



ALABAMA TAMIL SANGAM (ATS)

பர்மிங்காம் பக்கங்கள்



Q1 2025 NEWSLETTER

ATS President Address



Vanakkam!

As we conclude the first quarter of 2025, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible start to the year and share some exciting updates about what's ahead for our Alabama Tamil Sangam (ATS) family.

Q1 Highlights – A Powerful Start

We kicked off the year with a series of vibrant and meaningful events that brought our community together and celebrated the best of Tamil culture:

- Thai Pongal Celebration: A festive start to the year filled with tradition, joy, and togetherness.
- Pattimandram with Dr. Gnanasambandan: A packed house enjoyed the wit and wisdom of one of Tamil Nadu's most beloved speakers in a truly memorable evening.
- Community Outreach at Grace Klein Food Bank: Our members came together to serve the greater community with compassion and unity.
- Nets & Spikes Indoor Sports Tournament: A thrilling showcase of athleticism, teamwork, and sportsmanship that energized our youth and adults alike.

Each of these events is designed to engage, inspire, and bring us closer as a community while continuing to highlight the strengths of our younger generation.

Ongoing Initiatives – Building for the Future

We're also excited to launch the ATS Cookbook Project—an initiative to collect and preserve simple, meaningful recipes from our members. The goal is to create a printed cookbook that can be passed down to our children as a cultural keepsake, capturing the flavors and stories that make each family unique. This is open to all to participate.

In Closing

2025 is already shaping up to be a remarkable year. Thank you for your participation, your spirit of volunteerism, and your commitment to celebrating and preserving our Tamil heritage. ATS thrives because of each one of you.

Let's continue this journey together—with pride, purpose, and unity.



Please send your articles for the next newsletter by June 15th, 2025. Email your articles to atscommunication@alabamatamilsangam.org. The articles can cover topics such as hobbies, arts, stories, achievements, cooking, gardening tips & pictures, health & wellness.

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 2025

ATS Camping Trip

August 2025

ATA Annual Day & AARAM Talent Showcase

August 29th - 31st 2025

Cricfest 2025

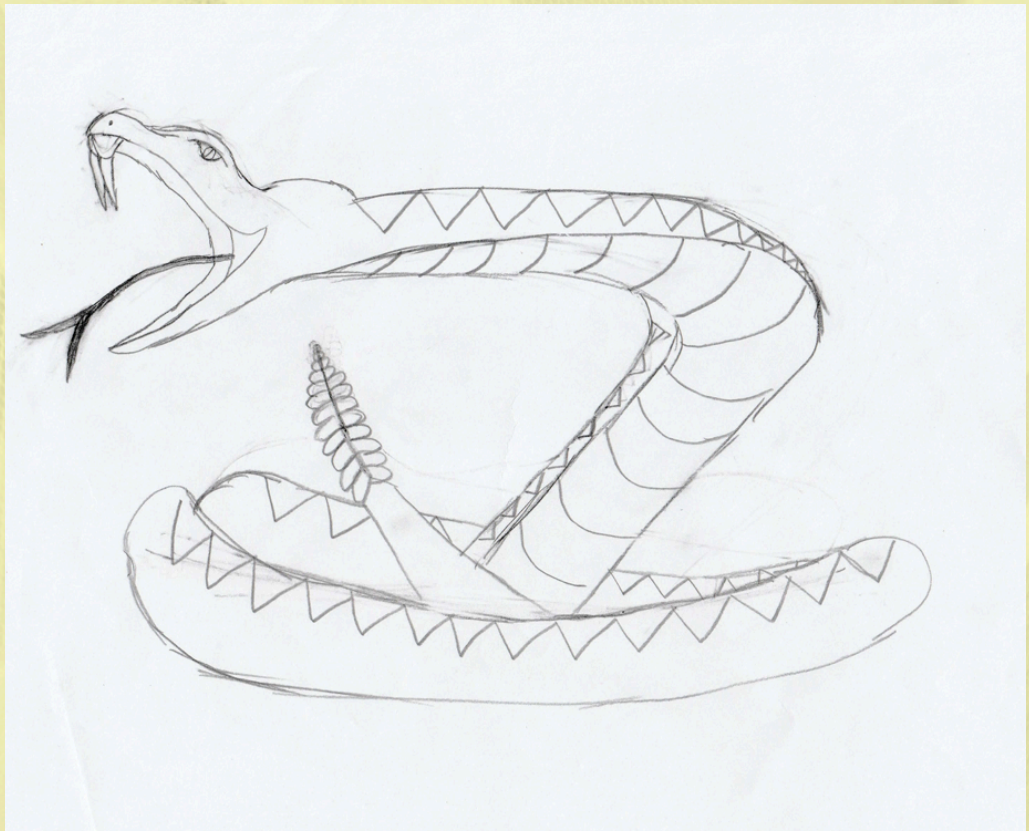
Our signature cricket tournament over Labor Day weekend. - get your teams ready.

