

# NEWSLETTER



AUM PRANAVASHRAM TRUST, ILANJI - JULY 2021

## The good news first

Even though Covid has half-eclipsed the way our everyday lives used to function, we are slowly emerging from the latest pandemic wave relatively unscathed.



## The Children's Home

Schools remained closed; New admissions for the Children's Home; Summer holidays are over; Regular online classes for the children since July.

## The Old-Age Home

The lockdowns were the hardest for the seniors, I guess. The visiting and movement ban affects them in various ways. Vaccinations have been administered to many elders by Government service doctors.



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## The Animals

The animal kingdom of the Aum Pranavashram (dogs and cows) had to undergo many tribulations. An epidemic in the cowshed, diseases, and accidents - these are the keywords of the last months. The good news: all of them have survived! More later...

## General Introduction

The summer heat has given way to one of the most beautiful Monsoon times ever seen by us in these last many years. A good friend of ours made the photo on the right side in Kumbakonam, a big temple city in Tamil Nadu with numberless, gigantic and intriguingly beautiful temple sites. The rainbow appeared after an evening Monsoon shower.



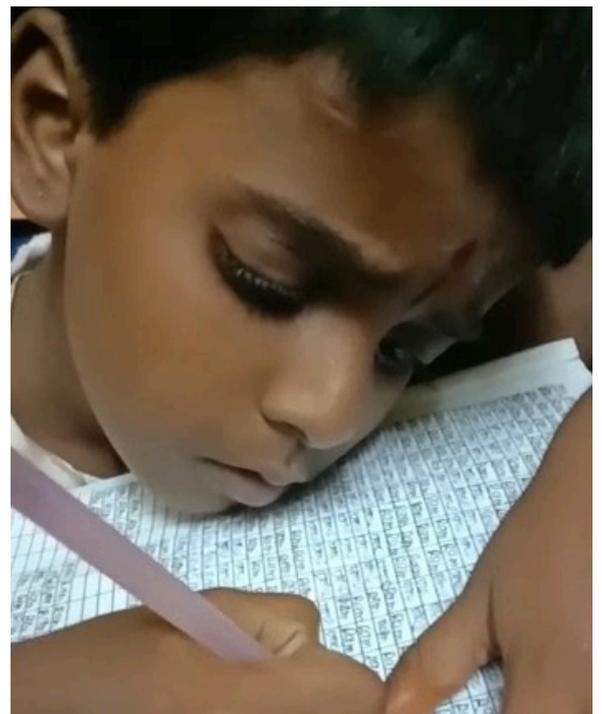
The cooler climate with its wind gushes and drizzling is heavenly, not only for us but also for animals.

Over a few days, the Courtallam waterfalls threatened to submerge the area in water, but the rain stopped at the right time.



## New admissions in the Children's Home

Esakkiammal and her little sister Muthulakshmi (photo right) are orphans who have lost their parents within the short time of three months successively. Due to poverty, their aunt brought the children to us. When the sisters realised that their aunt took them to our Children's Home, they were shocked because they thought that Hostels were terrible places. They were a little difficult to integrate into the children's community. Their faces remained without a smile, and they did not want to speak to anybody. However, they turned out to be very funny and active very soon! Their hearts softened



because of the child-friendly, welcoming atmosphere, which offers the children warmth and a sense of home. And one day, suddenly, the world was fair again, everything was fine. The photos on the right side show the happiness on their faces! Muthulakshmi is still very young and likes studies (there is a cute photo on the previous page); Esakkiammal is a little bit struggling since she had not been sent regularly to school before. She is ten years old now and was admitted into the 6th standard. It's a big challenge for her, but we are confident that - with the help of tutors - she can pick up and slowly assimilate all the knowledge from the previous classes.

The summer vacation has come to an end, and online classes are mostly in full swing now. All children got promoted to the next classes. There are chances that schools might open their gates in August, but in the face of the Corona pandemic still active in various Indian states, we cannot say anything for sure. Schools have remained closed since March 2020.

Despite the long summer lockdown curbing movements to a minimum, children tried to make the best of it somehow. Creative activities like drawing and colouring, writing little stage plays and enacting them in front of us all, dancing, singing, writing quizzes, and even trying out little magic acts created a fun-filled atmosphere. Because of all these activities, time flew by very fast! The photos on the following pages are from those performance evenings and afternoons. Before that, let me tell you about the college girls:



↑ Before

↓ After



MUTHULAKSMI

ESAKKIAMMAL

Four young ladies completed their college studies in June 2021:

1. Thirumalaiselvi, BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration)
2. Vigneshwari, BSc Physics (Bachelor of Science, Physics)
3. Sasikala, BA Eng.Lit. (Bachelor of English Language and Literature); since she lives with her aunt, I don't have a recent picture of her.
4. Rathi, BA Economics (Bachelor of Arts in Economics)
5. Anurathi, General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM)



Three girls are continuing their training/ studies in their respective colleges:

1. Saroja, Medical Lab Technology (MLT), second year.
2. Kausalya, B. Com CA (Bachelor of Commerce and Computer Application), second year.
3. Sornalakshmi, B. Com, third year.



