



# Herald Hindustan

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Dear All,

The life of a foreigner cannot be more exciting than visiting the small towns and villages of India. Foreigners often find themselves in the throng, surrounded by inquisitive Indians, but they do not mean to make you panic; it is simply that you are being admired. People in India like visitors and they are harmlessly curious. You might be asked several questions that might be an utter invasion of privacy to a Westerners mind; are you married? How old are you? How much do you receive as a salary? Why are you not married, and what do your parents do for living - all these questions get thrown at you in a strange phrase and accent very typical to rural India, another remnant of the British Raj's past in India. But all these invasive questions mean no harm and in a collective society, your reputation and your collective identity matters more than your specific identity. We like to eat together, travel together, work together, and private space is an alien concept here. This collective force has broken several invasive obstacles and this will remain always. This does not mean that you have to answer every question being shot at you - flash an evasive smile and you can digress. Conversely, try asking them questions and you will be surprised how honestly you get a reply, for most of the matters that others might cringe at. Volunteers who travel to another land would need to learn and assimilate as much as possible and to be able to learn you have to alter your prejudices and the arbitrary choice on how much you would want to alter is all yours. But, to live in another land we might have to if you want the best experiences.

*Jagadish Kumar*  
*Country Director - India*  
*Projects Abroad*



**"Pongalo Pongal!"**

By Loretta Dean

On a sunny Saturday morning, fitting for a celebration that takes time to pray to the sun god, volunteers joined staff and students at The Trinity School for a day of Pongal festivities. The school yard was a spectrum of colour as rich hued saris mingled amongst embroidered dhotis under a canopy of vibrant stripes.

A crackle from the tannoy indicated the start of the Pongal activities as music began, accompanying the fluid movements of women who traced intricate Rangoli patterns onto the sun-baked ground. We watched on in wonder as events proceeded. A cow and her calf were lead onto the field, tethered and ready to witness the pot of Pongal boil over; a sure sign of prosperity for the year ahead. Anticipation built amongst the crowd gathered around the bubbling Pongal that filled the decorated clay pots and volunteers were encouraged to participate, fuelling the fire with dried banana leaves. Laughter erupted. The school horse had taken flight, bolting across the field as though he too could no longer control his excitement.

"Pongalo Pongal!"

A symbol of a bountiful harvest, the overflowing pots brought sprits alive as everyone exchanged Pongal wishes. Good luck, good fortune and good cheer was passed around along with the delicious Pongal, distributed on banana leaves. A sweet concoction of rice, lentils, milk, sugar, cardamom, raisins and cashew nuts; the dish was reminiscent of rice pudding, enjoyed by all.



The games began as the volunteers joined staff and students in a Rangoli design competition, a competitive game of musical chairs, and a traditional Pongal contest similar to a Mexican piñata. A clay pot was filled with coins and suspended in the centre of the playground. Volunteers, students and staff members each took turns to try break open the pot with a long wooden stick. This proved difficult. Much to the amusement of the crowd, the majority of the blindfolded contestants marched away from the pot with assurance, narrowly missing members of staff with the stick they held.



The welcome we received was second to none and all of the volunteers were grateful for the opportunity to celebrate Pongal alongside those from the Trinity School. We had a fantastic, fun-filled day which truly captured the fascinating culture, hospitable nature and energetic, friendly characters of those whom which we shared it with. All in all, it was an unforgettable celebration which left the words “Pongolo Pongal” on everyone’s lips.





**University of Toronto graduate Julian D'Cruz learns to see a different side of veterinary practice in India**

By Vigneshwaran  
Information manager

Julian D'Cruz, a 24-year-old neuroscience graduate came to India for three months through Projects Abroad to volunteer at the Veterinary Medicine Project in Tirunelveli, and then later in Madurai. He decided to come to India to experience a different side of veterinary practice than what he was used to in Canada.

In Tirunelveli, Julian worked with the local veterinary doctor where he helped with his daily tasks. Julian shadowed the veterinary doctor during his morning rounds starting at 6am, followed by visiting three different clinics during the course of the day. In Madurai, he rotated to several pet clinics including a clinic in Thiruparangundram; which is the largest veterinary clinic in Madurai city.

Julian's daily tasks included monitoring the animals that come to the clinic, helping with general examinations, checking whether the animals have any injuries and sometimes he could also help with less complicated surgeries. Below the veterinary doctor, Julian was the only other person in S.S. Pet Clinic in Madurai, thus his level of responsibility was fairly high considering he was dealing with live animals. Some of Julian's other responsibilities included having to talk with pet owners if the animal had a difficult temperament and having to keep the animals safe and not letting them injure themselves during procedures and vaccine administrations.



Julian says this volunteering experience has helped him to grow as a person spiritually, physically and mentally. "I have learnt that I really want to go into the field of veterinary medicine. I have gained in-depth knowledge about the practice before going to veterinary school; for example I have learnt how to identify different types of skin diseases and symptoms for many ailments. And all thanks to my placement with Projects Abroad."

"What I gained from this placement will definitely be a boosting point in my application for veterinary school which I am going to apply for next year. This will go at the top of my list of veterinary work related experiences. Hopefully, It will make a good impression on the admissions committee in getting me into the college," says Julian.

We hope this inspiring story encourages others to help Projects Abroad continue to make a difference, and by doing so, learn something themselves along the way.



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