Youth Corner

ART BY SHARON BASKAR



ART BY HARISH RAMAKRISHNAN



Youth Corner

ART BY HARISH RAMAKRISHNAN



Member Article

இனிய இரமலான்



**Dr. Namakkal S.
Rajasekaran**

இனிய
இரமலான் வாழ்த்துகள்....

அமாவாசையும் அப்துல்காதரும்
வேறு வேறு என்று
யார் சொன்னது?

அப்துல்காதர்
அமாவாசைக்காகக் காத்துக்கொண்டிருக்க
அடுத்து வரும் பிறை கண்டு...
அகிலம் கொண்டாடும்
இரமலானும் உண்டு!

அண்ணாமலையும்
ஆவலோடு காத்துக் கொண்டிருக்கிருக்க
அக்பரின் "ஆட்டு பிரியாணி"
அறுசுவையோடு உண்டு...

அன்பு பகிர்ந்து
நட்பு வளர்த்து
நல்லிணக்கம் கண்டிடவே
நலமாய் நாளு(மு)ம் வாழ்ந்திடவே!

அன்புடன்
முனைவர். நாமக்கல்
இராசசேகரன்

Member Spotlight



Tell us about yourself:

I am Nithya Mariappan, a Ph.D. graduate from the University of Madras, Chennai. Currently, I serve as a Clinical Scientist at Proteus Genomics Laboratory in Birmingham, Alabama, where I specialize in pharmacogenetic testing and clinical research aimed at improving patient care. I am happily married to Selvam Raja, a lead consultant at Infosys, and blessed with a daughter, Anju. She is currently pursuing her undergraduate degree in Computer Engineering at Auburn University and is also a talented singer and accomplished classical dancer.

Tell us about your journey to the USA:

I owe everything I am today to my Appa and Amma—their love, sacrifices, and unwavering belief in me have shaped my path. My sisters and all my family members have been my strongest support, helping me overcome every challenge. They are my greatest blessing, and I am forever grateful to them.

Nithya Mariappan

My journey from India to the United States began with a deep passion for research. After earning my Ph.D. from the University of Madras, Chennai, I moved to the U.S. in 2005 to pursue Cardiovascular studies at Louisiana State University (LSU). In 2015, I joined the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), where I contributed advancements in cardio-pulmonary research. Currently, I am transitioning into the role of Clinical Scientist at Proteus Genomics, a clinical reference laboratory in Birmingham, Alabama, specializing in clinical diagnostic research. I am actively engaged in various clinical research initiatives focused on enhancing patient care. These efforts aim to improve early diagnosis, personalized treatment, and overall patient outcomes.

Beyond my scientific career, I have also ventured into entrepreneurship by starting a small food catering business, called **"Ambur to Alabama."** Balancing my role as a researcher and business owner has been both challenging and rewarding, allowing me to pursue my passion for food while continuing my contributions to science. As a woman in both research and business, I take pride in navigating these dual roles, managing my time effectively, and maintaining a commitment to excellence in multiple fields. Looking ahead, I remain dedicated to advancing clinical research while expanding my entrepreneurial endeavors, with the goal of making a meaningful impact in both healthcare and the culinary world.

Tell us about your challenges and how you overcame them?

One of the toughest challenges I faced was leaving my family when I moved to the U.S. Being away from my parents and loved ones was incredibly difficult. However, knowing my sister would take care of everything in my absence gave me the strength to move forward. Staying connected with my family and relying on their ongoing support helped me overcome this challenge.



Member Spotlight Continued

Moving from India to the USA as a researcher and a married woman with a family came with many challenges, especially in understanding the American academic system. One of the biggest hurdles was maintaining a work-life balance. Managing research, family responsibilities, and household tasks initially felt overwhelming. Struggling with time management led to stress, but I overcome this by creating a structured routine and sharing responsibilities with my spouse.

Adapting to a new culture also required adjusting to different social norms and daily habits. To ease this transition, I participated in cultural exchange programs and built a strong support network of friends and colleagues, which helped me feel more at home.

