



Mohanam Newsletter 2018

Month of January to March 2018

Dear friends,

This season has been full of new connections in the bioregion and all over the world. The Mohanam Team is deeply grateful to Julie and the Light Omega Community in Amherst MA USA, Yoga Center Amherst in USA, Auroville International USA, Lionsclub Nootdorp Pijnacker from Netherlands, Phillip & Sabine from Germany Nia, Conelia from Switzerland Nia, Marion maertens from Germany Nia, Dianazimmermann from Germany Nia, Fabian Austrian Group, Melissa Michaels from Goldenbridge USA, Raman from Singapore and American University of students Maaliya, Simon and Mariya. Your support helps us to grow our mission and expand our offerings, preserving the rich cultural heritage of Tamil Nadu for generations to come. We wish you and all those who have supported Mohanam health, happiness, and peace - and we hope to see you again.



Below you will find some information and photos from our winter/spring season.

Amathikural Vattam - Voice of Peace:

On the first Saturday of every month, Ilainarkal Education Centre hosts a "Voice of Peace" session. Elders from the bio-region come to share their knowledge and experience with local youth. This year on 6th January, Mohanam hosted the "Voice of Peace" at our New Campus, and we welcomed around 50 youth and elders from the bio-region and Auroville. We specifically invited Mrs. Danaraj team from Rayapettai Village, a devotional vocalist who shared traditional songs, while Meenakshi shared knowledge about Tamil Markazhi month. It was a beautiful experience for all.



Monthly Youth Sharing Circle:

On 6th January we also hosted the monthly Mohanam Youth Sharing Circle. The youth gathered to encourage each other, gain conflict resolution skills, and develop their leadership abilities. Communication was a key focal point at this month's meeting.

Bio region sports and National youth day:

Mohanam celebrated National Youth Day on 12th January with a traditional tournament at the Palmyra sports ground. Youth attended from Auroville and the bio-region government schools. Special guest Mr. Gnasekar, the district Youth Sports Welfare Officer, inaugurated the event and shared information about how youth can join local sports groups.



He even volunteered to provide direct support to any youth looking to join a sports team. And he was very inspired about Mohanam's work to revive and preserve traditional Tamil games and cultures, such as Pambaram, Pallankuzhi, Thayam, Aadupuliattam, Nondiatattam, Kho K'ho. Another special guest, Mr. Poopathy from the National Service Scheme, also give an inspiring speech about Swami Vivekananda, and after a terrific day of fun and competition, Mr. Jurgen Putz presented momentum certificates to all participants.



Thanks giving Agrariyan Festival (Pongal Celebration collaboration of Taminadu, Africa and Auroville):

On 13th January Mohanam celebrated Pongal with our friends at the African Pavilion. We organized a joint festival to share traditional dance, songs, and wisdom from local and African traditions. Mohanam shared information about traditional cooking, especially emphasizing 34 special local vegetables that have fallen out of popular use. Many people, especially youth, came to the taste test three or four times, amazed by the excellent flavors, and several times we were asked if our display of local vegetables was for sale.



We introduced traditional foods like millet, ragi, steamed vegetables, fried foods, buttermilk, curd, and sugar cane. There were traditional cultural performances of kummi, kollatam, kuiltchiattam, thappattam and African folk dances from local youth and children.



We were grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with Meenaskshi, who holds a wealth of wisdom about traditional Tamil culture. Meenaskshi was keen for us to include a nomadic tribe called Aathiyar that's settling on land just outside of Auroville, to give them a chance to express their own culture. "Traditionally, they are professional beggars," she says. "They used to go around the village door-to-door with musical instruments and a well decorated bull and give blessings, such as 'This house will flourish', 'Good news will come', 'More crops will come', 'You will be blessed by the Lord'. The women make gift bags with waste material from tailors' shops. They also do quilling [decorative paper work]." The festival included with a stall displaying the tribe's beautiful and finely detailed paper decorations.

