

Tsunamika in new avatar

- [Annie Philip](#)



A 10-foot model of the Tsunamika doll in Puducherry on Thursday. -Photo: S.S. Kumar

From being a symbol of hope, doll is now an environmentalist

Her story is now well known. The story of how the tiny doll, Tsunamika, created in Auroville in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, became a symbol of hope and resilience to not just communities affected by the disaster but to people across the world who have faced hardship. Today, more than 6 million Tsunamika dolls have been made and distributed across 80 nations earning a livelihood through donations for the women who are making it.

On her 10th birthday, Tsunamika is ready for a new avatar: one of a coastal environmentalist. Kicking off the anniversary celebrations was a coastal yatra undertaken on Thursday by the team behind Tsunamika, the Upasana Design Studio, in coordination with NGO PondyCAN, the Department of Science, Technology and Environment, Puducherry and the National Coastal Protection Campaign. In perhaps an indication of Tsunamika's new larger role, the team has prepared a 10-foot model of the doll which went to four coastal region schools in Puducherry and Tamil Nadu. Also helping Tsunamika were the team from Komali MeDi Clown Academy and Svaram in Auroville, who put up a colourful play with artists dressed up as Tsunamika and Santa Claus in lead roles, on the importance of protecting our coast and marine environment.

Schoolchildren watched enthralled as the play, in a sing-song fashion, raised several issues including the need for recycling, responsible waste management, sustainable fishing practices and beach restoration. A turtle and fish puppet also joined the lead artists in the play, with the audience told about depleting mangroves, sand mining along the coast, ill effects of plastic and pollution in sea water. The artists also touched upon migration to cities owing to livelihoods being snatched away.

When asked about Tsunamika's new role, Uma Prajapati, founder of the Upasana Design Studio, often called Tsunamika's 'amma' said, "I feel like I am marrying off my daughter. She's going into the world. We are looking for hope and I trust she is capable of magic."

The new project will use Tsunamika as a 'mascot' of compassion and take the message about coastal protection to as many schools and places as possible, said Probir Banerjee of PondyCAN.

The project will synergise the efforts of various stakeholders and could become a pioneering effort in protecting India's beaches and vast marine environment, he said. "Tsunamika wants to act and wants others to act as well," he said.

The yatra was attended by Education Minister T. Thiagarajan, MLAs A. Anbalagan and K. Lakshminarayanan. The daylong celebrations on January 10 at Auroville include photo exhibitions, workshops, dance, live music, food and handicraft stalls and a play by a Finnish theatre group.

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