Raising a child while blending Indian and American cultures came with its own set of challenges. At home, we celebrate Indian festivals, speak Tamil to keep a strong connection with grandparents, and cook traditional meals. At the same time, I encourage my child to embrace American traditions like celebrating Thanksgiving and participating in school activities. This balance allows my child to appreciate both cultures and adapt comfortably to life in the USA. Teaching her Tamil, our culture, classical dance, and Carnatic music was not easy, but we remained dedicated to keeping her connected to our roots.

Tell us about your hobbies and interests outside your family and work?

Outside of family and work, I have several hobbies that keep me active and contribute to my personal growth. One of my main passions is cooking, which inspired me to start **Ambur to Alabama**, a business focused on offering high-quality, home-style meals made with fresh, locally sourced ingredients. I enjoy experimenting with different cuisines and sharing my love for food.

I also take pleasure in gardening and practice yoga to maintain my physical and mental well-being. Additionally, I value sleeping and taking time to rest as part of my self-care routine. These hobbies keep me creative, balanced, and motivated, bringing fresh perspectives to both my work and personal life.

What do you value the most?

I believe in the importance of strong relationships, honesty, and the value of time. Life is more meaningful when shared with others, built on trust and kindness. Every day is an opportunity to learn, improve, and make a positive difference. Let's keep supporting each other, making memories, and creating an impact. Additionally, I enjoy reading, as it helps me unwind and expand my knowledge.



Member Spotlight Continued

What are the positives in Birmingham?

Birmingham is a great place to live for many reasons. The city is friendly and welcoming, with people from many different cultures. The weather is mild and comfortable all year round. It's easy to get around with good public transport, and there are lots of parks and green spaces to enjoy. Birmingham has great schools and universities for education. The community is supportive, and there are many events and festivals that bring people together.

For example, during the tough times of the COVID-19 pandemic, many, including my family, faced struggles and helplessness. But the community came together to help in every way, offering emotional support, providing essentials, and simply being there for each other. They didn't just act as neighbors; they became like family, offering comfort and care during our hardest time. This kind of unity and kindness is what makes Birmingham special, and I am truly grateful for it.

What is your message to ATS?

தமிழர் ஒன்றினால், தமிழருக்கு இல்லை இந்த உலகில் தடைகள்!

As a proud member of the Alabama Tamil Sangam, I honor the strength of our language, the beauty of our culture, and the unity that connects us all. Tamil is more than just a language—it is our identity, our pride, and our legacy. As the saying goes, "ஒன்றுபட்டால் உண்டு வாழ்வு," when we come together, success is inevitable. Let's pass on our heritage to the next generation.

It's important to teach our kids and young generation about Tamil culture and why it matters. We should be role models for them, showing through our actions how valuable our traditions and heritage are. By doing this, we can inspire them to carry forward our culture with pride.

Let's keep our traditions alive while growing, evolving, and thriving in our second home.

வாழ்க தமிழ்! வளர்க தமிழ்!

Dr. Nithya Mariappan, PhD
Clinical Scientist,
Proteus Genomics Laboratory
Birmingham, Alabama



Q1 Event Highlights

Pongal Highlights

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ATS THAI PONGAL CELEBRATION

The well-known harvest festival of Pongal, which is mostly celebrated in Tamil Nadu, India, has a special meaning. As a token of appreciation, the Sun God is served a unique dish called "Pongal," which is made from freshly harvested rice. Through vibrant decorations, music, and traditional dances, families come together to celebrate. It is a time for joy, family get-togethers, and cultural appreciation.

As a way to commemorate and uphold our tradition, Pongal celebration was planned by Alabama Tamil Sangam on January 18th 2024. Following the customary "Thamizh Thai Vaazhthu" and the American National Anthem being sung by young girls, the ATS Pongal ceremony began with the lighting of lamps. The day began with a beautiful bharathanatyam performance by Siri Chandrasekar. An enjoyable quiz known as "En Kelvikku Enna Bhathil" was conducted. We had to review our prior knowledge because a large portion of the quiz's questions dealt with Tamil poets and poetry.

Rahul Karthik, Krish Nathan, Shruthi Harichandran, Samuel Baskar Raj, and Adhithi Sree Kumaran were among the young people who received youth accomplishment awards in order to support them. The president and secretary of ATS discussed their thoughts on 2024 and their goals for 2025. ATS encouraged a few volunteers to be honoured as 2024 Heroes for their exceptional service to the Alabama Tamil Sangam. The live performance by Zhagaram Kalai Kuzhu in Parai was enthralling. All of the kids, both men and women, took part in the games and had a terrific time. A vote of thanks was given by our president. Following the singing of the Indian national Anthem, the event came to an end with delicious food.

