



Newsletter

Aum Pranava Ashram

Aug 2020

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With a short notice



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Introduction

Dear friends of the Aum Pranava Ashram,

All the ashram members trust and hope that you are healthy and happy even while facing the challenges which this Corona Virus has brought down so hard on us. We have been swamped in the past five months to maintain the ashram as 'normal' as possible in the face of the Covid-19 crisis. Our ashram had always been like a beehive, swarming with people and activities. Now this place was suddenly compelled to close its gates. No entry or exit (re-entry) was allowed during the lockdown over the past few months. Some staff members had to leave us due to family reasons. Still, all children and elders have been staying safely at the ashram, and we are incredibly grateful to be able to say that nobody got any symptoms caused by a viral infection so far.

The present newsletter contains fewer words and more photos. The amount of ashram work and intensive educational activities for our children kept me from writing more extensively about the ashram activities. I decided to let the photos speak on their behalf and tell the story of some of the things that happened and how we managed our time during the lockdown.

The landscape on the front cover of the newsletter shows one of those spectacular sunrises from the top of the cowshed (which we call by its traditional name *Goshala*), where regular Yoga classes have been conducted. Due to its overwhelming scenic beauty, it has a very calming effect on the mind, thus making it an ideal place for meditation, yoga, or any other introspective activity. The unpolluted atmosphere is a bonus for the lungs and the whole body 🙌.

In these weird and unusual times, we try our best to keep the ashram functioning as always.

We hope you and your loved ones remain healthy, calm, and safe through this unstable period. Thank you all for your continued help and support, for which we are ever grateful!

*Traude and Visvanathan, Children, Elders, Staff Members,
Cows and Dogs, ... :)*



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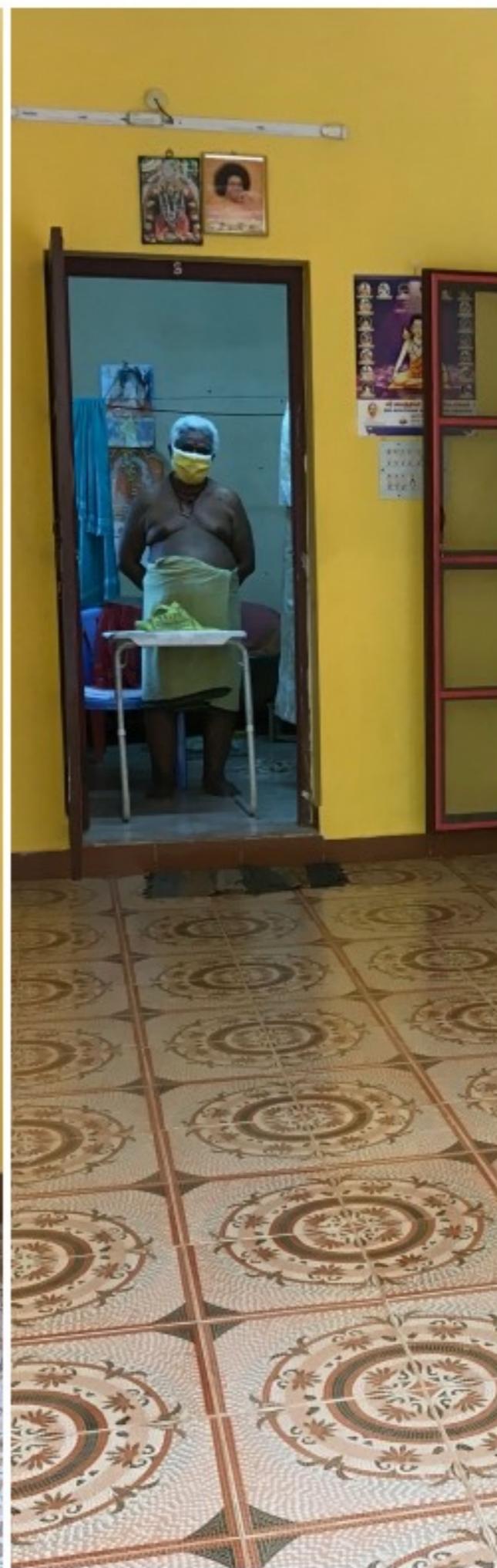
Covid News

The very strict and consistent lockdown started late March and ended in June 2020. Until then, the Corona cases were within safe limits. However, after that, with the partial opening of the district borders and a general impatience on the part of the citizens, the curve has been going up steeply until today. The lockdown continued but with more freedom given to the working population and businesses in general. Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu with its 7 Million residents and other metropolises in India, have been sorely affected by the virus. The good news is that the recovery rate from the disease is relatively high. People are advised to take Homoeopathic preparations, ayurvedic remedies, and natural food items like ginger and turmeric to increase immunity as a preventive measure. Public life has almost come to a halt through physical distancing, lockdowns, quarantines, masked faces, and a general ban on social gatherings.





