats are then laid in front of the desks to sit on. When everything is finished, all leave the place, except Kaval. This is done at 3 p.m. by one of the senior students from Kathirava with the Sthala Annachie.

At 5.20 p.m, the sisters begin arriving in their multicoloured clothes. Brothers begin arriving at 5.35 p.m. The setting is perfect for the present giving. Upparrihai on the west of the square, tall and benignly look on the Family of 500 - 900. The sun sinking in the west, spreading its bright glow on the whole scene, makes the velvety green of the grass more beautiful and the multicoloured dresses of the sisters more vivid and arresting.

At 5.45 p.m. the leader blows the whistle or rings the bell, announcing the beginning of the Present Giving. He reads out the names of each one of the Family at a time, and the children of that house, too excited to walk, run to get their presents from Accals or Sitties who gives each one his or her present. Then the toddlers taken by their elder sisters, go to get their presents for themselves. They return laughing and smiling, and the toddlers tumbling in their excitement, to get to their Accals. When back, they walk or run around showing their presents to their Accals and friends.

The seniors do not walk, and certainly do not run, to receive their presents. They have their dignity to keep! But they are not exempt from the excitement and joy of the occasion. Excited children bring them their presents. They show their presents to their freinds and others by passing them around, and not by running from one person to another like the excited youngsters. There is laughter, and continuous lively talking, and if anything humourous happens, it brings peals of laughter! The leader has to blow the whistle often to quieten them. But it is hard to contain the excitement of the time.

The whole affair takes a little less than an hour. The happy gathering ends by our giving thanks to our loving Father and to our friends, who make this possible. Dispersing is just as noisy, with laughter and talk. The Kathirava seniors stay behind and put the desks and tables

back in their rooms.  
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back in their rooms. The place is now empty, but the family takes with them the joy and the excitement of the day, and the memory lingers for many days afterwards.

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The last event of Christmas Day is the final Family gathering round the Christmas tree at 6.45 p.m. for the 45 minutes joyous soul stirring carol singing. At 9 p.m. the chimes which have been playing carols for the whole week, morning, noon, and night, play the last carol of the season for the year! But the remembrance of Christmas lingers on, warming one's heart for many days.

## X SERVING

D.Dwight Eisenhower, Commander in chief of the Allied forces on the western front from 1944 - 45, and later USA President, wrote when he joined West Point, "From here on it would be the nation I would be serving, not myself."

### 1. The Family :

From the mid thirties to mid sixties men served the Family in many departments and in many ways. The most important was the bringing up of the boys. Many of them were also teachers in our school, and others worked in Parama Suha Salai as nurses, laboratory technicians, and ward boys. Others worked in the workshops, gardens, farms, sewing room, offices and did binding and hair cutting. In these departments many worked as full timers and a few as part time workers. There were five to eight missionaries working in these departments along with us.

### 2. India :

Now (1984) there are a few men still with the Family. But most of them are scattered all over India and overseas. They are nearly in every profession. Many have done well in the world and some are in responsible positions. Many are serving the Lord in doing their jobs and in their free time, the Lord's work. Some are doing full time work for the Lord. One of them said to me, "Whenever you hear of anyone of us doing well and serving the Lord it is you and the Family doing these through us." As we are sad to hear of the failure of some, we are happy to hear of those who are doing well and are serving the Lord and the people. We need more men to serve the Lord in India and also the Family.

May our Father and Lord bless each brother and sister scattered all over India and the world.

### NAMES AND IN

1. Hellen Bradsha
2. Alec Arnot - Fa
3. Mrs. Gwen Arn
4. Stephen Neil- C  
in Tirunelvo
5. Ronald Procter
6. Godfrey Web-I
7. Murray Web-I  
Capt, MC
8. John Edward
9. Norman Robe  
Blue, Aus
10. Philip Cuthbo  
(BE UK US
11. Ian Gill - Car
12. Evans Hopki
13. Godfrey Ho  
Australia
14. Betram Bard
15. Jack Yeoma