PATTIMANDRAM WITH DR.GNANASAMBANDAN

The event was a remarkable celebration of Tamil language and culture, made possible by the steadfast support and spirited involvement of our community. Dr. Gnanasambandan's compelling arguments, sharp wit, and profound insights brought both inspiration and delight to all in attendance. The debate topic "நமது வாழ்க்கைக்கு சமூக ஊடகங்கள் படிக்கல்லா? தடைக்கல்லா?" was very engaging.

Click
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We extend our heartfelt gratitude to:

Pattimandram Highlights

- Dr. Annamalai Nadarajan and family, whose generous sponsorship was instrumental in making this memorable event a reality.
- The debate participants **Nithya Rengasamy, Kavitha Karthikeyan, Ravi Thirunavukarasu, Jegan Kandhasamy, Sangeetha Mohanraj, Valliyappan Swaminathan** for their thoughtful preparation and eloquent delivery, which greatly enriched the discussion and captivated the audience.
- Antony Selvan, for his outstanding leadership, dedication, and creativity in organizing the event and producing exceptional promotional content.
- Ravi of Silver Coin, for providing a delicious dinner that was enjoyed by all.
- Our attendees, whose enthusiastic participation and strong mid-week turnout were a true testament to your enduring passion for Tamil culture.

Q1 Event Highlights

ATS Community Outreach

ATS Community Outreach team organized an inspiring outreach experience for all of us on President's Day. We participated in Serve Day at Grace Klein Food Bank.

Volunteering at a food bank was a profoundly rewarding experience that left a lasting impact on ATS volunteers. The church was a hive of activity, with boxes stocked with various food items as ATS volunteers worked diligently to organize and distribute them.

One of our primary tasks was to assist in sorting and packaging food donations. This involved checking the quality of the items, ensuring they were safe for consumption, and categorizing them appropriately. We sorted the items and placed a few items from each category like bread, fruits, vegetables, milk and desserts to make several food boxes for donations. It was heartening to see the generosity of the community, as donations ranged from canned goods to fresh produce from several grocery stores like Publix, Whole Foods, Trader Joe's etc.

Another significant aspect of our volunteering experience was interacting with the pantry's clients. We helped distribute food packages to people in need that came to collect the food boxes.

ATS youth volunteers that participated also helped to cut felt to make stress balls in addition to helping make food boxes and distributing them. It was truly inspiring to see our young volunteers step up with energy and compassion, embodying the spirit of service and community. ATS provided free lunch for the ATS volunteers as well as the site leaders from Grace Klein. They enjoyed the delicious paneer biryani and chicken biryani provided by ATS. The gratitude the site leaders expressed for our work was incredibly moving, and it reinforced the importance of the work we were doing

Throughout our time at the food bank, we learned valuable lessons about empathy, community, and the power of collective action. It was a reminder that even small acts of kindness can make a significant difference in someone's life. Volunteering at the food bank was not just about providing food; it was about offering hope and support to those in need. It was an experience that we will cherish and carry with us always.



Q1 Event Highlights

NETS AND SPIKES TOURNAMENT 2025

A Thrilling Showdown of Volleyball Talent

The Nets and Spikes Sports Tournament 2025 was an unforgettable event, bringing together top volleyball teams in a day full of exciting matches, intense competition, and community spirit. Held on March 1, 2025, at the Bessemer Rec Center in Bessemer, Alabama, the tournament successfully brought together athletes and spectators for an action-packed day of volleyball.

Organized by the Alabama Tamil Sangam, the tournament featured 8 competitive teams, each eager to take home the championship. With the event now in the books, let's look back at the highlights and top moments from the tournament.

The Competition

The day was filled with high-intensity matches as teams competed in a round-robin format before advancing to the playoffs. Each match was filled with thrilling rallies, spectacular digs, and powerful spikes. The teams displayed exceptional teamwork and skill, making the tournament a true celebration of volleyball.

The top-performing teams in the league stage were:

1. Nashville SpiKings
- 2 Monarchs
3. Blasters



Tournament videos



Tournament videos

These teams all finished the round-robin phase with a near-perfect record, with only one loss separating the top three contenders. The strong performances from these teams ensured that the tournament's playoffs would be nothing short of exhilarating.

