

Oru Paanai

Feeding the Hungry in Sri Lanka



Oru Paanai Newsletter

Issue 7

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From

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Pharmacist

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A NEW ERA DAWNS

In the past eight months, much has changed in the activities undertaken by Oru Paanai (OP) in northeast Sri Lanka. Many of these changes were forced upon us by events, and it is our duty to share with you the circumstances under which OP has started travelling in a new direction, while continuing to be focussed on alleviating poverty and hunger in the region which was the primary purpose for which Oru Paanai was launched in 2008.

The main development which impacted on our activities was the decision of the World Food Programme (WFP), which had hitherto given the bulk of the funds needed to provide a midday meal to all school-going children in the most poverty stricken areas in the north, to end its involvement in December 2017, at very short notice. Their action was in keeping with their standard practice of helping the most needy in crisis-hit countries in the world where the WFP moves in to provide succour at their hour of greatest need, and continues to provide assistance until they judge that their assistance was no longer required.

In December 2017, the WFP felt that considerable progress had been

made in the economic development of the north and decided to withdraw their services after some 10 years of providing invaluable and much appreciated help.

The news of the withdrawal of the WFP came as an unwelcome surprise to the heads of the schools they had been supporting, who felt that they had been left in the lurch. It was at this stage that the Department of Education (DoE) of the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL), which for the past 10 years, along with Oru Paanai, had been subsidising the contribution made by the WFP, stepped in to take over the provision of midday meals to all primary schools in the north. The programme that the GoSL is implementing from early 2018 involves allocating a sum of SLR 35 per child per day to all primary school children. The feedback that OP has received so far is that the money allocated is more than enough to provide a nutritious and tasty meal to all the children in Grades 1- 6.

The menu drawn up by the DoE has considerable variety, and the children are very happy with what they are being given. So, what will OP's role be in the future? This was the question that the OP Trustees considered at great length before charting a new course. Our main

objective in launching OP in 2008 had been to support the WFP and the DoE in providing mid-day meals to the most needy children.

The takeover of the provision of meals by the DoE meant that there was no role for OP in this aspect and marked the end of that particular phase of our programme. It had always been our intention to end our programme when the WFP withdrew their support, based on their assessment of the improving situation on the ground. OP has therefore ended its role in the provision of midday meals with a sense of mission accomplished and a great sense of satisfaction that we have been able to help when help was most needed.

OP, in the course of the past 10 years, has been one of the recognised charities helping to rebuild the north and east. We have earned a reputation of being proficient at fund raising, and operating with minimal overheads, thus ensuring that all the monies raised are spent on helping the most needy.

We wish to build on our proven track record and continue to serve them with the same sense of dedication and commitment. The unmet need for help in the northeast is still considerable. The devastation wrought on the region by the 30 year war will take many more years to remedy.

OP has identified two areas where we could render help:



- **The provision of Sathu Ma (a cereal based nutritional supplement)** in selected areas of the north where childhood malnutrition is still a major problem. Continuing this activity will mean that OP will still be involved in feeding hungry children.
- **OP has undertaken a new project to provide for the destitute elderly in the north**, by running Annathanam Centres, which provide a cooked meal on a fortnightly basis, and distribute dry rations sufficient to last a fortnight. This group of the destitute elderly is a neglected one, who receive little government assistance. Oru Paanai holds Annathanam events in six centres, which are very successful and are greatly appreciated (*see separate report*).

OP will continue to support their other objectives:

- support the remedial classes in maths and science in the east, in conjunction with OP Batticaloa.
- help the Nuffield School for the Deaf and Blind in Kaithady, by providing hearing aids and conducting camps on a regular basis to identify the causes of hearing loss in children and fitting hearing aids
- OP will continue the construction of wells, finances permitting, which are a dire necessity in a drought stricken region
- OP will support the conducting of English classes in partnership with other agencies to make the youth from the region employable outside the Tamil speaking regions.

Thus, there is a variety of ways in which OP plans to continue its mission of relieving hunger and assisting the northeast to recover and rebuild. We will work alongside the many charities who have the same goals, collaborating whenever possible.

