

SEVA TIMES

THE ART OF LIVING INTERNATIONAL CENTER, BENGALURU



Light a Lamp Project Helps Laborer's Daughter Aspire To Become a Chartered Accountant

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Yuvacharyas Construct House for a Helpless Woman

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SEPTEMBER 2020

Teacher Refresher Meet Goes Online For the First Time

The Art of Living held its first online Teacher Refresher Meet (TRM) amidst the Corona pandemic. The TRM which was conducted in different batches between August 1-4, 2020, was attended by over 4000 teachers of The Art of Living from different parts of India. Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar addressed the various challenges being faced by the teachers in the current situation and gave them valuable guidelines for the coming year.

Volunteers Donate a Makeshift Hospital for COVID-19 Patients



The Art of Living and IAHV volunteers constructed a makeshift hospital at Narendranagar, Uttarakhand, and donated it to the government for the treatment of COVID-19 patients. The fabricated hospital with two wards and two OPD rooms that are attached to Dev Suman Hospital was inaugurated by Baby Rani Maurya, Governor of Uttarakhand, in the presence of Subodh Uniyal, Minister for Agriculture, in an online ceremony on August 4, 2020. The Governor commended The Art of Living for its exemplary service in the COVID times.

No More Water Woes in Jalna



The Art of Living's International Association for Human Values and Overseas Volunteers for a Better India constructed around 3000 watershed structures over a span of 3 years in Maharashtra under their Watershed Management Project. This monsoon the watershed structures in Jalna are filled to overflowing with water and more than 4 crore liters of water have been stored, benefiting over 30,000 farmers in the region.

Immunity Boosters for the Press and Police



In the second week of August, The Art of Living Apex, Jharkhand, handed over 50 kits of Sri Sri Tattva immunity booster medicine kits to the Press Club.



Another 100 kits containing Sri Sri Tattva immunity booster medicines and facial masks were handed over to Surendra Kumar Jha, Senior SP, Ranchi, for the benefit of Ranchi police.

Pan-India Online Youth Leadership Training Program - Creating Community Leaders in Every Corner of the Country

By Seva Times Correspondent

15th August, Bengaluru: A pan-India Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP) along with the Women Leadership Training Program (WLTP) was held during 2nd-3rd week of August where more than 240 teachers of The Art of Living conducted the workshop for 1480 participants. Leveraging upon the benefits of video conference platforms, it was for the first time that people from both rural and urban India participated together in the online program from the comforts of their own home. Several participants joined from remote corners of India, overriding network and connectivity issues.

The YLTP and WLTP are specially crafted as a seven day program to help the youth sharpen their leadership skills, rediscover the connection to their roots and most importantly to motivate them towards rising as community leaders. Over the last two decades, more than 3 lakh YLTP graduates or Yuvacharyas across India have been the dynamic human resource for the implementation of The Art of Living's social service and project initiatives.

On 15th of August, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar addressed all the participants and teachers of the program in a special session through video conference. Addressing their concerns related to wellbeing and livelihood during these uncertain and challenging circumstances as posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Gurudev emphasised on the use of Ayurveda medicines, specifically Shakti Drops from Sri Sri Tattva to boost immunity and combat the disease. He mentioned that

regular practice of pranayama, yoga and meditation can significantly reduce the impact of viral attack on a person. He also advised against consuming white sugar, as it depletes immunity and advocated the use of jaggery instead.

On the economic front, he encouraged the youth to become entrepreneurs and emphasised on micro entrepreneurship as a viable option for the youth in the coming times. Sri Sri Tattva, he mentioned was conceived with the very notion of providing income generation option to the youth of India. He motivated the yuvacharyas to work hard to make more Indian products available in their local shops in place of foreign products. He also spoke about Natural Farming as a career option for those who want to take up agriculture. He assured that the agriculture institute of the organization will lend them their support in this endeavour. For those youth who want to work in politics or administration, he said they should definitely do so and start working hard to prepare the ground. Keeping the need of the hour in mind Gurudev strictly advised against crowding public places during the upcoming festival season that every year witnesses huge footfall, be it for Ganesh Chaturthi in Maharashtra or Durga Puja in West Bengal and its neighbouring states. He urged people to follow all the rules and be fearless.