Playoffs and Finals

After a fierce round-robin phase, the teams moved on to the knockout stage, where the competition ramped up. The best-of-three set format in the playoffs allowed for dramatic turnarounds, and the intensity of the matches soared. The **finals** were a true test of skill, strategy, and endurance. The **Nashville SpiKings**, after securing a spot at the top of the standings, faced off against **Monarchs** in an intense final showdown. The match was a battle of resilience and determination, with both teams trading set victories in a neck-and-neck contest.

The first set was claimed by the Nashville SpiKings, giving them an early advantage. However, the Monarchs quickly regained their composure and fought back hard, claiming victories in the second and third sets, ultimately winning the match and the championship. Their dynamic team play and resilience under pressure earned them the well-deserved title of Nets and Spikes Sports Tournament 2025 Champions.

Q1 Event Highlights

NETS AND SPIKES TOURNAMENT 2025

Other Notable Performances

Although the Monarchs took home the trophy, several other teams impressed throughout the day. Blasters, despite a close defeat in the playoffs, showed exceptional growth and teamwork, proving that they are a team to watch in future tournaments. The Unstoppable Monarchs also displayed incredible tenacity, with a few close matches showcasing their spirit and determination.

Teams like Sparks, Strikers, and Sunfire also showed a lot of promise, with many of the players displaying excellent skill and sportsmanship. The event truly highlighted the growing talent in Alabama's volleyball community.

Community Spirit and Support

One of the most rewarding aspects of the tournament was the overwhelming sense of community. The Alabama Tamil Sangam's efforts in organizing the event brought people together, creating an atmosphere of camaraderie and support. Spectators were treated to an exciting atmosphere, filled with cheering fans, close matches, and a sense of unity among teams and supporters alike.

Looking Ahead to Future Tournaments

With the success of the Nets and Spikes Sports Tournament 2025, the Alabama Tamil Sangam has already begun planning for next year's event. The competitive spirit and the level of talent displayed this year ensure that the tournament will continue to grow, attracting even more teams and spectators in the future. The 2025 edition was an incredible reminder of the importance of community, competition, and sportsmanship in the world of volleyball. Whether on the court or in the stands, the tournament proved that volleyball is more than just a sport—it's an opportunity to come together and celebrate teamwork, passion, and skill.

Congratulations to the Monarchs, the Nets and Spikes Sports Tournament 2025 champions! See you next year for even more incredible volleyball action!



Q1 Event Highlights

2025 Celebration of Women's Day

Accelerating Action: A Celebration of Women's Empowerment

On a bright Sunday afternoon in March, the women of the Alabama Tamil Sangam Community gathered with a collective purpose—to Accelerate Action. The atmosphere buzzed with enthusiasm as friends, old and new, exchanged warm greetings, setting the stage for an afternoon filled with inspiration, camaraderie, and empowerment.

The event commenced with an uplifting message from Charles Daniel, ATS President, who encouraged the women to take charge of their aspirations and actively contribute to the community. He emphasized that change begins with intention and action, urging the participants to set meaningful goals that would bring positive transformation to their lives and the world around them.

As the attendees settled into the spirit of the event, the energy in the room soared when our very own vivacious VJs took over, hosting a dynamic icebreaker. Each slide built in anticipation and friendly competition, the women fought to win effortlessly, filling the space with laughter, cheers, and playful banter. The icebreaker was not just about fun—it symbolized the power of unity and creativity, reminding everyone that collective action starts with strong, supportive bonds.

The highlight of the event was the keynote session by the esteemed Dr. Monita Singh, whose words left a lasting impact on the audience. Addressing crucial health milestones, she delved into the importance of self-care, mental well-being, and self-reflection. Her calm demeanor and powerful insights resonated deeply with the women, inspiring them to embrace self-love, prioritize their health, and recognize their own strength. While sharing practical and small daily actions she reminded everyone that empowerment starts from within and that only by nurturing oneself can a woman truly uplift those around her.



Q1 Event Highlights

2025 Celebration of Women's Day Continued

As the afternoon progressed, the room buzzed with excitement for one of the most anticipated activities of the event—a sari-wrapping competition! Women paired up enthusiastically, wrapping vibrant sarees around their teammates in a spirited display of skill, speed, and teamwork. The activity quickly turned into a joyous spectacle, with a short ramp walk as teams cheered each other, laughter echoed through the venue, and an infectious energy bound everyone together. The room was filled with beaming smiles as women embraced the beauty of tradition, playfulness, and the sheer joy of sisterhood.