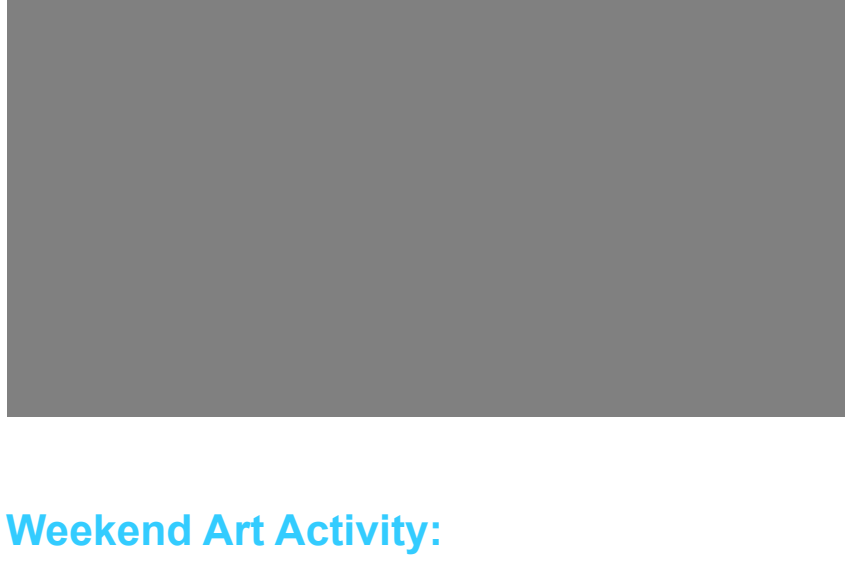
Drumming Circle Every Wednesday:

Every Wednesday we host a Tamil Folk Drumming Circle at the Mohanam Youth Space. The youth bring out various drums and folk instruments, and Aurovilians and guests are always invited to come and join. We light a bonfire in the center of the space, and drum and dance into the night.



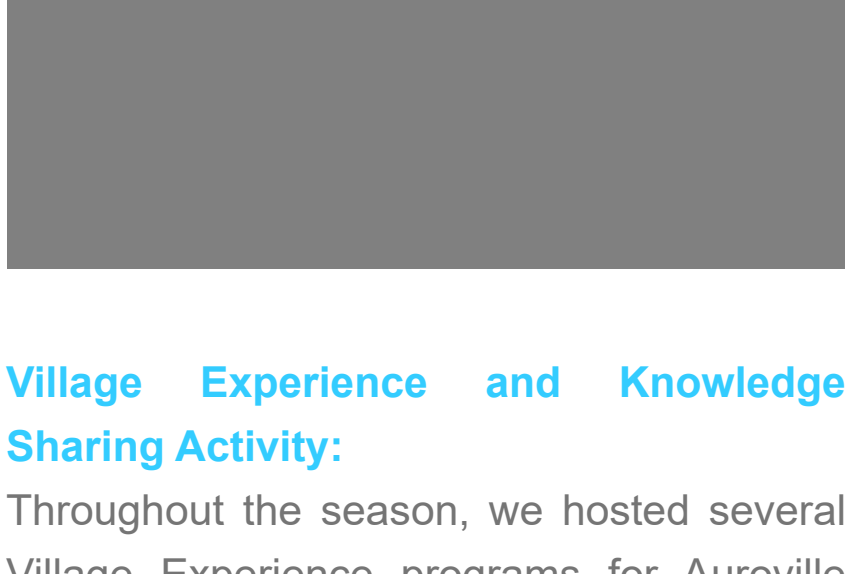
Outreach school art activity:

Every Wednesday and Friday, several Mohanam youth travel to the government schools in Vannur Taluk to share Tamil art and culture. These are youth who grew up participating in Mohanam's cultural heritage preservation projects, and now they are sharing what they learned with youth from the bioregion. They teach folk music and folk dancing, and there has been a great response among the school children.



Weekend Art Activity:

Every Saturday and Sunday, we host some kind of art activity at the Mohanam Cultural Heritage Centre. Youth from Alankuppam, Sanjeevinagar, Kottakarai, Annainagar and Nesal have come to learn music, classical dance, kolattam, Thappattam, Kuchiattam and Oliattam. They gain insight into the ancient Tamil traditions and art forms, and they are empowered by experiences of the richness and depth of their heritage.



Village Experience and Knowledge Sharing Activity:

Throughout the season, we hosted several Village Experience programs for Auroville guests and schools children. We brought guest into the villages to experience the traditional Tamil way of life, including Kolams, Music and Dance, and they ate traditional Tamil meals served on banana leaves. Guest were especially impressed with the natural hospitality and welcoming that they received from their Tamil hosts, and the beauty of Tamil culture is something that they will remember long into the future.