Chairman of The Art of Living Trust, Madhu Rao and National Director of Karmayog Department, along with National Executive Board members also addressed the gathering on the roadmap for the year head.



PAN-INDIA
YLTP & WLTP
AUGUST 2020

1480
YOUTH INSPIRED TO WORK FOR
NATION BUILDING

Learning from the EXPERTS

Building a New Front: The Art of Living Trust



Madhu Rao

Art of Living Trust.

Dr Hampi Chakrabarti in conversation with Sh Madhu Rao, Chairman, The Art of Living Trust.

■ **Though The Art of Living Trust is very new in its inception, the leadership of the trust comes with rich experiences both within and outside the organization. What kind of scope is that generating for the working of the Trust?**

Several areas of concern that we are dealing with today are the same that the corporate world regularly deals with. Like the need for good infrastructure, training and development, systems, software, the platforms from which our courses can be conducted, data analytics, marketing, competition and the like. Today, though The Art of Living is a very big brand, with a significant following, we cannot afford to be complacent because there are many other mindfulness and wellness programs in the same space who have got a strong foothold by means of marketing efforts backed by good delivery and access to people who are in the position to speak the language that the intelligentsia can relate to. We have to compete for the minds, attention and the hearts too of our audience. Therefore, this is an opportune moment for us to see how the corporate world around us is behaving and learn from their success stories. We also need to preserve our resources because we have a different objective as compared to the private sector who are entirely driven by profit and brand value. For us, the brand is important and so is leading more people towards wisdom and creating a divine society. Whatever has brought us till here has been effective, but we need to ponder whether this will be relevant for us in the

coming 10 years. It has to be reviewed and refreshed, probably rebuilt or reoriented for the new environment. Challenges will be there. We need to be very judicious because for us every rupee spent in building ourselves is at the cost of a rupee that could have been made available for our social service initiatives. This kind of decision-making that we do in the corporate world, has to come into The Art of Living too, in a gradual but major way. We have to keep in mind that everybody is a Sevak here and processes, operations and hierarchies are not always rigidly defined. So hopefully I will be able to bring in my corporate learnings to the table and also always be reminded that it is a privilege to serve Gurudev.

"There is so much that we can do to build a very strong country. The country is not going to change overnight."

■ **Are there any concrete strategies that the Trust is putting in place to reach these objectives?**

You know, every aspect whether it is teacher's training or the number of courses that are on offer, all have to be taken up individually. Of course, these are all initiated by Gurudev but we have to work towards the reach out. There are a lot of institutions who are potential customers, and with the same effort of reaching out to 20 people, we can probably reach out to 2000 people. We are also going to look into further streamlining the organisation's structure and also the individual competencies so that the right person is put in the right place. You cannot put a square peg in a round hole - the principle applies everywhere in life. The demands of the organization have increased greatly and we have to work very smartly with limited resources. There are limitations today given the challenges posed by the COVID - 19 pandemic; we are leveraging upon the available technology to overcome these challenges. We have ensured to keep the wheels moving, maybe not at the pace that we would have liked, but definitely in the right direction.

■ **How do you create a synergy in the work of thousands of teachers and volunteers from across India?**

This is probably the big differentiator between business houses, government bodies

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With Knowledge and Zeal, We Can Convert Crisis into Opportunity - Gurudev

By Padma Koty

Ever since the Corona pandemic began, Gurudev has been urging various stakeholders in his online interactions to move beyond the Corona crisis and look at it as an opportunity to move towards new beginnings. He has said that with knowledge and zeal these crises can be converted into opportunity.