Another young lady named Sneha is a first-year trainee at *Aurolab*, an ophthalmic laboratory closely collaborating with the renowned *Aurobindo Eye Hospitals* in Madurai and Tirunelveli. Rathi, who finished college just now, decided to join this lab training and started her work on July 5th.

One more general news: Muthuselvi, an ashram girl who completed her college education and worked for some time in our ashram office, married on June 23rd. Here is a picture of the happily married couple:



Now it is the highest time to show you some pictures of the children's performances. Muthulakshmi loves

her princess dance costume :)



A Pantomime on the issue of the Corona- pandemic

Dhanshika as a young version of Mahatma Gandhi



No program without Yoga demonstrations :)



These photos show very energetic dance performances! One of our dogs started barking because he thought something was wrong with Madhupriya, the dancer! :)

Photos of plays:



Purushothaman and Nithish



Esakkiammal R. as Lord Shiva, Yashoda as Mother Parvathi und Muthulakshmi as their son, Lord Subramanya. Muthulakshmi has thrown all heart into this role 🥰



A family drama

Matheshwari and Sathya always like to prepare Quiz-questions. →

Esakkiammal, Chitra and Sudha staged a discussion about mobile phones and how they have affected the youth.



The children also enjoyed *bhajan* classes (singing devotional songs in groups)...



... and had sufficient time for games and "chilling" :)



Now we are back at the study desks.



Each study group needs one smartphone or a screen to participate in the Google Meets. Even though we have to appreciate the



school teachers' efforts for smooth online classes, we all hope that the schools can open soon and children and teachers will interact personally.

I hope you enjoyed all the pictures of the children's activities! All the children wish you good health, peace and joy of life in these challenging times!

**BYE!**





## Covid - testing our physical, mental and spiritual stamina

The little details of the usual civil liberties which older people used to enjoy were not available during the long phases of lockdowns. Even though they didn't lack anything in a material sense, they missed the contacts and the visitors - some of them started to feel depressed. While most of the home's elders are fine, the depressions, hallucinations, and enhanced irritability of some members overshadow the peaceful atmosphere in the nursing home.

**W**e have witnessed older people getting hallucinations often, especially when negative memories and unresolved feelings create complex, subconscious attitudes, resulting in hallucinations. In the last few months those cases seem to have increased. Sadness and heaviness have sometimes had the upper hand. A man who showed real mental strength in the last years is suddenly deeply disturbed to the extent of having suicidal thoughts on account of having lost his last teeth, which was the tipping point of his self-hatred.



An almost deaf woman starts to hear terrifying noises and voices which do not leave her in peace. We try our best to help them ... but it's definitely not easy.

**R**izau Meeral (above 90 years old) and her son Bir Mohan live in one room. Both have deep spiritual inclinations and always read and contemplate from various

spiritual scriptures. They suddenly broke into a serious fight over family matters and didn't speak to each other for some time.



Then they both fell seriously ill. It took a long time for them to recover from the hurt and illness; meanwhile, they are good again. There are many personal regrets

in each and everybody's life, which is not the topic of this newsletter. I am citing these seemingly random but realistic cases to show the subtle effects of "Covid" on people's minds and bodies.

**I**n our last newsletter, I told about an old man suffering from renal failure and various other physical complications. He died very peacefully - leaving a smile on his face - on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2021.



Four of our nine dogs

## The Animals

I have already hinted at the difficulties of the past months in the animal kingdom of the Aum Pranavashram. Cows and dogs were equally affected. I am going to report about those cases, some of which are still not fully recovered.

The children, the elders, *and* the animals need a lot of time, care, and love to maintain good health and balance. I have never before written in any newsletter in such detail about the life and agonies of our animals. They are an essential part of the ashram, and the following reports convey a realistic picture of animal care in the Aum Pranavashram.

Over the past months, our place has been invaded by hordes of monkeys repeatedly. Apart from their continuous, enervating pranks like emptying all the garbage of the dustbins and distributing it all over the place or dragging clotheslines with the clothing items still on them through the ashram, they do not pose serious threats. However, they have made the dogs a target to irritate and provoke them to such an extent that - in a fit of blind anger - they believe they can fly or climb high trees.

During one of the wild monkey chases, one of our dogs wanted to jump from the rooftop of one building to another. He had done that before, but this time it went wrong, and he fell onto the hard concrete floor (see picture above).