AVI team visiting:

On 26th February members of Auroville International USA visited the Mohanam Cultural Heritage Centre to see the progress of our new campus buildings and experience Tamil culture. They enjoyed performances of drumming, stick dance and classical dance by our youth, and then had a hearty Tamil meal. The Mohanam youth were excited for the chance to share the dances that they had been learning, and the performances were very well received.



AUP Students case study in Mohanam:

Mohanam hosted three AUP (American university of paris) student interns - Simon, Maaliya, and Mariya. Simon and Mariya first they understand Mohanam activity, And they conducted brainstorming workshop with our team and created guideline of communication and promotion. They make it Mohanam Hand book to presented in the community and Maaliya trained our kids in the field of dance, our Mohanam kids learned new steps and dance. And also we arranged Maaliya dance class for Nesal school, the children very much interested to learned the dance. Around 45 children participated the dance classes.



Women's group Meeting:

On 10th January Mohanam hosted the Alankuppam revenue village women's group. The women meet to share information and gain skills in small-scale business development. Mohanam provides the woman technical support, training, and skill development. The participation women's group - Cosmetic items production (Jayanthi group), Nursery and Tank beautification (Manonmani group, Organic oil extract unit (Devanai group and Traditional food restaurant (Athilakshmi group).

Annainagar village kolam competition:

As part of our effort to preserve ancient Tamil cultural practices and crafts, on 10.01.2018, Mohanam hosted a village-wide kolam competition in Annainagar. 108 women participated, drawing beautiful kolams in front of their homes, and the village sparked with creativity. As promised, we distributed prizes (Medals and Kitchens Vessels) to the top three artists (Tamilselvi, Radha & Sankari) during The Annual Day celebrations.

Kolam Educational Workshop on Thursday 11th of January 2018:

From 11th to 13th January, we also hosted our annual 3 Day Kolam Workshop at Mohanam Village Heritage Centre. Aurovilians and guests from 32 different countries attended, and several women from the local villages also participated. Meenakshi spoke briefly about the history of kolams, including the spirituality and science connected to them. And we created a big collaborative kolam with input from all participants.

Walk of Hope:

On 28th and 29th January, the Walk of Hope passed through Auroville and the surrounding villages. The guru Sri M. organized the walk, which began at the Irumbai Siva Temple, to promote global peace and harmony. Our Mohanam youth participated in the walk itself, and also accompanied the inauguration with sweet melodic music.

Government team and Ile-et-vilane team site visit:

On 15th Feb the Puducherry Director of Tourism, and the team of Executive Engineers from the Public Works Department came to visit Mohanam Cultural Heritage Centre. They came to see the progress we've made so far in the construction of buildings for our new campus, which has been partially funded by the Government of Puducherry. The visitors were impressed, and the Director of Tourism provided a utilization certificate for the next stage of funding for the project. We anticipate that construction will be complete by the end of June, and the new campus will be ready for use when the school year begins in July.

Outreach school art activity:

On March 19th, the Nesal School celebrated their Annual Day, and the school head master honored the Mohanam team by bringing them on to the stage and wrapping a scarf around the neck of each one: Mr. Anand, Matthew, Anbarasi, Mushanth and Prasanth. Our youth had been visiting the school regularly for the 2 months prior to the event to teach folk dance, classical dance, music, kuchiattam and kolattam, and the Annual Day celebration featured performances in all these styles. Along with the other performances that featured hip hop and Bollywood-style music and dance, attendees enjoyed traditional Tamil arrangements and experienced the roots of Tamil culture.

LG of Puducherry Government Dr.Kiran Bedi Visited Alankuppam Lake on 5th march'18:

For the last four years, we have been working to clean up and develop the area around Alankuppam lake. We have conducted awareness activities, planted native trees, and hosted a Dreaming Camp in which local women and children shared their dreams for a beautiful lake that they could enjoy. On 5th March, we were honored that Dr. KiranBedi, Governor of Puducherry, accepted our invitation to come and see the lake and meet the locals. We shared with her our vision for a clean lake with walking paths, community gardens, and native trees, and she gave orders to local and state officials to collaborate with us to move things forward. The Governor also visited Mohanam Cultural Heritage Centre and encouraged us to keep up the great work.

LG of Puducherry Government Dr.Kiran Bedi Visited Alankuppam Lake on 5th march'18:

We are grateful and extend a heartfelt THANK YOU to Dr. Kiran Bedi, the Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry, and all the other government officials who have responded swiftly to our call and created a core group to facilitate the much needed changes. We are inspired by your decisive leadership and caring attention to the needs of our community.