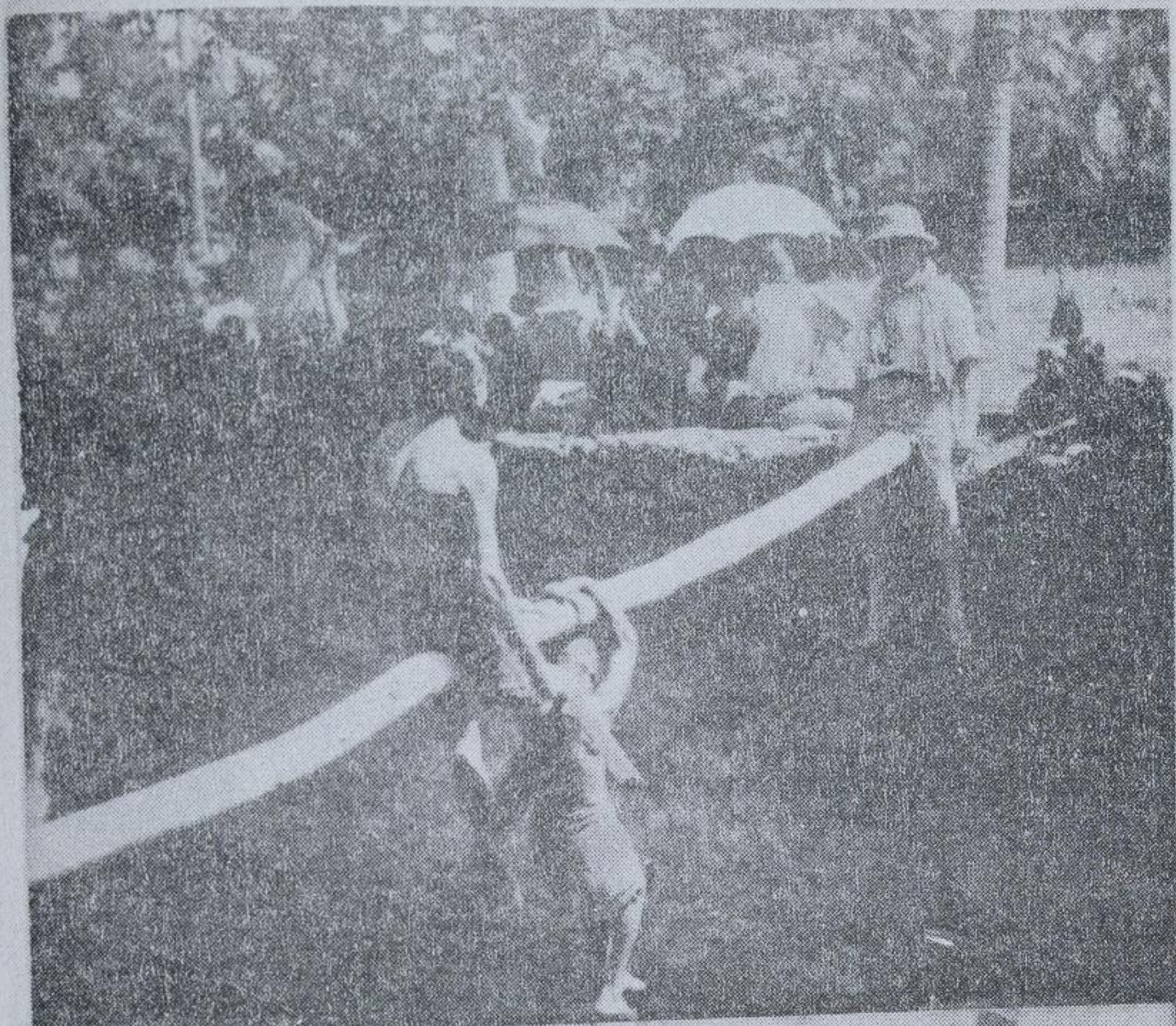
## XI MISSIONARIES

### NAMES AND INFORMATION

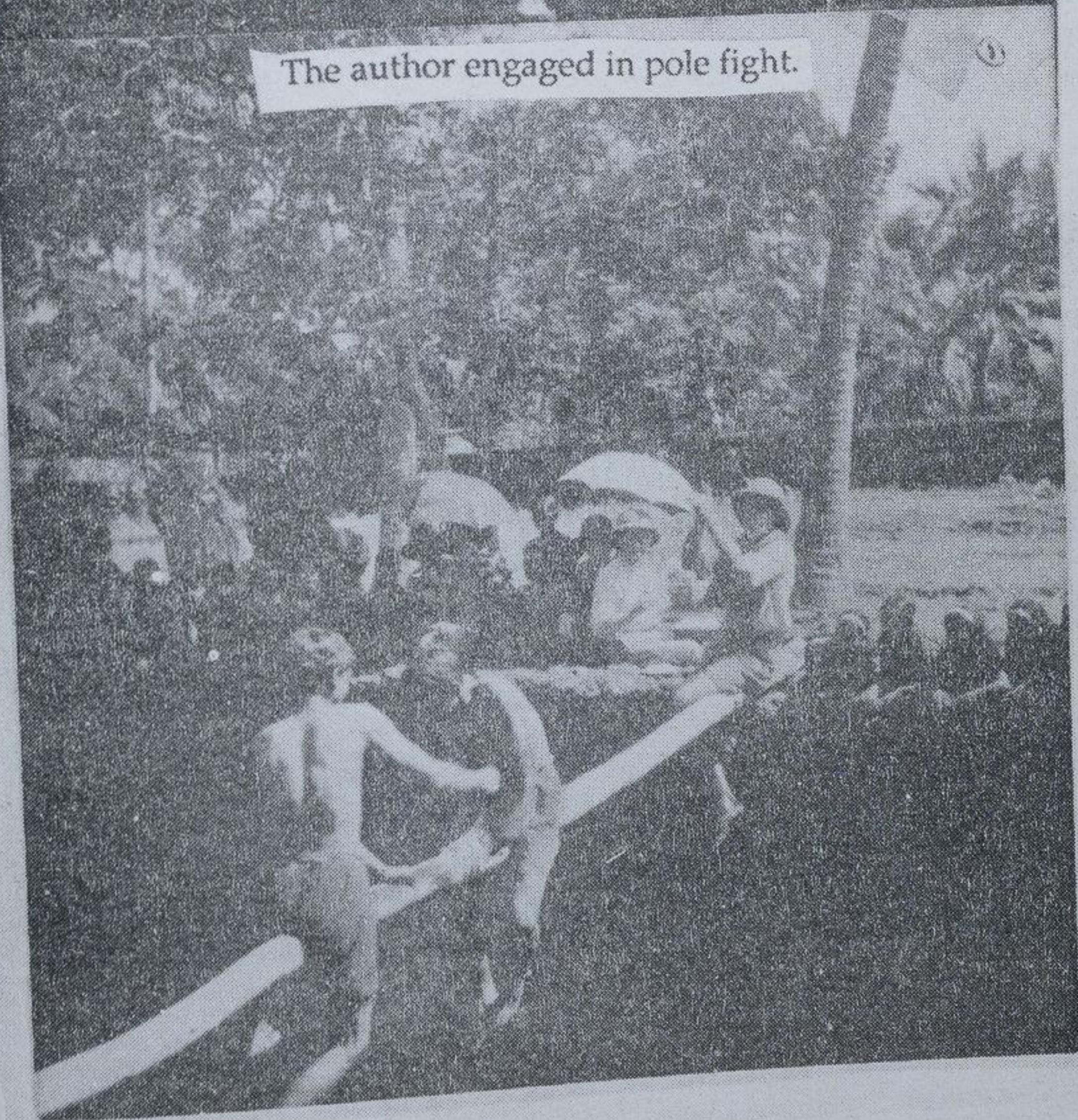
### TAMIL NAMES AND DEPARTMENTS

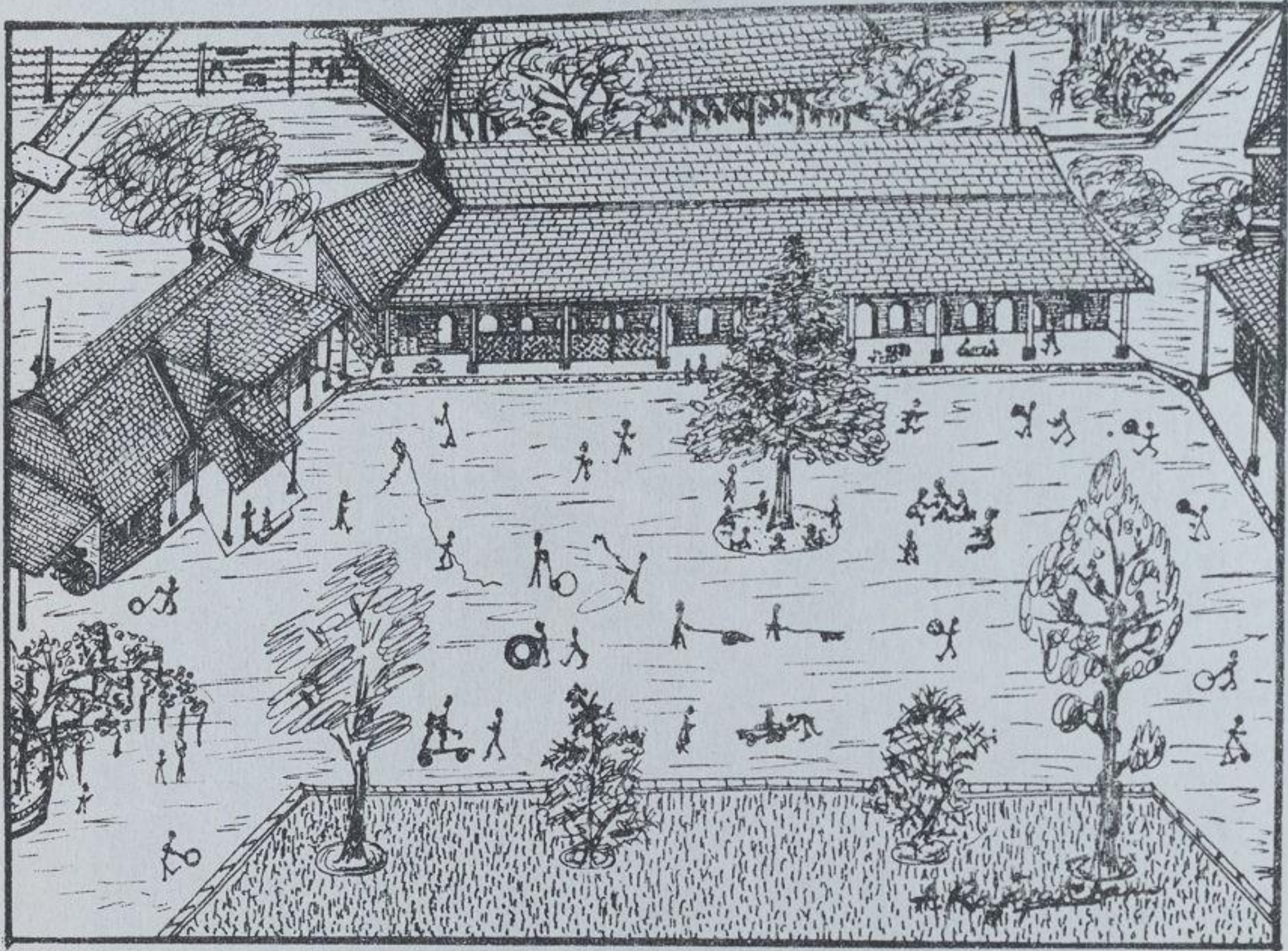
- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Hellen Bradshaw - Cheltiam                     | Premalu Sittie                     |
| 2. Alec Arnot - Farmer Scot                       | Menside (VC)                       |
| 3. Mrs. Gwen Arnot                                | Inba Sittie                        |
| 4. Stephen Neil- Cant, Bishop<br>in Tirunelveli   | (VC Teacher)<br>Menside            |
| 5. Ronald Procter                                 | Mechanic                           |
| 6. Godfrey Web-Peploe, MA Cant.                   | Devasamathanam (VC DF)             |
| 7. Murray Web-Peploe, Dr. MD :<br>Capt, MC        | Devamiththiran (PSS DF)            |
| 8. John Edward Risk - Ex-navy                     | Devanesan (VC DF)                  |
| 9. Norman Robert Burns - Rugby<br>Blue, Australia | Tholan (Agri, farm, VC<br>DF)      |
| 10. Philip Cuthbert England<br>(BE UK USA)        | Sirappan<br>(Workshop, Office, DF) |
| 11. Ian Gill - Cant Major                         | Aran (VC)                          |
| 12. Evans Hopkins - Cant. Rev                     | Venthan (VC, Building)             |
| 13. Godfrey Howell - Farmer,<br>Australia         | Devastira (Farm &<br>agriculture)  |
| 14. Betram Bardoe - Cant. Rev. Capt               | Devathondan (PSS, Workshop)        |
| 15. Jack Yeoman Trehane - Cantab                  | Thyahan (VC)                       |

