Krishi Mela-2020 Highlights Natural Farming

By Padma Kothy

Bangalore, Karnataka: Sri Sri Savayava Krish Mela 2020, (Organic Agriculture Mela), held between 22-23 February 2020 at the Art of Living International Centre, Bengaluru, showcased how the Indian farmer can adopt Natural Zero Budget Farming techniques and Climate Change Resilient Agriculture to safeguard and grow his/her livelihood in the face of economic crises and climate change threats.

The objective of the Mela was firstly, to educate and enrol farmers and stakeholders to focus on Natural Farming; secondly, to build collaborative platforms for all stakeholders, to create integrated solutions; and thirdly to build road maps and business models for Natural Farming.

The inaugural session on February 22 was presided over by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Dignitaries who graced the occasion were Dr. C. N. Ashwath Narayan (DCM & IT & BT Minister), B. C. Patil, Minister for Agriculture, Karnataka; S. T. Somashekar, Minister of Co-operation, Karnataka; Tejasvi Surya, Member of Parliament, South Bangalore; and Rav Subramanyam, MLA, Basavanagudi. Addressing the gathering, B. C. Patil, Minister for Agriculture, said that it is only now that the importance of organic farming has been understood. Gurudev appealed to youth to give importance to agriculture as it was now a profitable proposition with naturally-grown organic produce being in high demand and commanding high prices.

He said The Art of Living is planning to train one youth in every village in organic farming and urged farmers to directly market their produce instead of going through middlemen.

At the Mela, SSIAST [Sri Sri Institute of Agriculture Sciences and Technology Trust] signed an MoU with the Indian Institute of Technology, Bangalore, for fostering inter-institutional co-operation in education, research, technology transfer, and sustainable development.

The distinguished speakers gave fresh perspectives during the sessions on Agri start-ups by youth, while domain experts and scholars spoke on various topics of relevance to the theme of the Mela.

Among the attendees were delegates from Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), State Agriculture Universities (SAUs), State Agriculture and Horticulture Departments, entrepreneurs, and private agencies involved in agriculture.

Sessions were also held on home, kitchen and terrace gardening; horticulture, aeroponics and hydroponics; and agriculture (bees-keeping). Techniques of zero-budget natural farming and pearl-farming (for economic stability), were highlighted, supplemented by demonstrations of Vedic Agriculture.

A multiplicity of well-organized stalls selling a wide variety of organic products, a variety of home-made food and beverages, bags, the famed Chennapatna toys, garments, and innovative domestic-use products drew enthusiasts.

The Sri Sri Krishn Ratna Awards were presented to farmers and promoters championing natural farming, among them a beedi worker recognized for his immense 60-year contribution to the science of bee-keeping; Shrimati Pappamma, a seed-keeper and protector of Desi seeds; and Harisamantha Gunupada Mallik for natural farming.

The delegates visited the Ashram’s Dei Gauahala, and the various model farms that showcased seedling techniques, Vedic farming, intercropping techniques, and desiccated varieties, micro irrigation, waste recycling, etc.

The model farm where 74 varieties of vegetables were grown on a plot less than half an acre drew much attention.

Spirituality, Breaking Boundaries, and Coming Together to Save the Planet

The 9th International Women’s Conference Came a Full Circle

By Ruchira Roy

Bengaluru, Karnataka: From starting a movement to reverse the sex ratio in Punjab to putting Latvian folk culture on the global cultural map, to changing the laws of Nepal to bring in more representation of women in parliament, inheritance, and social justice; to passionately serving the Delhi Police as the first Indian IPS officer, from dancing up a revolution to being vegan chefs-the women speakers at the 9th International Women’s Conference were a force to reckon with.

International Women’s Conference 2020, which was held at The Art of Living International Centre, Bangalore, from February 14-20, was where over 400 global women leaders from various fields came together to celebrate womanhood by learning and building each other up as they delved deeper into the theme of the conference ‘The Circle of Life: Passion, Dispersion and Compassion’ and its reflection in our social and personal pursuits.