The new lockdown rules and regulations had to be divulged in a few meetings. It was particularly difficult for the elders to adjust to the new situation, because they were used to moving out freely during the daytime.



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Our ashram has been a safe place so far without any social visits from the surrounding towns or villages. Apart from the routine ailments of our elders (which are severe enough even without the pandemic), we consider ourselves lucky that we did not have any serious health conditions. This fact is very fortunate at a time when doctors are hardly available, and hospitals are closed down.

Suddenly having ourselves all to ourselves, we made the daily routine intensive, colorful, and diverse for all ashramites. The three big departments, Children's Home, Old-age Care, and Cowshed/Agriculture, occupied our full physical and mental attention, which had been taken up by the ashram's administrative organization previously. Since some long-term staff members left the ashram and new ones took their place (we were fortunate enough to get to hire them), the motto of the last months could be summarised as a crash course in flexibility and adjustability.

We are also fortunate to have fields all around us. Thus, we could move freely in nature and make ourselves useful in the Goshala fields. Girls liked weeding work (as you can see from the photo on page 10). At the same time, boys were interested in getting to know how agricultural machines work (like tilling and cutting tools). We cleaned all the buildings and turned the



With and without the mask



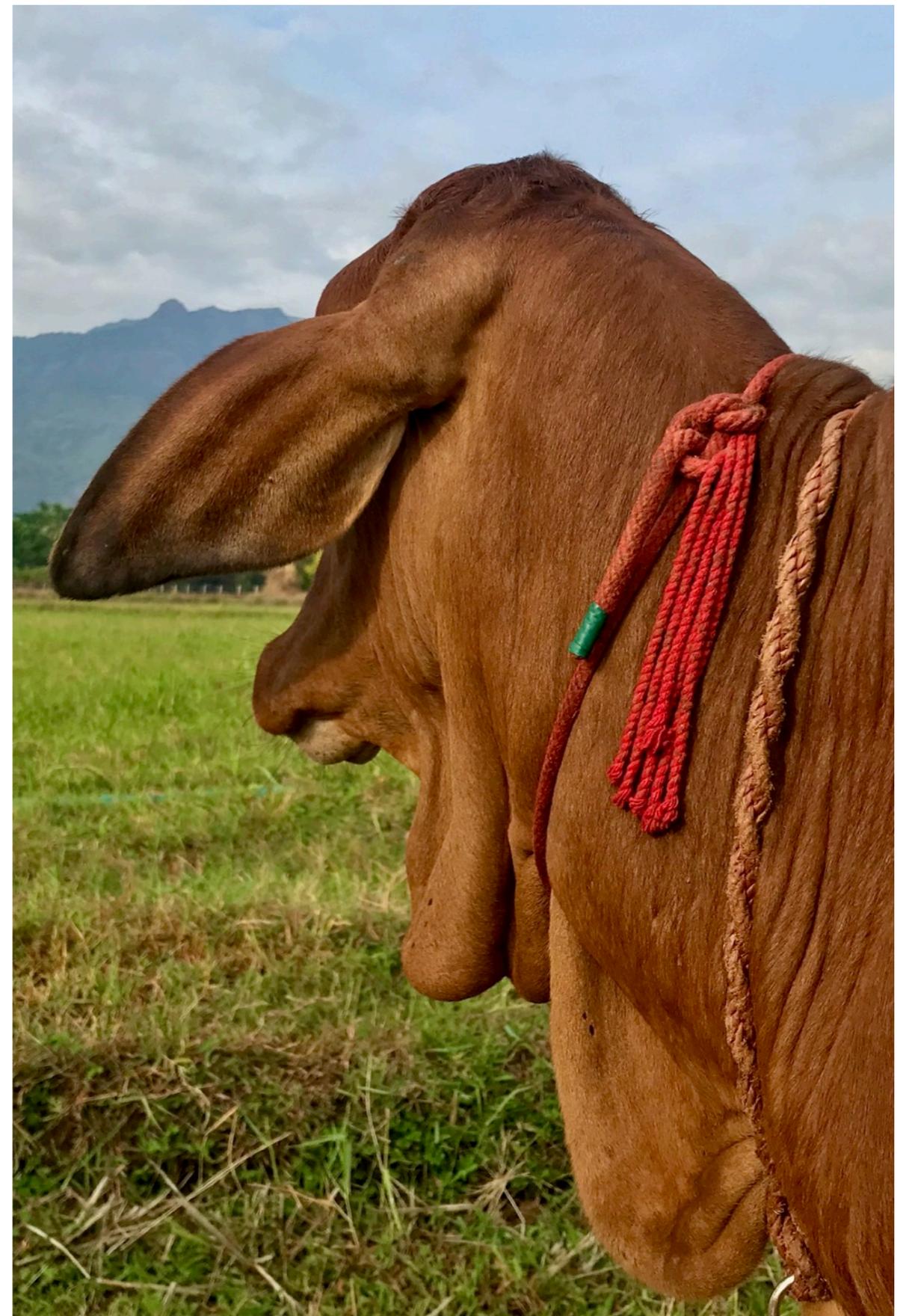
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rooms upside down. In the early morning hours, the boys and I (Traude) took some of the cows for grazing, which was one of the daily highlights for us! The boys discovered their love for the cows and liked to guide them to places where green grass was available. We still cherish those memories! Compared to our usual office or school routines, the time we had for each other was very precious. Physical work, play, and creativity were good for all of us. Visvanathan and I could spend all the time with the children, the elders, and the ashram's animals. Visvanathan re-discovered his old passion for chess and carrom-board (a game of Indian origin played on a board by striking wooden carrom men into the corner pockets with the flick of one's finger on the striker). The chess interest of the children turned into a chess craze! It was a regular chess board invasion that we witnessed. After more than two months into the game, some children still spend every single free moment playing chess together with Visvanathan! Heads are spinning, and the chess boards are under siege.