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 16. Philip Berthoud. Wood work Swiss        | Theeran (Workshop)       |
| 17. Terence Addenbrooke Captain             | Tiral (PSS VC)           |
| 18. Angus I Kinnear - Cant. Dr              | Dayaseelan (PSS, VC)     |
| 19. Claud Wavre - Mech. Swiss               | Vibaharan (PSS)          |
| 20. David Watson - Cant. Captain            | Shafra (VC)              |
| 21. Jim Melville. Dr                        | Deenabandhu (PSS)        |
| 22. Haris Simmons. Rev. Australia           | Vettriventhan (VC)       |
| 23. G. Roland S. Taylor Dr. FRCS,<br>Major  | Kaithunai (PSS)          |
| 24. Marc Golay. Watch Maker. Swiss          | Markabandhu (Watchmaker) |
| 25. G. R. Benjamin Walkey Dr. FRCS.<br>Capt | Jayaseharan (PSS)        |

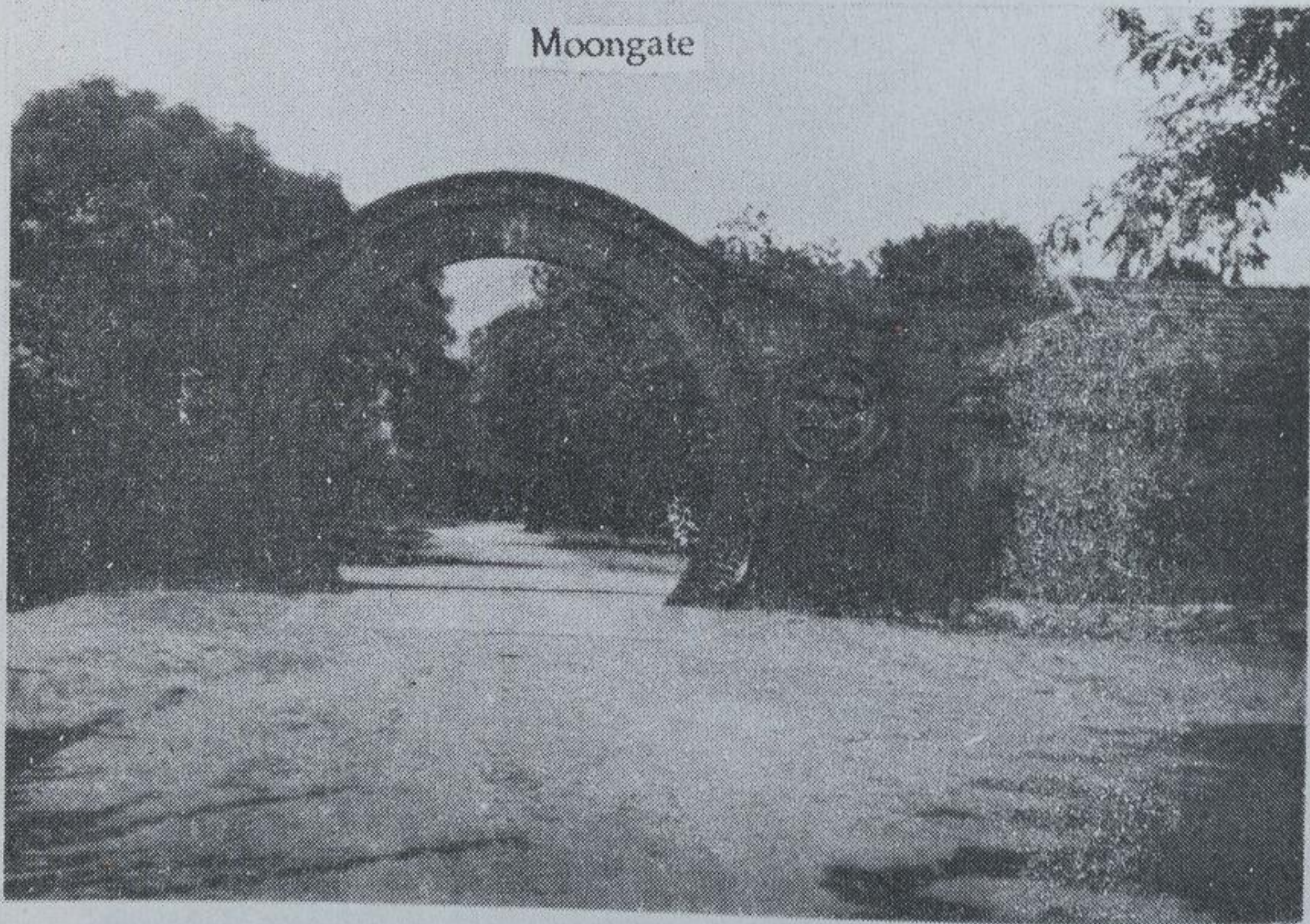


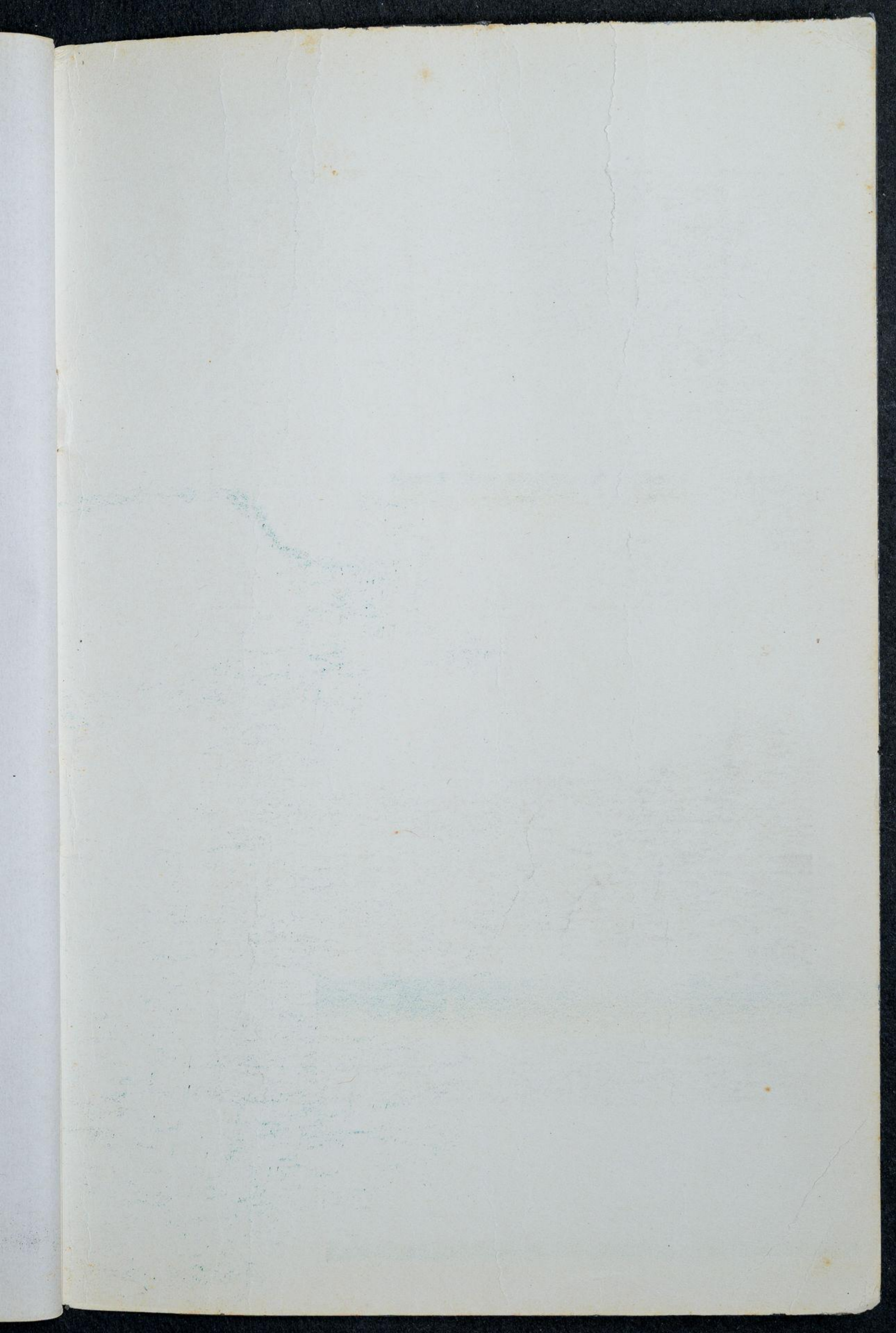
The author engaged in pole fight.





Sunthira Sthalam





This is an intensely practical book, which not only faces the difficulties and problems of daily life in a boys' home, but also describes the joys and opportunities which are found on the way. It also explains how lives can be moulded in conformity with the pattern set by Christ.