None of this can be achieved without the ungrudging support extended to us by all of you, our erstwhile supporters and wellwishers. It is our fervent hope that you will continue to support

us even though our activities have become more diverse.

We all have the same common aim of eliminating poverty in the north and east, helping the two regions to be restored to a semblance of normality.

NEW INITIATIVES BY ORU PAANAI

The Annathanam / Dry rations Programme

Oru Paanai has launched a new programme in its ongoing quest to help in the rebuilding and rejuvenation of the war-affected areas. While a lot has been done by the government and numerous charities, there are several gaps, and it is one of these we are striving to fill.

We have recognised, in the course of visits we have made to the north and east, that there are a large number of very poor elderly people who struggle to eke out an existence, due to dire poverty and an inability to access help. Even though government schemes do exist to provide a monthly state pension for the elderly destitute, many of them fall through the gaps in the system, either due to ignorance or at times the whims and fancies of those running such schemes.

Having identified the existence of such sections of the community, OP

has decided to focus their future activities on providing fortnightly meals as well as dry rations on a fortnightly basis to the poorest people in identified areas. Whilst addressing the needs of the elderly, we have also included in our remit other individuals needing urgent help - like some disabled people, as well as some who are unable to work due to mental ill health.

The Annathanam Programme was initiated June 2018 in two Annathanam Centres in the Udayar Kattu and Puthukudiyiruppu, on a trial basis. Following the success of these schemes, the number of Centres was increased to six by September, the newer Centres being based in in Thunukkai, Thunaivi and Kottai Kadu – all these villages being in either Chankanai or the Mullaitivu District. These villages were chosen on the recommendations of a number of community based officials, like Social Services officers, Village Headmen, and Village Officers, and community volunteer organisations like Olirum Vaalvu and Mothers Unions. The selection of individuals to be supported was vetted by a group of Oru Paanai members and wellwishers including Anusha Devi, Rev. Anukoolan, Mrs. Lily Anukoolan, Ms.Soba and Dr. Dan Muthuveloe and his wife Dr. Leela Muthuveloe.



In each Annathanam Centre, cooked meals are served on a fortnightly basis. Between 30 and 50 people attend on these days. The meal served consisted of country rice, a variety of vegetables, lentils and soya. The meals are cooked by volunteers as well as the more capable elderly beneficiaries. All the recipients then mingled with each other and with the OP volunteers, enjoying the chats and the chance to interact with others, which many of them are deprived of. Occasional singing sessions take place in some Centres!

At the end of the meal, dry rations, like rice, rice flour, wheat flour, dhal, chickpeas, sugar, Ulundu and Milk Powder, are given to each of the beneficiaries. These purchases are made in Jaffna and transported to the Centres by the Oru Paanai team. These dry rations cost about Rs. 2,000 per person, and are distributed in reusable bags, with the date and OP logo printed on them. The distribution of the rations takes place under the direct supervision of OP volunteers and staff. The dry rations distributed will be enough to last a fortnight, before the next annathanam day.



The premises used for the purpose of providing the cooked meals and distributing the dry rations vary from village to village, and include Olirum Vaalvu offices, community halls and church halls. Records are kept of the Annathanam meals, the dry rations distributed and the helpers' details and countersigned by

the representatives of the local village-based organisations. The volunteers and the representatives of local village based organisations worked well together with great love and compassion towards the poor. Their support has been invaluable for OP in this new venture.

The following comments from Anusha Devi, the OP representative in Jaffna, are worthy of mention : *'all the elders greatly appreciated the meals served to them. We could observe a community spirit developing amongst them ... we were not sure of even one meal a day, but now we can be certain of at least one meal a day, the elders say with tears in their eyes. These centres have become places where people can meet and find peace and release from their mental burdens'*.