Some of the speakers at the conference included Hariminat Kaur Badal, Union Cabinet Minister, Justice Gita Mittal, Hon. Judge of the High Court, & J. K. Dr. Kaur, with it in a higher power, we say that let this or anything better than this happen, we gain the power to let go, the power of dispersion. Compassion is about seeing the bigger picture…how we are interconnected.”

Union Minister Harimmat Kaur Badal, spoke about the richness and equality in the relatively young Sikh faith, “Spirituality is there inside everybody,” Kaur said, “just need somebody to ignite it in you…a spiritual life is where your passion is channeled in the right direction. When you have a Guru in your life, life is stress free.” Dr. Kran Bedi spoke about the first time she learnt she was passionate about justice, when at the age of 9, she held a man from beating his wife. She also shared how she learned to never complain about a man from beating his wife. She also shared how she learned to never complain about something, it truly shows in the work we do. When we have a goal, and along...
Agroforestry is Helping Farmers Stabilize Their Incomes

By Padmini Koty

Agroforestry is an integrated agriculture system of land using combination of forestry and agriculture. It is beneficial to both farmers and the environment, including rearing of livestock. Briefly, it involves the growing of trees and shrubs around or among crops. India can easily contribute to the National Agroforestry Policy 2014, formulated to promote “the planting of indigenous plant varieties in any area outside the farm to sustain forests as well as farming practices.”

We asked Madhav Gomare, Project Coordinator of The Art of Living Integrated Natural Resources Management (INRM)/Projects, to explain, and he says, “Agroforestry is any sustainable land-use system that maintains or increases total yield by combining food crops (annuals) with tree crops (perennials), using management practices that suit the social and cultural characteristics of the local people and the economic and ecological conditions of the area.”

What are its benefits? Agroforestry enhances soil fertility, increases productivity, decreases pests, stabilizes incomes and cash flows by generating multiple income streams; even if the main crop fails or is affected by climate, the other components of the agro-farming system continue to provide food. It also prevents erosion and sedimentation, helps in maintaining healthy ground-water levels. Significantly, it helps in maintaining the nitrogen cycle and the carbon cycle.

Another important question: can agroforestry adversely affect traditional models of agriculture? No. It has been traditionally practiced in India, and actually supports existing farming models with indigenous species of plants, shrubs and trees, while financially uplifting and supporting the whole eco-system, and providing employment to youth.

Agroforestry forms an integral part of The Art of Living’s agriculture-training programs as well and 200 farmers have implemented it so far. It has also given appreciable dividends in the traditionally drought-prone Later District of Maharashtra, where an agroforestry initiative was implemented three years back on a barren stretch of land, as an integrated Natural Resource Management Project.

Here, first “plugging” – the process of turning up the hardened soil and mixing natural compost with it, was done. Next, along with crops, 3 categories of trees were planted – short, medium and long-term. Species like salandawood and neem, along with ten types of fruit trees have been planted, and flowering plants as well to attract pollinators like bees and butterflies. Today the once-barren land shows the transformative power of agroforestry.

Given India’s wide variation in topography and rainfall patterns, agroforestry confers flexibility. Aavare Gomare, “It can be implemented on any land where grass grows, and ties in with any type of agriculture.”

Guruvayurappan, P. Project Officer, Wildlife Protection Society of India, and VIFP Yazhavudhayi, explains that agroforestry uses permaculture principles, balancing the ecosystem and “hosts land, food and security for wildlife. Trees support nesting and provide halting for day and night birds which helps in control of pests, while their roots help maintain the water and food cycles.” Also, it can provide tribals employment and better income.

Agroforestry helps recover even degraded land, while cultivating both the farmer’s income and the eco-system from climate-change vagaries. Extending its practice can only benefit our farmers and the nation.

Cycling for a Cause

“How will you savor bread made by those who don’t even allow your daughters to be born?”