His guardian angel did not let him down! He landed on his bottom and escaped with



severe bruises and a cracked iliac bone. On the left photo, you can see our "hero" after the fall.

The second case deals with our smallest dog, who suddenly started to produce bladder stones! He is just now recovering from the second operation; the first one



happened less than two months ago. His tenacity and braveness remain unbroken, and we do hope that we can get to grips with his disease.

The third case is about an elderly dog named Poorna (photo

on the next page), who suddenly gets seizures. There are no hints as to why she



gets those fits. They occur two to three times a day and make her more aggressive. She is under veterinary care, and we genuinely hope that she can soon heal from this ailment.

The last case is about a young cow who could not get up anymore and refused to eat anything.



The reasons for this disease are again mysterious. After one week of waiting, helping and hoping and getting drips almost every

day because she was so weak, somebody suggested lifting her with the help of ropes and a pulley. The pulley was an ingenious idea! We could pull the cow up on her feet and make her stand for some time.

Every day, we lifted her employing the pulley and practised simple standing with her. Her whole body was shaking since her legs were weak. One could see how painful

it must have been for her. After around two weeks of practice, she got up and lay down again on her own. More than standing up, lying down was more difficult because of the excruciating knee pain.



Gradually, she regained trust in her own legs' strength and walked out of the shed for a bit of grazing. Then, the fur and skin on her hind-part broke and just detached itself in large patches from her body! (The picture above shows those patches). The hair grew again; meanwhile, she has recovered from all those mysterious symptoms and can move and eat in a usual manner.

We are incredibly grateful that all animals could recuperate from their diseases! Ravi's stone problem still poses a riddle to us, but I am confident that we will figure this case also out!

Ending this report of a glimpse of the



ashram's animal kingdom on a more positive note, here is a picture of our ever-hungry lady-dog "Hamsi", an intelligent and loving ray of sunshine in our lives!

# Community Service



A group of beneficiaries

We have continued our community service activities, albeit without personal contact. It was possible due to some of the family members having bank accounts (which was very uncommon even a few years ago). Government services have urged ALL people to have personal identity cards (called *Aadhar* here in India) and bank accounts with Government Banks to receive public service benefits and private support, like ours. However, many people continued to come personally to us to ask for help.



The picture above shows one group of people (with Visvanathan standing behind them) who can frequently be seen begging on the streets or selling their handmade ethnic fancy items. In the district of Tenkasi, there are between 300 to 400 families/clans

of these socially/ethnically distinct groups of people (photo left at the bottom).

Another +/- one thousand low-income families from various other socially/ethnically specific groups live in and around Tenkasi district headquarters.

Some of the families are on our list of monthly financial help. Even though our contributions are like a drop of water on the proverbial hot stone, we continue to support them in whatever way possible. Their lives are full of hardships. It is imperative to help those who suffer most, especially during this pandemic when the streets were almost empty!

On seeing the ashram community service activities, some of our



friends get inspired and active themselves, leading to fruitful co-operations. An example to illustrate this: Mr Mohan, a good friend and long-time well-wisher of the Aum Pranavashram, likes to distribute food to poor people on the street. We support his initiative by cooking the food in our kitchen, packing it in easily hand-out parcels, which will then be given to people in need by Mr Mohan and Mr Karthikeyan.



The photos above are from a food distribution organised by Mr Mohan in collaboration with officials from various public services.

# Closing Remarks

Thank you for your interest and your continued support! Through all the difficulties and ups and downs in our daily lives, multiplied by the number of our Aum Pranava family members, your help and support have been an anchor of continuity and moral support for us.

Stay strong and healthy in body, mind and spirit!

Patience is the mother of all wisdom - this pandemic, too, will one day be a thing of the past.

Precarious situations like the one we are all going through at the moment might make us more aware of our existence's fragile and limited nature here on our beloved Planet Earth. It is imperative to develop enduring patience, continued love, deep compassion and unshakable peace to build a good human society.

With the photos of the children on the following page of this Newsletter, we say goodbye and **Thank You!**

Warmest greetings from us all in the Aum Pranavashram,

Traude and Visvanathan

Children and Elders

Staff Members and Volunteers

Monthly beneficiaries (around 80-100 people supported financially or with purchases for livelihood and medicine)

Cows and Dogs, ... :)

## Aum Pranavashram Children 2021-22



Muthulakshmi



Dhanshika



Nageshwari



Sudali



Sriram



Purushotthaman



Esakkiammal



Nithish



Yashoda



Velmurugan



Vinotha



Madhupriya



Madhubala



Matheshwari



Poomari



Kavya S.



Krishnaveni



Sudha



Sathya



Subbulakshmi



Esakkiammal K.



Chitra



Kavya A.



Indhuja



Prabha