The children also kept themselves very busy. In a friendly competition, they divided themselves into four groups with four different topics, which they then worked out in the form







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of a play, a painting, and an essay. The items were: 1 - *Mahabharatham*, 2 - *Ramayanam*, 3 - *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*, and 4 - *Selfless Love*. It was pure joy to watch them exert their creative forces on these topics by putting together their costumes, the texts and dialogues, their paintings, and writing their essays. The pictures on the next pages convey their involvement for a little more than two weeks.

Time flew by. In the first week of June, the official "school-reopening" pulled us out of all these holiday activities. Instead of going to school, the temporary educational method is homeschooling and learning from videos on-screen sent by teachers from the respective schools. Our study halls have turned into little classrooms with two smart TVs, two laptops, and all the private smartphones of our ashramites, which we could possibly lay our hands on:) WhatsApp is our platform of communication with the school. It was necessary to purchase digital equipment to broadcast the videos on larger screens and handle the different timetables for all our children. Getting accustomed to this new teaching method was all very hectic initially, but has become routine meanwhile. We stay flexible.

We miss the activities in the fields and the Goshala. Instead of green fields and sunshine, we have History, Chemistry,





Kausalya, Chitra, Matheshwari, Sneha





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Physics, Biology, Economics, Tamil, English, and Maths books to fill our heads. Schools are not likely to open anytime soon. So we will try our best to ensure our children's education in the form of homeschooling this year.