By Ram Ashheesh

Dmsnabad, Maharashtra: Yuvarakha Ganesh Raju Kanawat has once again set off on his cycle from Tulpule, a village in Dmsnabad District, Maharashtra, on a mission to save the girl child. He set out barefoot on his bicycle on January 31, 2020, and has now reached Benaras in Uttar Pradesh, covering a distance of 1000 kilometers with the message, “Save the Girl Child for a Bright Future.” From Rewa he will be proceeding to Ayodhya via Kashi on his bicycle on January 31, 2020, and has now set out barefoot on his cycle from Tulpule, a village in Dmsnabad District, Maharashtra, on a mission to save the girl child. He set out barefoot on his bicycle on January 31, 2020, and has now reached Benaras in Uttar Pradesh, covering a distance of 1000 kilometers with the message, “Save the Girl Child for a Bright Future.” From Rewa he will be proceeding to Ayodhya via Kashi on his bicycle on January 31, 2020, and has now reached Benaras in Uttar Pradesh, covering a distance of 1000 kilometers with the message, “Save the Girl Child for a Bright Future.”

Saroja Vaidyanathan, Indian dance research scholar, Malashri Mangalji; Bharatnatyam exponent, Uma Vairat, Kaliki Dance therapist, Anand Talwar; Yogi, and other respectable persons have added their voices in support.

Dmsnabad, Maharashtra: Yuvarakha Ganesh Raju Kanawat has once again set off on his cycle from Tulpule, a village in Dmsnabad District, Maharashtra, on a mission to save the girl child. He set out barefoot on his bicycle on January 31, 2020, and has now reached Benaras in Uttar Pradesh, covering a distance of 1000 kilometers with the message, “Save the Girl Child for a Bright Future.” From Rewa he will be proceeding to Ayodhya via Kashi on his bicycle on January 31, 2020, and has now reached Benaras in Uttar Pradesh, covering a distance of 1000 kilometers with the message, “Save the Girl Child for a Bright Future.” From Rewa he will be proceeding to Ayodhya via Kashi on his bicycle on January 31, 2020, and has now reached Benaras in Uttar Pradesh, covering a distance of 1000 kilometers with the message, “Save the Girl Child for a Bright Future.” From Rewa he will be proceeding to Ayodhya via Kashi on his bicycle on January 31, 2020, and has now reached Benaras in Uttar Pradesh, covering a distance of 1000 kilometers with the message, “Save the Girl Child for a Bright Future.” From Rewa he will be proceeding to Ayodhya via Kashi on his bicycle on January 31, 2020, and has now reached Benaras in Uttar Pradesh, covering a distance of 1000 kilometers with the message, “Save the Girl Child for a Bright Future.” From Rewa he will be proceeding to Ayodhya via Kashi on his bicycle on January 31, 2020, and has now reached Benaras in Uttar Pradesh, covering a distance of 1000 kilometers with the message, “Save the Girl Child for a Bright Future.” From Rewa he will be proceeding to Ayodhya via Kashi on his bicycle on January 31, 2020, and has now reached Benaras in Uttar Pradesh, covering a distance of 1000 kilometers with the message, “Save the Girl Child for a Bright Future.” From Rewa he will be proceeding to Ayodhya via Kashi on his bicycle on January 31, 2020, and has now reached Benaras in Uttar Pradesh, covering a distance of 1000 kilometers with the message, “Save the Girl Child for a Bright Future.” From Rewa he will be proceeding to Ayodhya via Kashi on his bicycle on January 31, 2020, and has now reached Benaras in Uttar Pradesh, covering a distance of 1000 kilometers with the message, “Save the Girl Child for a Bright Future.”

