

NEWSLETTER



AUM PRANAVASHRAM NEWSLETTER | MARCH 2022

Good News First

The *pandemic* is coming to an end.

I am aware that this is a bold statement. I am just thinking out loud what all people wish to be reality.



The Children's Home

All the ashram members have overcome the most recent Omicron wave. Schools have resumed their teaching activities in full measure, and children are very happy with it.

Elders

Thanks to the elders' good stamina and the staff nurses' continuous care and attention, all our elders have also survived the last wave of the Corona virus invasion.



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A word in general

The inherent developments of the past few years in the social and work-ethical fields have led to a precarious situation that poses a few challenges for us right now. The entire Aum Pranavashram is undergoing a time of change. Migration to bigger towns and cities or metropolises, disinterest in agricultural or household tasks, salary raise expectations, and concurrent feelings of discontent have caused many problems not only for us as an ashram or social organisation but also for small-scale companies. The lack of a manual workforce is strongly felt.

The present Newsletter has to make do with fewer words. Photos say more than words; they will tell the reader about the events of the recent months since November 2021.



Children

The children are happy with the regular school routine, almost like before the pandemic. Their timetable is dense with morning Yoga classes, studies, homework, playing, relaxing, and duties like cleaning up their living and learning spaces.



Elders

Most of the elders are doing well; some members have problems with symptoms of Parkinson's disease, mental imbalance, and depression. Some patients need constant monitoring and care.



Animals

Our Goshala is under heavy tick invasion. Cleaning the cows and removing the ticks, attending to the wounds, and giving bandages so that the crows do not pick at the scars takes a lot of our time and energy. We hope that our Goshala will once again become the place of peace and joy, as it used to be before all those viral attacks and insect invasions.



DIWALI CELEBRATION



CHARITY (RICE- AND GROCERY BAGS)



PONGAL FESTIVAL

All events in time lapse

Simplicity was the keyword for all the activities and festivals celebrated since November 2021. Except for the Cultural November Programs, we could not accommodate guests or volunteers during the past two years.

During the Cultural November Programs, the charity distribution of rice- and grocery bags were organized in great detail to keep the distributions smooth and swift.

Christmas and New Year Celebrations were conducted in a pleasant atmosphere with ashram family members only.

Pongal celebrations were lively and full of fun for both children and elders. Once again, the ashram girls and staff members have proven their Rangoli skills in the Pongal competitions.

01
Diwali

4th November 2021

02
Cultural November Programs

20th - 24th November 2021

03
Pongal

13th, 14th and 15th January '22

Diwali (Deepavali) '22

The festival of Light. Covid restrictions for crackers and fireworks and the rainy and cold weather curbed children's enthusiasm a tiny bit. But they had fun anyway :)



Cultural November Programs '22

The focus of this year's Cultural November Programs from the 20th to the 24th of November was on charity. The list of around 500 beneficiaries was planned by having volunteers field-work in the surrounding villages, identifying individuals or families in need. Shortly before the distribution, we delivered the cards with the respective names, dates, times, and stamp to the



beneficiaries' houses. In this way, the rice- and grocery bags could be distributed easily without too much hassle to all the five hundred beneficiaries. The photos were taken during these meets from the 20th to the 28th of November '21.

The highlights of the cultural programs were:

- The morning Veda recitations.
- A musical evening program (which happened completely spontaneously).
- The Bharathanatyam Dance Program on the evening of the last festival day.

The simplicity and somewhat laid-back character of the programs spread their charm. All participants enjoyed the serene atmosphere of the ashram and the musical presentations.





Veda chanting: excerpts from the Rig-, Yajur-, Atharvana- and Sama Vedas

Bhajans with the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi Group from Tenkasi



Surprise evening musical program Sri Veeramani Raju (right side), a well-known singer in Tamil Nadu. He made a random visit to the ashram on the evening of the 20th November and performed spontaneously a devotional musical program.



A group photo with the Bharathanatyam dancers and their teachers.



Christmas '22



Christmas Presents for all children

Pongal '22

Bhogi-, *Surya*-, and *Mattu*- Pongal are celebrated on three successive days.

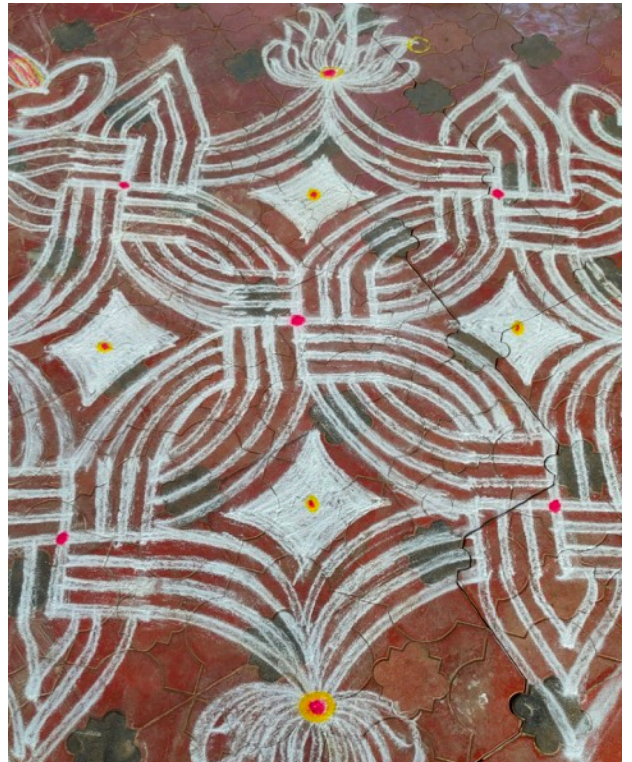
Bhogi Pongal is the prelude to the thanksgiving *Poojas* (devotional rituals) for *Surya* Pongal. The fire of *Bhogi* Pongal is symbolically meant to burn the past and a renewed beginning. It is an opportunity to free up mental space and gather renewed energy for the tasks in the coming year ahead. Later in the night, the ladies and girls of the ashram get to work for the *Kolams* and *Rangolis* (designs made with white or colourful powder), which are a compulsory part of the Pongal tradition. Sometimes the ladies and girls work until late in the night. On the following day, early morning, the family members get to





see the amazing art pieces created the night before.

