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THE HINDU

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Focussing on youth

ERODE: When kids of his age were playing and whiling away their summer holidays, **T. Stalin Gunasekaran**, a Class V student three decades and seven years ago, was busy getting together boys of his age to form Manavar Munetra Sangam, which served as a platform for discussing social issues like the need for evolving a casteless and healthy society.

The boys then celebrated Subramanya Bharathi's birthday by organising Bharathi Vizha.

To this day the Bharathi Vizha continues uninterrupted on December 11, as it has been for the past 36 years.

The organiser-turned-lawyer did not just stop with that, he built one organisation after another targeting youth. The Sangam evolved into Bharathi Youth Federation, giving way to Bhagat Singh Youth Federation, and finally Makkal Sindhanai Peravai.

Book festival

Through this broad, apolitical platform, Mr. Gunasekaran, columnist as well as author, inspires youth and many others in Erode to lead a well-read, informed and better life. So much is his commitment to books and education that he organises an annual book festival in Erode, and has established a library in Manickampalayam.

He shares his thoughts with **Karthik Madhavan** on youth movement, books and the need for organising book festival in Erode.

Today's students and youth must be awakened, for very little is their social and political awareness and commitment.

Information

Despite the flood of information and easy accessibility of sources of knowledge, they have very little understanding of the world. And, given the poor understanding, most of them care little for the society.

Towards this he launched the Latcham Manavar Sandhipu Iyakkam (a meet the stu-

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PHOTO: M. GOVARTHAN

dents movement), where he met students at schools to talk about patriotism, social service, education and kindled their interest in the world outside.

And, went a step ahead and conducted a programme 'Arap-paniyil Aasiriyargal' for teachers as well, because without teachers' support, it would be difficult to mould students.

Aim

The aim was to reach students through teachers, he says, and points out that they have so far involved 1,000 teachers in the programme.

The author of the two-volume Viduthalai Vezhviyil Tamizhagam, a compendium of freedom fighters from the State, says a part of the blame for students' abysmal state of affairs has to borne by the education system as well.

Education system

"We have a mark-oriented, value-poor education system, where students undergo a lot of pressure. They are hardly encouraged to think. And, there is very little in the textbooks to trigger their imagination."

He suggests that the educa-

tion system should not just overwhelm students with facts and figures and ask them to learn by rote for marks but help them think and kindle their creativity. "A society poor of thinkers and creators is bad."

Inspiration

Mr. Gunasekaran, however, concedes that the students are brilliant and what they are looking for is inspiration.

"The society has offered students and youth very few sources of inspiration. Not be said of the political system, which is a let down." As regards reading books, he says students should be encouraged to read books.

"Parents and teachers must tell students that good books are best friends and encourage them to befriend as many books as possible. Besides, they must not stop with that but also help them access good books."

He says as a measure of encouragement, those students who buy books worth more than Rs. 250 at the book exhibition are awarded certificates. He further points out that a motto of Makkal Sindhanai Peravai is that every house should have a library.

' தி இந்து ' (THE HINDU) ஆங்கில நாளிதழின் சார்பில் ஏதாவது ஒரு துறையிலோ அல்லது பல்வேறு துறைகள் மூலமாகவோ சமூகத்திற்கு வலுவான பங்களிப்புச் செலுத்திய ஒருவரைத் தேர்வு செய்து 'PERSONALITY OF THE WEEK' (இந்த வார ஆளுமை) என்ற தலைப்பில் வாரத்திற்கு ஒருவரை அங்கீகரிக்கும் பொருட்டு அவரின் சீரிய பணிகள் பற்றிய சிறப்புக் குறிப்புகளை வெளியிட்டு வந்தனர். சில வாரங்களுக்குப் பிறகு இவ்விதழின் இந்த முயற்சி நீடிக்கவில்லை.

22.05.2007ஆம் தேதிய ' தி இந்து ' நாளிதழில் திரு த.ஸ்டாலின் குணசேகரன் அவர்களின் சமூகப் பணிகளை அங்கீகரித்து ' PERSONALITY OF THE WEEK ' என்ற பகுதியில் அவரைப் பற்றியான முக்கியக் குறிப்புகளை வெளியிட்டுச் சிறப்பித்தனர்.