

# NEWSLETTER



AUM PRANAVASHRAM NEWSLETTER | MARCH 2023

## Good News First



Despite the globally unsettling conditions, I am delighted to be able to write this Newsletter and to wish the readers Love and Peace and the strength to deal with the challenges of our everyday lives successfully.

## The Children

You will find plenty of photos and short reports of last month's events in this Newsletter.

## The Elders

Diseases and great mental and psychological anguish made the lives of Kothai Paathi (93), and Alamelu Paathi (79) very difficult. After waiting for their heavenly salvation for so long, both women could finally leave their fragile physical frames in peace.



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Prashanthi Nilayam, Puttaparthi, December 2022

## Looking back

We are now heading for the annual exams in March and April again. After a more adventurous and eventful time from December to the middle of February, the children have meanwhile adopted a stricter working routine with very little distraction or external activities. They are busy keeping the acquired knowledge in their heads most of the time, which creates quite a lot of mental tension and a feeling of fatigue. Aside from helping them with their studies, their health is our most serious concern during that time. Healthy and sufficient food and water intake is critical at this time. After the morning yoga class with the children, we don't see them until the evening prayer at 6 PM (school time) and then during dinner. After that, we find them in the study rooms again. We wish them the best of luck with their exams!

In December and January, they enjoyed plenty of extracurricular activities:



Trip to Puttaparthi  
25 - 31 Dec'22

Traveling expands our horizon



Pongal  
15 & 16 Jan'23

Cultural and creative



Thai Amāvasai  
21 Jan'23

Charity and social activities



Republic Day  
26 Jan'23

Tamil Nadu as a culturally rich  
union state



# The Trip to Puttaparthi

After a pandemic-related break of almost three years, the children and the staff members of the Children's Home could finally embark on the six-day trip to Puttaparthi. The bus journey from Aum Pranavashram in Ilanji to the destination in Puttaparthi takes more than 24 hours which is not easy for all the

children and some older participants. But on the whole, both the outward and the return journey with stop-overs in Thirukoyilur, Thiruvannamalai, and Kancheepuram went without major problems, and the children enjoyed the adventure from the first hour!



This trip, as well as many other cultural activities of the children, are only possible thanks to the help of sponsors ❤️

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the sponsors for their generous support for this journey! Without them, a trip like this with a rented bus and food for fifty members of a Children's Home for six days would not be possible.

Long-term friends of the Aum Pranavashram staying at Puttaparthi spoiled the children with tasty snacks and ice cream daily; this, and the

beautiful and peaceful atmosphere of Puttaparthi and the social interactions, made everyone calm and relaxed, as has always been the case.





## Pongal 2023 Cultural and Creative

*Thai Pongal* (also *Makar Sankranti* or *Lori* in the Northern states) is not only celebrating people's thanksgiving to Lord *Surya* (the Sun) for sustaining life on earth but relates mainly to the winter solstice. From this day on, the days become warmer and longer again. In South India, the difference between the longest and the shortest day of the year is not more than one and a half hours).

After the morning Pooja on the 15th of January, in which we traditionally honor the Sun as a central life-sustaining force, the children got ready for the creative competitions from early afternoon to late evening. The photos of their creative works and the prize distribution can be seen on this and the next page.

*Mattupongal*, on the 16th of January, places the cows at the center of worship. During the *Go-Pooja* (*Go* means cow), we thank the cows for their beneficial role in agriculture and as the milk producer for their calves and our babies and children. Their presence is a blessing, and we pray for their long and healthy life with enough grass, fodder, and water.

## Photos of the children's creative work

The *Rangolis*



Colorful *Rangoli* powder strewed carefully on the ground

A dancer:



A bullfight:



In Tamil Nadu, we call this usually bloodless but controversial, heroic bullfight [Jallikattu](#).

Young, fit men try to hold on to the bull's hump or horns as long as possible; even five seconds appear long in this fight. One of our boys created this unique *rangoli*.



A house, a well, a garden, a temple, and a pond with fish and flowers :)





# Pongal continued

Photos of the prize distribution:

↕ Colorful hotchpotch-Rangolis of various symbols :)



Crafted works:



Vinotha and her magic wand 🪄

A beautiful bull cart



Our boys recycled a detergent bottle and planted seedlings in it. The upper part of the bottle and its cap is used as a watering can.





## Thai Amāvasai

21 January 2023

"Thai" is the name of the month Thai in our Tamil Calendar (15 Jan - 14 Feb).

"Amāvasai" means the day of New Moon.



## 500 food parcels

A little more than 500 food parcels, which were cooked and packed in the ashram, could be distributed on that auspicious day in the areas of Tenkasi, Courtallam, Sengottai and Papanasam.

# Thai Amāvasai

The two first New Moon days after the Winter and Summer Solstice hold important places in the tradition of "Pitru Tarpanam," which is the worship of the ancestors. The winter solstice marks the first day of the month of Thai and is celebrated as *Surya Pongal* because the sunlight on Earth starts increasing again. The first New Moon after *Pongal* is considered more powerful and hence more auspicious for the worship of our ancestors, who can attain peace and salvation through the offerings received. The forefathers shower their blessings on their families, thus improving people's lives and diminishing their problems.

Volunteers helped us to distribute the 500 food parcels prepared and packed in the Aum Pranavashram kitchen.

Among the volunteers was a group of 80 college girls

(NCC) who helped us pack and clean after cooking for around 700 people on that day in a diligent and organized way.

Below is a photo of the students.



In addition, a smaller group of teachers and 30 young pupils from a village around 50kms away visited the ashram.

Students, pupils, teachers, and volunteers, gained insight into life at the ashram and in the villages.

Having done something meaningful for others, people's minds were full of contentment and satisfaction.





## Charity - Distributing 500 Food Parcels



The NCC group of students at lunch

Volunteers from Austria and Germany with the children from a village school

The food parcels were distributed using auto-rickshaws and our small van.



We thank all the participants who turned this eventful day into a positive one, full of sincerity, laughter, and happiness! ❤️







## 26 January 2023 - Republic Day

As every other year, the children put up a program together with the staff members of the Children's Home, which impressed the audience very much.

The photos below convey a little taste of the ceremonial atmosphere.

\*Subramania Bharathi (or Bharathiyar) was an ingenious freethinker of the Indian Independence Movement and a social reformer, a Tamil writer, poet, and lyricist whose songs and books are still sung and read.



Group photo



Muthulakshmi as \*Bharatiyar



Ihasri sings a sweet rhyme



Beautiful folk dance performance



The girls had the ingenious idea to impersonate the *Ashoka Chakra* (which we find in the middle of the Indian Tricolor) and rotate it!







A picture of Alamelu from better times

## Elders

Getting older is often connected to various diseases, making old-age life sometimes extremely difficult. I have mentioned in the introduction that two elderly ladies, who spent a long time in sickness, died during the last three months. Humility, patience, and forbearance might help us achieve human maturity; getting older is like a slow art, late and difficult to emerge, lending a crown to wisdom 🙏.

Alamelu had to endure a lot of mental torment for a few years. It must have been a great relief for her to leave her body and mind 😞



## Yoga

I look forward to writing about our Yoga activities at the ashram in the July edition of our Newsletter.





# Moments

In nature around the Aum Pranavashram







We thank you all for your positive reactions to this Newsletter and for all the love and support that we receive!

With our most loving greetings to you from all the children, elders, staff members, cows, and dogs of the Aum Pranavashram!

*Traude & Visvanathan*

*Aum Pranavashram, Ilanji*