Dr. Thambirajah, Vice Chairman of Oru Paanai, accompanied by his wife Dilu, visited an Annathanam Centre in October 2018. In his report, he writes movingly of what they saw:

'The muthiyor (elderly) and the disabled people we met are very deserving people with hardly any sources of income and totally dependent on the provisions we give them – the volunteers who helped in cooking seemed to be enjoying what they were doing ... they all sang songs and told their stories ... I saw tears from many faces on hearing the stories from others ... this was an awakening for Dilu and

me that even after 10 years have passed since the war ended that people are living in such poverty'.

What next for the OP Annathanam Programme? Expanding the number of Annathanam Centres would be the next step, funds permitting. It is expensive to purchase food items in Jaffna and transport them to villages in need and we must explore the possibility of local sourcing.

All this requires more funding, for which we depend on you, our supporters. A few of our supporters who we have spoken to, are much enthused by the details of our new venture and expressed their willingness to support us. We hope that more of you will join us in this new and very worthwhile Annathanam programme.

We must end by thanking Dr. Dan Muthuveloe and his wife Leela, Anusha Devi, and her sister Soba, Rev. Navendranugoolan and his wife Lily, for identifying this need and helping us to get this programme going.



ஒரு பானை

மதிய உணவுடன், உலர் உணவு வழங்குதல்

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(ஔவையார்)

ORU PAANAI

Feeding the hungry



ஒரு பானை





A TRIBUTE TO AN ORU PAANAI STALWART

The Late Dr Nadarajah Rajakumaran



Dr Rajakumaran, a founder member and the Treasurer of Oru Paanai passed away suddenly on the 25th of February 2018. He had rendered yeoman service to Oru Paanai over a period of nine years, maintaining the OP accounts in immaculate detail as well as overseeing the production of detailed accounts that the Charity Commissioners required on an annual basis. In fact, he was busy putting the finishing touches to the accounts of an OP Fundraising event held on the 17th of February when he was taken away from us. He was also a generous contributor to Oru Paanai, much of his contributions being known only to a handful of the committee members. He will be sadly missed by his family, as well as the wider Oru Paanai family.

We publish below a personal tribute to Raj, written by his dear friend, Dr. R.Thillainadarajah, Consultant Anaesthetist, Jersey (Ed.)

A personal tribute to Dr Rajakumaran (known as Raj)

Where do I start when writing a tribute to my close friend Raj? I last saw him two weeks before, when he was involved in organising an Oru Paanai fundraising event, when he seemed to be in good spirits.

I first met Raj when we both joined Aquinas College to do our A Levels. Our wavelengths were similar, so we became good friends. We both did well in exams and entered Colombo Medical College. Having studied in Jaffna, Colombo was a very different place for both of us. It was far from home, so we became even closer friends and were able to discuss our common focus in our new life.

We stayed in the same accommodation with six other friends. This was a large house and for the first time in our lives, we had to organise the day to day business of running a house, cooking, cleaning and paying our bills and this was where Raj's organising and management skills really helped us all.

Raj was very studious and disciplined. He always organised our combined studies and this helped us all hugely. We were all young and at times studies were not our the main priority. It was Raj who got us

refocused, making sure we all worked together and passed our exams. He had a type of personality that made him keep in touch with friends and bring them together. Even last year, following our batch get together in Colombo, he contacted all the old friends from that group and organised an evening meal in a Colombo restaurant. I was able to meet a few with whom I had lost touch over the years, but Raj being Raj, had kept in contact with all of them and brought us all together to meet.

Raj was very helpful to everybody and had a calm and gentle personality. I never saw him become angry or lose his temper at any stage over the years. Our first job as interns took us to work at Badulla Hospital and he was my co-worker. He really worked hard and was very popular amongst all the staff. He was a dedicated doctor and loved his job. His work ethic had not changed over the years and all his patients and colleagues had a lot of respect for him.

He married Kantha and was blessed with a beautiful girl Indu. He first moved to Nigeria from Sri Lanka, and then came to the UK, where he passed the MRCP without any difficulty and worked as a gynaecologist before later becoming a GP.