This zeal, and the experiential knowledge to turn crisis into opportunity is what is evident in numerous projects of The Art of Living since its inception. Whether it is the 702 free schools or de-stressing traumatized US war veterans through an IAHV program aptly called Project Welcome Home Troops, at a time when war-weary veterans returning home were committing suicide in large numbers, or the worldwide Prison Program which is based on Gurudev's compassionate idea stating "inside every culprit there is a victim crying for help. If you heal the victim, the culprit in them disappears", The Art of Living has been actualizing this powerful principle in its seva-platforms.

The many thoughtfully structured SSRDP programs to skill unemployed rural youth, especially in areas of the nation where unrest had worsened the unemployment crisis, too have seen knowledgeable subject experts, professionals, corporates and dedicated volunteers working enthusiastically together to reduce the skills-gap and develop employment and entrepreneurship.

Perhaps The Art of Living's stellar River Rejuvenation Program (RRP), which has helped reduce farmer suicides and turned around the agrarian crisis - in which depletion and non-availability of water has been one of the main issues, is the best example of turning crisis into opportunity. While for most of the world's population water is a necessity, for farmers and agriculturists, it is also a non-negotiable source of livelihood. Concerned about this alarming situation, Gurudev launched RRP in 2013 to bring transformation on a war-footing. The RRP is a brilliant, replicable case study in water resource rejuvenation and management, bringing together subject matter experts, volunteers, government agencies, local bodies, corporates and riverine communities, representing the coming together of knowledge - scientific (ISRO is one of the contributing organizations), technical and traditional - and the zeal of the people involved in these colossal efforts. Knowledge and zeal, in fact, are the fulcrum on which the designing, delivering and managing of these programs is based in addition to overcoming the roadblocks that come up.

The proof of the RRP is in its many paybacks. To name just a few: improved ground water levels, augmentation of farmers' incomes, increased number of crops, rural employment, community engagement, afforesting of river banks (with native species), the list goes on.

Light a Lamp Project Helps Laborer's Daughter Aspire to Become A Chartered Accountant

By Sunanda Chatterjee

The Light a Lamp project was initiated in Kolkata in 2009 by a group of volunteers of The Art of Living as a mentoring program for underprivileged children and youth in Kolkata's urban slums. The objective was to bring a new light of opportunity in the lives of these children through mentorship, education, yoga, and meditation. It was also seen as a window to steer these children away from hopelessness and the possibility of being lured towards anti-social and disruptive behavior, which wasn't at all uncommon in the conditions they were exposed to.

Over the years the Light A Lamp project has touched the lives of more than 1000 children across Kolkata. Among them is Arti Singh, daughter of a local laborer, who joined the project as a student of 3rd standard. She turned out to be a zealous and enthusiastic student. Very soon, with the interventions of the project, she was guided to master over her inhibition of public speaking and the English language. She participated with her peers in writing and staging the drama titled, 'Brilliant Birbal' and performed it in front of an audience of more than 300 people at Sri Sri Academy in Kolkata. With mentorship from the project she passed her higher secondary exams with 83% marks. But her family's financial condition could still not have afforded higher education for her.

Upon seeing the girl's brilliance and the challenges



strewn on her path, the volunteers and mentors at Light A Lamp project in Kolkata and their acquaintances as far as in The Art of Living community in Australia, pitched in with crowd funding efforts for her education. One of the USA based project partners, Learn Without Barriers INC, too pitched in with sponsorship. Thanks to all their efforts and the girl's diligence, today Aarti is all set to join Sri Sri University as student of B.Com (Hons.). She aspires to become a Chartered Accountant or a Banker.

Author is a mentor with the Light a Lamp project. To know more or contribute to the project, please write to lightalamp@projects.artofliving.org

Homeless Woman in Kerala Gifted a Beautiful House by Volunteers

Kannur, Kerala: Saroja, a daily wage earner in Kannur, is a single mother of two children - a girl who is now studying in Class 10 and a boy who is in Class 8. The family has been living in a makeshift home made of plastic sheets for the last 12 years. With the help of the Panchayat President she sought help from the government but due to some technical and legal formalities they could not be included in the government project.