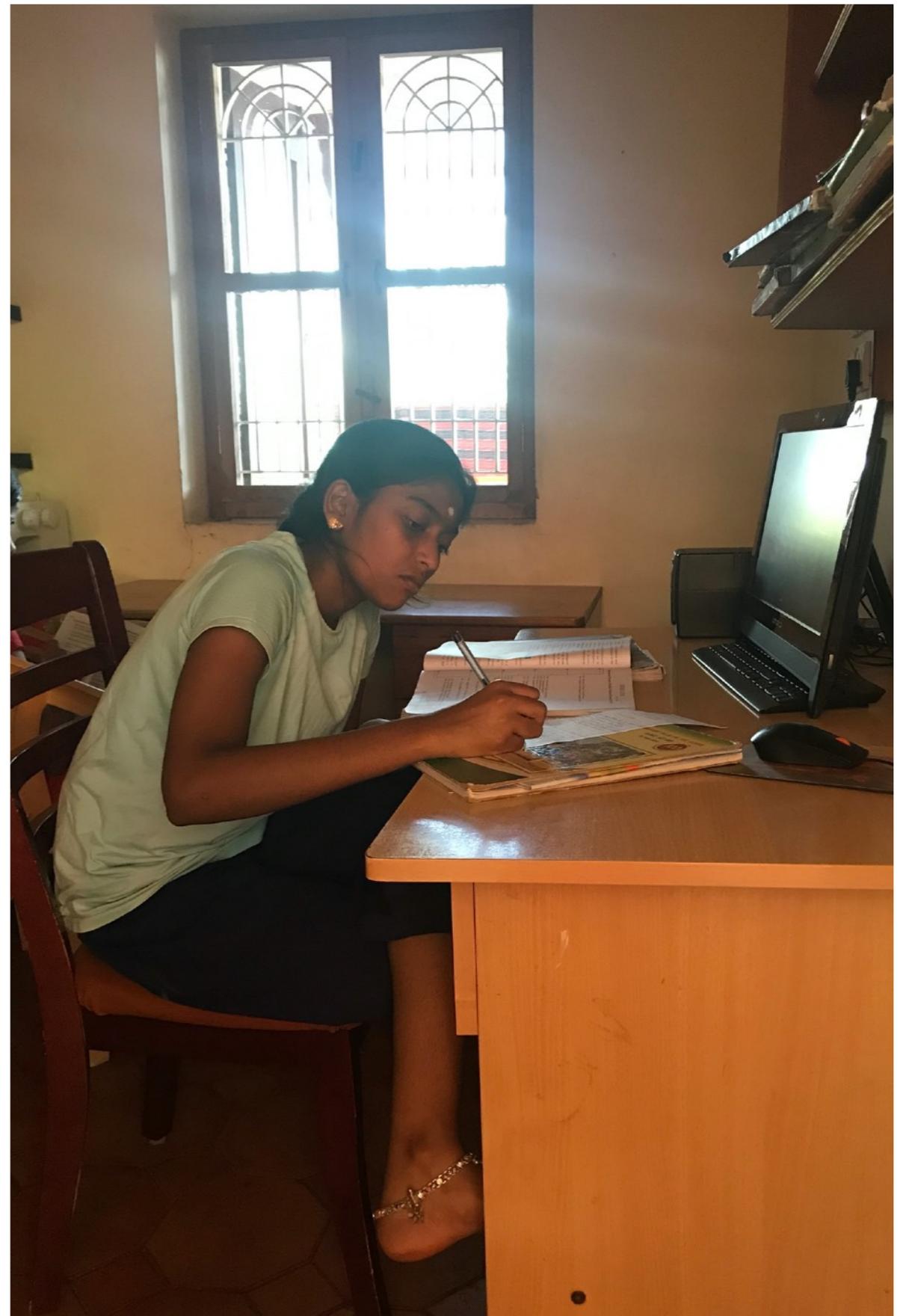
Despite all the weird uncertainty and challenge of juggling life with the virus on-board, I would like to close this newsletter with an ancient adage which reminds us of the fleeting nature of human life, words, and endeavors:

This (crisis)*, too, shall pass.

* "Crisis" is my addition. The original goes as follows: *This, too, shall pass.*









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Conclusion

Due to time constraints, *Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp*, and our *Website* will have to assist us in spreading news and photos about the ashram in the coming months. Our Social Media addresses are indicated on the next page and the feed will be updated continuously.

It might not be beneficial in the crisis management to speculate about the origin of the Corona Crisis or its end. We have to be alert and use our common sense to protect others' lives and our own. But the Virus has done something which nothing or nobody else could have accomplished: it has helped us keep our life-system on hold, enabling us to take stock of our on-going activities. If we want, we can see how we stand as human beings and fellow human beings. It is imperative to assume our human responsibility for this crisis. NOW would be the time for corrections or changes.

Every beginning is hard, especially when it comes to changing one's attitude. The life-system which we have created does not only exist outside of us. The roots are in our thinking. If we want to make modifications to the system, we have to change our thinking. With great caution, care, and clarity, we should analyze the situation and provide solutions. Selfless action without basing it on profit and exploitation of other kingdoms will surely help us create a happier world for ALL on this our fair planet Earth! The decision lies in every single human being's mind.

Each pure thought brings light and positive changes, even though very subtle in the beginning. Old habits have sedated us, thus making it difficult to act. Time is still the best healer. Positive changes will encourage us to move on. May we choose the wise, compassionate, forgiving path, and may we be forgiven!

 ***Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu!***

Happiness to all the beings in all the worlds! (...and may we develop our abilities to make others' life happier!) 

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Our Social Media Addresses:

Facebook		Aum Pranava Ashram
Instagram		aum_pranava_ashram
		traude.englert
Whatsapp		+91 9488722865
Website (will be renovated soon)		www.aumpranavashram.org
E-Mail Addresses		aumpranavashram@gmail.com
		info@aumpranavashram.org



This beautiful rainbow appeared early morning during our yoga practice.