Recounting the days before he set out on his mission, Gomaye says that he was so shaken by a painful incident that befell a girl child that he went into depression. To recover from depression, he began “Agroforestry: The Art of Living’s Youth Leadership Training Program. On completion of the program the group went on a new outreach to a village in a hard-hit area, where they did something significant in his life, something that would have a positive impact on society. He decided to voice the country for the cause of the girl child. So he set out on his first journey on his bicycle in 2017, cycling through several villages in Maharashtra with his “Bett Bachao” message.

Most people live an insignificant life, concerned only about themselves and their own families. A few like Gomaye stand-up on their comfort zone and become an inspiration to live a life with meaning, to be a soldier for their nation, to reach out and fight for the protection of people they do not even know. Protecting the environment; to deliberations on the various perspectives that cultures offer that celebrate harmony in diversity.

Recipients of the prestigious Vishalakshi Award instituted for valuable and inclusive contribution to the field of arts and culture included Kannada Actor, Malavath Mangal; Bharatnatyam exponent, Uma Talik; Kuchipudi exponent, Vanitha Uduma; notable choreographer and Indian classical dance dancer, Vaibhav Ghavate, Indian dance researcher, Parvati; research scholar, performer, Methi Devka, and Sanjay Kumar, social activist and reformer.

The project was held in collaboration with the Art of Living, and supported by the Madhav Gomcare Trust, Baramulla, Jammu & Kashmir and Srinagar Jail.

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The Power of Women

In Indian mythology, the female energy is depicted as Shakti – the embodiment of strength against all odds, combined with beauty, love and compassion. Shakti is also presented in the trinity of Durga, goddess of valor and vitality; Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and well-being; and Saraswati, goddess of knowledge and art. Women just need a reminder that all these Goddesses are holding such important portfolios (Defence, Wealth and Education) and that they better not fail in these roles.

Women must be proactive. Somebody else has to empower us if itself is a sign of weakness. Women are innately powerful and they only need to realize it. Every woman has within her the right blend of strength with grace, courage with compassion, affluence with values, and wisdom with vision. In her lies the seed of a profound social transformation. In many facets of life the world over, the modern woman has achieved this ideal of Shakti, using her innate strength to create a more humane and just social order.

In public life, many women have worked to highlight issues that increase global peace, social welfare and international equity. In economic life, they have worked to make corporations more socially responsible and communities stronger. In literature, they have found new voices to raise social consciousness. Women always make an impact wherever they go. They can shape societies and countries. It is women who can instigate values in the many people around them.

I see women as a source of introducing values into children, the family and society. She is the glue who holds everyone in the family intact. To be together, a woman brings celebration into the home. If the woman of the house is depressed, there can be no celebration. Neither can there be celebration where womenfolk are not participating. Women should be more spiritual, they should preserve that sense of belongingness in and society together. In fact, that is their responsibility.

The real strength of a woman is her emotion when she

Drug Deaddiction Campaign Launched with the Message “Fun for a Moment, Punishment for a Lifetime”

Sriganganagar, Rajasthan: As part of the Drug-Free India campaign, The Art of Living team in Sriganganagar had organized an awareness campaign at the Government Girls’ Senior Secondary School in Hindumalikot, Sriganganagar on February 4, 2020. With ‘Pehle Pho Toh Mazaai, Zidhai Pho Toh Zanaa’ (Fun for a Moment, Punishment for a Lifetime) as their central theme, students gave inspirational messages of de-addiction through speeches, poems, and songs. A workshop on chemical-free gardening and a drug de-addiction awareness camp were also organized for the benefit of rural women at the Hindumalkot Panchayat Ghat. Hindumalikot which lies close to the India-Pakistan border is one of the worst affected areas of drug addiction with more than 70% of the men and women in this area having fallen prey to it.