After retirement, he moved house to be closer to his daughter and family, so that he could spend more time with his grand daughters, who were born after his daughter married Tom. He was very much a family man at heart. He was very charitable, and being the treasurer of Oru Paanai, he organised several fundraising events. He used to chip in with his own money whenever there was a shortfall. He will be sadly missed and his passing is a big loss for both the charity as well as his friends and family.

The Brave and Dedicated Fundraisers for Oru Paanai



TRANS AMERICA CYCLE RIDE July - Sept 2018

Prof. Swaminathan, the chairman of Oru Paanai, has been the fundraiser nonpareil for our charity in the past nine years, cycling from east to west and north to south in the UK, in addition to climbing Mt Kilimanjaro, and staging musical and dance concerts. He has been a rock as far as Oru Paanai is concerned.

Earlier in 2018, he undertook a bicycle ride across the USA to raise funds for OP, which was probably the most strenuous of all the fundraising efforts he has

made. He started on the 21st of July from the Pacific coast - Florence in Oregon. After the traditional dip of the back wheel in the Pacific Ocean, he cycled across 11 states, namely Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri Illinois, Kentucky, West Virginia and Virginia - finishing at Yorktown in Virginia by dipping the front wheel in the Atlantic Ocean.



support for all the riders along the route was amazing, and the route went past our homes so we could stop briefly to say good morning to our families! We were tired at the end but had a real sense of achievement”.

Sam and Tony successfully completed the ride and raised over £1600 for Oru Paanai.



VELO BIRMINGHAM CYCLE RIDE August 2017

Sam Muthuveloe and **Tony Dean** joined over 15,000 participants from all over the UK in taking part in the Velo Birmingham cycle ride. The ride was a 100 mile route which took cyclists through Birmingham, Worcestershire, Staffordshire and Sandwell and Dudley. There was a mixture of spectacular countryside, historic towns and villages and the urban and industrial areas of the Black Country.

Tony said: “This was the first time that Sam and I have ridden 100 miles in a day. We trained for it and we were lucky with beautiful weather. The



LANDS END TO JOHN O'GROATS by Bike

I am Paul Dean, Manjula Muthuveloe's father in law. I wanted to raise some funds for Oru Paanai by cycling a long way. I started at Lands End in a group of 15 riders supported by Global Adventure Challenge at the end of August and 12 days later arrived at John O'Groats. We saw some wonderful scenery and I admired all my fellow cyclists - but it was not an easy ride. We covered 85 miles a day in all weathers, and yes, it does rain in Scotland. The total trip was 1000 hilly miles and our total climb was 58000 feet, or two Mount Everests. I was the oldest rider and I have a heart condition. I was the slowest rider but still averaged 13mph and burnt 75000 calories.



I feel a sense of achievement for completing the ride, but also for raising funds for such a worthwhile charity. We raised, including online giving, gift aid and cash donations over £2000 of which at least £500 came from the Tamil community. Should you wish to add to this total the site justgiving.com/fundraising/Paul-Dean-LeJog is still open.

AN EVENING OF BHARATANATYAM 17th February 2018



Divya Kasturi, a multifaceted dance practitioner, did an excellent Bharatanatyam at the Winston Churchill hall on the 17th February this year. Preceding the dance we had short performances from young artistes. First was a vocal recital from students of Vamsi Krishnan, followed by a dance performance by Divya Kasturi's students.

The main event of the evening was the dance by Divya who did two hours of enthralling dance on the theme "Nesam" (Love). She was accompanied by Shri Vam-shikrishna Vishnudas (vocal), Shri Prathap Ramachandra (Miridangam), Shri Sithamparanathan Jalatharan(violin), Shri Praveen Prathapan (flute) and Shri Shane Shambu (Natuvangam). In her performance Divya depicted different dimensions of 'Nesam' (love): Divine devotion, Love, Motherly affection, patriotic spirit and Universal peace. She used a variety of compositions to illustrate her theme.

The hall was fully packed and the audience was enthralled by the performance and several remarked that this was one of the best performances they have seen in a long time.

The occasion was honoured by the presence of the Chief Guest, Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran and Guest of Honour, Prof. Raji Rajarayan OBE. The total donation from this dance programme was about £12,000, which included several large donations.