Beyond the fun and games, the event carried a deeper message of empowerment. As the competition settled, the gathering transitioned into an inspiring session on women's strength and decisive action. Sumathi Selvan took the stage to share the remarkable story of Bertha Benz—a woman who defied norms and made history through her bold initiative and unwavering determination. Her story served as a powerful reminder that courage and resilience can drive change, reinforcing the event's core message of taking action and leading fearlessly.

As the afternoon drew to a close, the spirit of celebration only grew stronger. The gathering seamlessly transitioned into a delightful closing session where women indulged in delicious cake and snacks, snapped countless selfies, and embraced one another in warm hugs. Laughter continued to ripple through the room as friendships deepened and new connections flourished.

What started as a simple gathering became a powerful reminder of the strength, resilience, and boundless potential of women when they come together. It was not just an event—it was an experience, a movement, and a call to action. And as the women left that afternoon, their hearts were full, their spirits uplifted, and their minds brimming with inspiration to take bold steps in their own journeys.

Indeed, the day may have come to an end, but for the women of the Alabama Tamil Sangam Community, it was only the beginning of something extraordinary.





Q1 2025 Financial Update

Alabama Tamil Sangam Balance Sheet As Of Dec/31/2024				
Balance Brought Forward From Q4 2024				\$20,451.78
No	Date	Description	Income	Expenses
1	January 18, 2025	Pongal		\$ 3,605.31
2	January 22, 2025	Pattrimandram	\$ 1,300.00	\$ 1,251.98
3	January 12, 2025	ATA Staff lunch		\$ 200.00
4	February 17, 2025	Community outreach		\$ 202.03
5	March 23, 2025	Womens' Day		\$ 391.59
6	March 31, 2025	General Expenses (Storage)		\$ 499.65
7	March 31, 2025	Membership New/Renewal	3594.07	
8	April 1, 2025	Nets & Spikes	\$ 2,400.00	\$ 1,675.41
Total income			\$7,294.07	
Total expenses				\$7,825.97
Change in Net Assets				-\$531.90
Ending Balance As of Mar/31/2025				\$19,919.88
Note: CricFest 2024 accrued for Hoover First Responders				\$ 700.00

Alabama Tamil Academy Balance Sheet As Of Dec/31/2024				
Balance Brought Forward From Q4 2024				\$4,914.01
No	Date	Description	Income	Expenses
1	Jan-28-2025	General Expenses		\$ 12.63
Tamil School Income			\$ -	
Tamil School expenses				\$ 12.63
Change in Net Assets				\$ (12.63)
Ending Balance As of Mar/31/2025				\$ 4,901.38

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ANNOUNCEMENT



ATS WEBSITE UPGRADE

We are looking to enhance our existing website. We plan to develop a database and an app alongside, if you have the expertise and willing to support, develop and or manage please reach us at atsexecutive@alabamatamilsangam.org. All are welcome.

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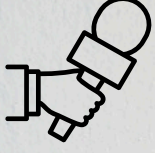
We welcome sponsors both individual and Business. If you desire to support and funding overall ATS' ongoing programs, please reach out to us. Businesses are welcome to participate by placing your advertisements on our quarterly newsletter. Please reach out to us for more details or email at atsexecutive@alabamatamilsangam.org

ATS SUB COMMITTEE

If you want to support us by joining a committee, we'll be excited to have you. ATS' success is determined by the overwhelming support by its members. We urge you to join a team either to commit short term or long term and be part of the fun. We'll fill you in with additional information. Please email atsexecutive@alabamatamilsangam.org

ALABAMA TAMIL ACADEMY (ATA) SUPPORT

One of our flagship program that has a noble intention of educating children our beloved Tamil language. This is a program that is governed solely by ATS member volunteers who teach weekly throughout the school year. If you desire to support in anyway, including sponsorship, teaching or other help please reach out to us at atsexecutive@alabamatamilsangam.org



ATS PUBLICATION TEAM



Editors & Reviewers

Babu Ramalingam
Hari Prasad
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Kavitha Karthikeyan
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Nithya Srinivasan
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Roy Pravien
Sugantha Krishnan

Disclaimer: Alabama Tamil Sangam is a Non Profit, Non Political, Non Religious Organization. Interested in promoting Tamil Language, Culture, Art & Music and cultivating community relationships amongst its members.

CONTACT & FEEDBACK



நன்றி

*Thank
you*

ATS appreciates your interest and thanking you, for submitting your articles for this newsletter. We encourage you to send articles for the next Q4 newsletter to atscommunication@alabamatamilsangam.org

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