Over 100 Sarpanches Gather for a Summit in Satara, Maharashtra

Sarpanch’s Summit: The Art of Living had organized a Sarpanch’s Summit in Satara, Maharashtra, on February 4, 2020 at the Surya Palace, Koregaon Bk, 29 January, 2020. Over 100 sarpanches attended the summit including women sarpanches. Natural farming, women empowerment, preservation of local culture and traditions, literacy, youth empowerment, and conservation of the environment were among the topics discussed at the summit. The sarpanches were introduced to the Art of Living’s model of developing ideal villages, a method that has been successfully implemented for over 30 years. Over 100 sarpanches were eager to apply what they had learned at the summit and resolved to work with their community in a systematic manner to put their villages on the path to progress. Shekher Mundada, Trustee, The Art of Living, and Rishi Devavar said that the summit along with Art of Living faculty Jayant Bhole, Amol Naware, and Aml Bhujale, Shree Patro, President of the Sarpanch Council, Atal Mor, President of Konkan Tehsil, Karan Bhatre, BDD, and Sudhir Giri were among those who attended the summit.

Pictorial Exhibition of The Art of Living Projects in Hanoi, Haryana

The Art of Living team in Hanoi had organized a pictorial exhibition of its ongoing projects at 50 Mahila Mandalikyada on February 3, 2020. Pictures of Project Pavilion, Bhiwadi Bhakti, Nirmalya Niveshak, The Art of Living, and the Propagation of Ancient Indian Knowledge were displayed. Several eminent people of the city visited the exhibition and appreciated the work done by The Art of Living. A unique feature of this chapter is the Sri Sri Gopal camp. Under this campaign people have adopted desi cows. The Art of Living Hanoi Chapter has awarded a Citation Certificate to all such people and given a special title of “Sri Sri Gopal Family”. The Art of Living has also set up a special camp on items of daily use. In addition, all those offering these discounts to them also receive the title of “Gau Bhakt.”

Seva Highlights

In February 4, Gurudev encouraged, guided, and motivated youngsters in “Youth Connect” – an event organized at the PDA College of Engineering, Kalaburagi. “Spirituality is the essence of all religions. We enjoy music from every region in the world... We should accept wisdom also in the same manner. We should be broad minded, accept knowledge from all; then our vision will broaden,” he said.

The next morning, it was time for Rathyamanku Chintanai (Spiritual Contemplation) at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur. Gurudev enlightened the students and faculty on deep spiritual matters and explained how they can be incorporated in our daily life. He spoke about Antarama Chaturthyan – an internal quadrant which consists of mind, will, consciousness, egoism. He said if one gained knowledge on how these function, it would be possible to gain Atmanegma knowledge of the self.

During Gurudev’s 4-day tour of the region, three Mahat Satyagras were organized. In Kalaburagi on February 3, in Yadgir on February 4, and finally in Raichur on February 5. Massive crowds gathered to be in his presence, soak in his wisdom, and meditate under his guidance. At the satyagrahas, Gurudev spoke about various topics, to benefit all age groups. For children, he advised parents to raise them on the verses of Basavanna and other great spiritual leaders and social reformers of the 12th Century; for the youth he advised them to develop skills and become self-sufficient; for the women he encouraged them to preserve their traditions and take pride in their ethnic cuisine; and urged all people to practice yoga, pranayama, and meditation. He urged farmers to adopt natural farming techniques and encouraged them to use Ayurvedic products and save themselves from the harmful use of chemicals.

In all, the crowds were treated to a lifetime of wisdom and they went back joyous with hope and motivation,, watch over and keep their family together, a woman brings celebration into the home. That’s why we call India Bharat Mata. We never say Bharat Pita. Our country is named and personified as a woman. Though Bharat is a male name, we associate it with a mother/woman. Strength of a woman is persuasive yet not aggressive. Strength of a woman is elastic not brittle. Strength of a woman is subtle not obvious.

On a gap of 8 years, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar visited Kalaburagi, Raichur, and Yadgir in Kalyana-Karnataka, a region in the northern part of Karnataka. From February 2 to February 6, 2019, Gurudev met thousands of people who were very hard of hearing received hearing aids.