Oru Paanai Lunch Event 2018





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Oru Paanai Fundraising Events 2017 – 2018

OP Annual Charity Dance

OP staged a lunchtime event on 23rd July 2017, which was in the usual format of a meal, entertainment and dancing to a live band, instead of a dinner dance. We hoped that more young parents with little children would be able to come along.

So it proved, as more than 25 young couples and their children participated this year. Sky High, a popular Sri Lankan band, provided the music for dancing. Divya Kasturi's pupils provided the main entertainment, supported by a cameo from Suresh Swaminathan and his daughter Sashvita, and the mellifluous music from the celebrated flautist Janahan Srisantharajah.

The event was a grand success, with over 350 attendees, who were full of praise for the organisers for laying on such a grand show at The VIP Lounge in Edgware. A sizeable sum of £9,000 was raised for OP on the day. The OP committee have decided to stick to a lunch time event in 2018 as well, which will also hopefully be a great success.

Colombo Tamil Union hosts OP Event

The P.Saravanamuttu Stadium (Oval) was the venue for a fundraising event organised by Tissa Jayatilaka, the current chairman of OP SL branch. It was very well attended with over 70 guests enjoying a sumptuous meal, where different food stations served up tasty SriLankan food like dosas, hoppers and other delicacies.

One of the highlights of the event was the table décor, which consisted of a colourful decorated paanai!

A contingent from the OP UK was also present, consisting of Dr & Mrs. Rajakumaran, Dr and Mrs Subanandan and Dr and Mrs Devendra.

Dr. Devendra did a powerpoint presentation on Oru Paanai's aims and objectives. A sum of SLR 700,000 was raised for OP at this event. Tissa and Naresh Jeyalingam, the Secretary of Tamil Union are to be congratulated for their wonderful work in making this event a success.

Visit www.orupaandai.org.uk

for the latest news, event information and details on how to make donations

Activities undertaken by Oru Paanai 2017 – 2018

Oru Paanai Kaithady

The major activity undertaken by OP Kaithady in this period was a visit to the Nuffield School by a UK based team consisting of a Consultant Audiology Physician, a Consultant Paediatrician, an ENT Specialist, a General Physician and an Audiologist.

This team conducted a camp in Kaithady, and their activities included a complete assessment of children, followed by fitting of Digitally Programmed Hearing aids. Children with waxy ears were treated by instillation of drops followed by syringing. The team also visited the Jaffna Teaching Hospital where they donated machines to detect hearing loss in newborn babies. The ENT surgeon from Kilinochchi Hospital met the team, who donated an Automated Brain Stem Response audiometer (worth over £ 20,000) to be used in his hospital and also an echo machine, both to be used in detecting hearing loss in newborns.

In the past year, an Audiometer and an Ear Moulds making machine has been donated. Further funding for making moulds in the Nuffield School was sent in June 2018 (£1,630) which was donated by a well-wisher.

Oru Paanai Kaithady has also extended their services to Homes in Puthukudiyiruppu and Mannar. The Audiologist has trained 3 teachers of the Nuffield School to carry out hearing tests and the IT teacher was also trained to program the hearing aids. Fifty hearing aids were sent to the Nuffield School to cater for children who had joined the School recently.

OP Kaithady intends launching an appeal in the near future to raise funds for building the Padman Ratnesar Audiology Centre, in the memory of the well-known ENT surgeon from the UK who has been associated with many charitable projects related to hearing problems. Plans for building the Centre are being formulated at present.



Oru Paanai Education

In 2018, Oru Paanai has donated £10,000 towards conducting remedial classes in Maths and Science in 3 schools in the Batticaloa area – Vantharamoolai Vishnu Maha Vidyalayam, Chenkaladi Central College and Kannankudah Maha Vidyalayam. These classes were conducted under the auspices of the Department of Education, and supported by OP.

The Zonal Director of Education (Batticaloa West), Mrs. A. Canagasooriyam undertook the responsibility of the distribution of these funds to the schools and OP learns that the programme was a success.