The only tools for this artwork are the *Kolam* or *Rangoli* Powder and two fingers. At first, the area for the *Kolam/Rangoli* is cleaned with water. After that, the girls keep dots on the ground, which are later on connected to make the work symmetric. Like fine sand, the powder flows through the thumb and index fingers in controlled measure down to the ground, connecting the dots swiftly without





Morning Pooja for *Surya Bhagavan*

hesitating. The more difficult designs must be created, studied and practiced by heart in advance to be confidently done.

In the apartments of India's big cities and metropolises, it is not possible to create the *Rangolis* or *Kolams* in front of the house. This ancient form is still practiced in the countryside, especially in the villages.

Surya-, Mātthu- und Ulavar- Poojas

After admiring the *Kolams* and *Rangolis*, we perform a *Surya* ☀️ *Pongal Pooja* (ritual), in which we worship or honour the Sun as life-giving energy. We humbly offer various essential food items (see in the photo above) like rice or wheat, vegetables and fruits, milk, and curd as tokens of our gratitude for the abundance created by the Sun and the Earth together.

On the following day, we worship the cows as *Gomatha* (Cow Mother) and the farmers. Without them, there would be no agriculture and no food on our plates or leaves (local preference) :)

During the holidays, we organised the annual Pongal Games for the children, the



Māttupongal Rangoli

elders, and the staff members. The children loved the games and the prizes!

Closing words

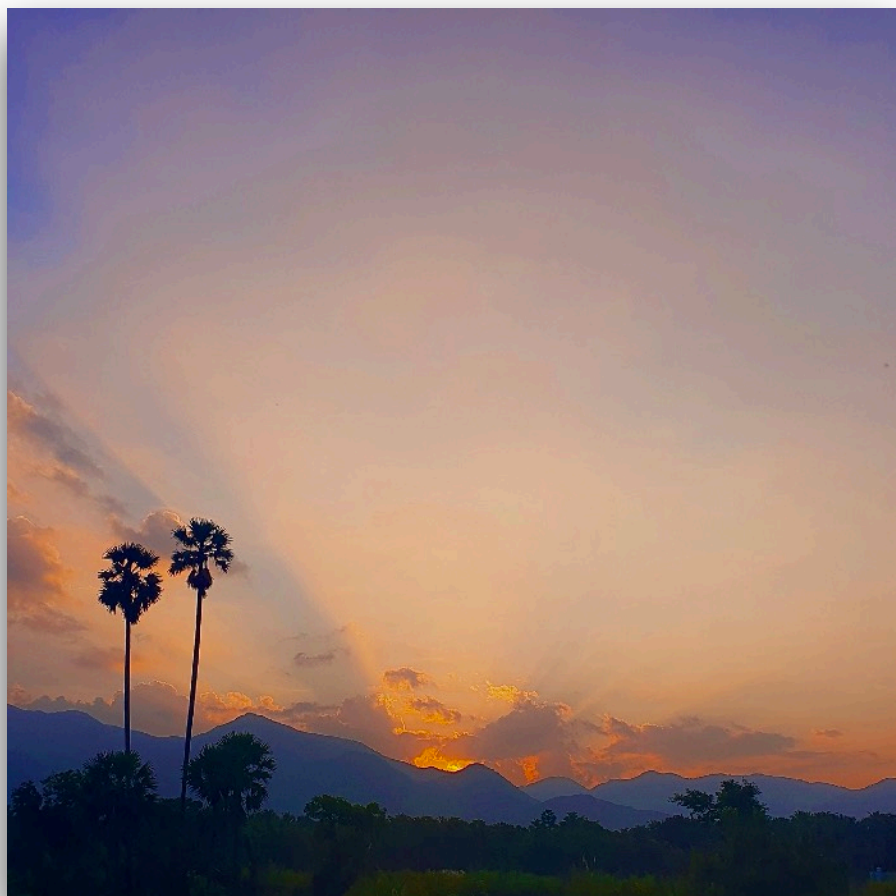
Due to time constraints, this Newsletter has become short(er); I remembered Mark Twain's humorous but appropriate words, "I would have written a shorter letter, but I didn't have the time." Of course, my brevity is no match to Mark Twain's wit. Anyway, I still hope that you enjoyed reading the Newsletter.

The Pongal Games were much fun for all the ashram members. The Pongal Games/Competitions originated in January 2005 and were meant to create happiness, improve communication between the ashram members, and involve people in beneficial fun activities. After the prize distribution, the ashram members were tired and content :)

In the name of the children, elders, and staff members, we thank you from the depth of our hearts for all the love and help that we receive.

With a photo taken from the roof of the cowshed, the place of the most beautiful rainbows and subtle colors of the sky, I say goodbye, wishing you safe, happy, and healthy days with your family and friends!

Thank You.



Humbly,
Aum Pranavashram
Visvanathan and Traude
Children and Elders
Staff Members and Volunteers
Cows and Dogs... :)