Free Ear Checkup Camp Prior to World Hearing Day in Molela

Molela: Rajasthan: The Art of Living in Molela teamed up with the 20th India Foundation, Mumbai, to organize a free ear checkup camp on February 24, 2020, at three Kardhar Government Senior Secondary Schools, a few days prior to the World Hearing Day on March 3. Over 500 school children from Molela and 54 other people from nearby villages have their ears examined at the camp. Over 200 children had ear wax blockage, 10 people who were very hard of hearing received hearing aids.
Aruna Kumari Tumarada

A happy childhood under the care and comfort of learned and devoted parents, had given Aruna a bright beginning to her life. But the joys were short lived. At 17 she lost her father had to take on the responsibilities of her family. She had to quit her studies and took up a government job to support her schooling younger brother, aged grandfather, and mother. Selflessly she gave up on her dreams and let her life be dictated by her commitments. With the wounds begun to heal, marriage and two children once again brought back the joys in her life. With her husband’s encouragement she completed her higher education. Then together with her younger brother she started a coaching institute and began teaching. On a friend’s insistence she brother she started a coaching institute and began teaching. On a friend’s insistence she

Aruna says, “This translation seva gave me the strength to stand the tragedy of losing my beloved child.” On 20th June when she came out of coma, the doctors predicted that it would take her at least six months to start walking. But with the might of her determination, within a month she had started practicing yoga! And in December of that year, much before the six months, Aruna had completed her teachers’ training program and was blessed by Gurudev to conduct The Art of Living programs. Gurudev’s words that why don’t they make their home into an ashram inspired Aruna and her husband. They set apart a small hall in their home and made it available for regular group satsang, sati sati, courses and other activities of the organization.

Today Aruna conducts several courses for The Art of Living including-Utkarsh Yoga, Medha Yoga, Sri Sri Yoga, Happiness Program, YPFF, DSN, Volunteer Training Program, Corporate Program and Wellness Program. She has conducted hundreds of courses and has spearheaded several social development projects. Under the Vihalakshmi Women Empowerment Project, she organised training in tailoring for rural women. Through this, around 300 women have been empowered to earn a livelihood. Once, in Vijayawada, she had conducted a YLTP course for 45 really rowdy men and then those men went ahead and organised a Navchetna Shivir in one of the most notorious slums of Asia - Rajarajeswari Peta in Vijayawada. They even started a library in that slum. Even the police were surprised to witness this transformation! She has conducted courses for several senior government officials. During one such course, she met an IAS officer, M. M. Nayak, who having been hugely benefitted from the course, requested her to organize it for the children across all Kukurba Gandhi Vidyalayas in the region. These schools mostly host students from the lesser privileged sections of society. Aruna immediately gathered a team of 10 teachers and conducted the Utkarsh yoga course for 6,300 students within a span of three months. Once after she conducted classes for the police personnel of Visanagaram district in Andhra Pradesh, they honoured her with a Sphoorthi Award. Currently she also leads the Andhra Pradesh state team for Project Bharat.

Challenges were strewn across her path. Aruna says that being a woman working among ill-mannered men many times posed grave challenges. But nothing dampened her spirit; she never looked back. She says with a twinkle in her eyes that the little girl that came from an orthodox Brahmin family with a conservative lifestyle, today travels all by herself, far and wide to take the wisdom of her Guru to as many people as possible. To her own surprise, she meets so many young girls who look up to her for inspiration. Aruna Kumari Tumarada has had one long and eventful journey. She smiles as she looks forward to the many miles yet to be covered, “What can I say? This is kripa.”

As poems of inspiring knowledge and practical wisdom by the 12th century saint of North Karnataka, inspiring Aruna and her husband. They set apart a small hall in their home and made it available for regular group satsang, sati sati, courses and other activities of the organization.

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An Unshakeable Journey of Service
By Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti

“This translation seva gave me the strength to stand the tragedy of losing my beloved child.”

And eventful journey. She smiles as she looks forward to the many miles yet to be covered, “What can I say? This is kripa.”