OP Wells Programme

In 2018, OP, along with Well Being Trust, constructed eight conventional dug out wells in Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi Districts.

Ten tube wells were also done in Chankanai Division in the Jaffna District for very poor refugees who were recently resettled in the area.

The total cost of the wells was £10,000. Oru Paanai Trust and Well Being Trust contributed £5,000 each to complete the task.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

OP and Safe Guarding

OP was contacted earlier this year by the Charity Commissioners who inquired about our safeguarding policies. It appears that even charities registered in the UK, who work with children in other countries, are expected to adhere to the rigorous standards now expected in the UK. As many of our members who work with children in the Kaithady camps are NHS staff, they already have undergone mandatory training in Safeguarding. We have also been assured by the authorities in Sri Lanka that their staff in institutions we work with there have now been trained in Safeguarding policies and adhere to them.

OP and Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 2018 which came into force in May this year applies to all organisations, including Oru Paanai. We maintain a database of our regular donors, including their names, addresses and some email addresses. OP never discloses this data to any other agency and our donors can rest assured that we will endeavour rigorously to protect this information from being accessed by any individuals or organisations. However, if any donor wishes to have their details deleted from our database, please contact us and we will carry out their wishes.

Oru Paanai

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We are deeply indebted to...

- Our regular donors whose sustained support is the main source of funding for Oru Paanai, which enables us to continue our efforts.
- The occasional donors whose generosity supplements our regular income. This year, we have received varying donations - from £500 each from a number of donors, many of whom are either friends or family members; £1000 from a family who at their mother's funeral requested that donations be made to OP instead of flowers; a donation from a family on their mother's first death anniversary in October which paid for an annathanam at one of our centres, and a very large donation of £5,000 from an anonymous donor at Divya Kasturi's dance recital. Such largesse makes our task a lot easier.
- Prof. Swaminathan, who has single-handedly raised the most amount of money for Oru Paanai, by his varied fund raising activities. We cannot find the words to thank him adequately for all that he has done for OP.
- The Canberra group headed by Chelva Kumaranayagam who continue to send us annual donations.
- Dr. Anton Sebastian, a regular contributor of both excellent articles as well as advertisements for all Oru Paanai souvenirs.
- Anusha Devi Muralidharan, who ran the Feeding Programme for 9 years in Sri Lanka, and now has taken over the lead role for our new venture, the Annathanam Programme, which has got off to a great start. She has been ably assisted by Rev. Navendranugoolan and his wife, Lily, in running the new programme.
- The Oru Paanai committee who continue to work hard to make their efforts at rebuilding our homeland a success.

Dr. S. V. Devendra and

Dr. Mike Iswaran,

Joint Editors, Oru Paanai Newsletter



The New Oru Paanai Committee *To Make Things Happen...*

At a meeting of the OP Trustees held on the 12th of May, a new committee was elected.

The previous committee, chaired ably by Dr. Nandhabalan, had done a sterling job of steering Oru Paanai from strength to strength for nearly ten years. We are hopeful that the new committee will continue the good work done by their predecessors with the same sense of dedication and commitment.

Chairman: Prof. R. Swaminathan

Vice Chairman: Dr.R. Thambirajah

Joint Secretaries:

Dr. D.W.Muthuveloe, Dr.S.V.Devendra

Treasurer: Dr. S.Kathirgamanathan

Trustees:

Dr. K.Nandhabalan

Dr. D.W. Muthuveloe

Dr. R.Thambirajah

Dr. A.J.Thambapillai

Dr. N.Sriskantharajah

Prof. R.Swaminathan

Dr. Mrs. Leela Muthuveloe

Mrs. Shyamala Devendra

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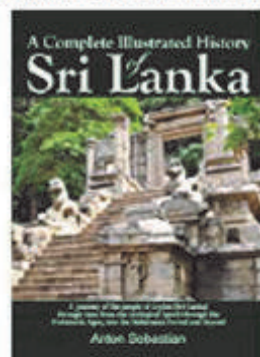


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