Her plight caught the attention of some volunteers of The Art of Living when her heart-rending story was published in December 2019 in the Kannur edition of the newspaper Mathrubhumi. When they visited her, they found that her plight was even worse than what was reported. Their so called 'house' was nothing but plastic sheets with no electricity or water. If things were not bad enough already, Saroja was afflicted with a disease of the nervous system.

Sanju Mohan, President of The Art of Living Kannur District Development Committee and Rajeevan, Secretary, formed a sub-committee under this DDC for house construction with KP Prasanth as the Chairman, Vinod Ariyeri as the convener, and Ramesh Ariyeri as the construction supervisor. Prasanth Panunda and Preetha Prasanth prepared the plan for the house. Finances for the construction came from contributions



by The Art of Living volunteers. The construction work that started in December 2019 was delayed by a few months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A beautifully constructed house was finally handed over to Saroja and her children last month. They are now safe and secure, their hearts overflowing with gratitude, their faith in humanity restored.

Building a New Front: The Art of Living Trust

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and an institution like The Art of Living. Today we call for inspirational leadership in all fields and in this organization we have that in abundance. We do not need to reinvent that. The reverence and gratitude that our teachers and volunteers have towards Gurudev help us tide over several issues and human pitfalls that other businesses face, especially issues like communication. Therefore, although we have a wide range of people with very different personalities, we are all bound by a common mission beyond personality issues - that of being an instrument of making Gurudev's vision a reality in the world. Also, with the help from technology and our pyramid organization structure in place i.e., the Trust office, APEX members in the states, zonal, district, taluka coordinators going up to even the village level, communication is fairly smooth and almost instantaneous. Along with this, at the end of the day, there has to be a sense of belongingness, empathy and compassion - which we learn from how Gurudev conducts his work and interactions with everybody. We, as his representatives, have to genuinely demonstrate those qualities. Which means that we will need to have seamless communication with our teachers and volunteers regarding their difficulties and challenges in work as well as in personal life and see to how we can hold their hands through the challenging times and take them along with us. At the end of the day, there is only so much marketing that you can do, if you do not practice what you preach, you will come across as hollow. When you genuinely model yourself on the qualities that Gurudev demonstrates, the vibrations become so much positive, people feel uplifted in that environment and you are able to bring many more people towards knowledge.

■ **What message would you give to our teachers and volunteers on how they can better contribute to the vision that Gurudev has set for us?**

They have to live the knowledge. If they, especially the teachers, go back to the teaching experience they will see after every program how much of transformation they have brought to the lives of people attending it. They can see the joy and gratitude

on their faces. They should go back to that feeling of upliftment at being able to be an instrument of the divine; that for me is inspiration enough. There is so much of unfinished work in the world for us to take on; people are waiting for us. A friend of mine was conducting a course in mainland China. A lady walked up to her after the course and thanked her profusely for saving her life. She informed her that she had given up on life and was researching ways to end it! After the experience of the course, this lady made it her life's mission to help other people who are in similar situations. Interestingly, this case is not unique in The Art of Living, our teachers and volunteers come across such cases every day. Can there be a better inspiration! You are a saviour already! Just live by the knowledge and every moment ask yourself, 'what more can I do to make my life really worthwhile?' Reach out to people and make it worthwhile.

■ **Where do you see The Art of Living Trust five years from now?**

Well, we will certainly like to fulfil Gurudev's vision, and that's a huge target. We have to put our collective efforts to go out and work very hard to achieve it. At the same time, it cannot be just about the target numbers, it is actually about transforming the Indian society at its very roots. If your roots are strong, the tree is going to be healthy. Unfortunately, we see so many problems in our society - lack of discipline, corruption, violence, addiction, lifestyle disorders etc., that have gotten into people. There is so much that we can do to build a very strong country. The country is not going to change overnight. We also have to engage in character building; people need to believe that there is something we need to do to contribute to the betterment of a nation. This is where our initiatives like Youth Leadership Training Program and Project Bharat become so relevant. Be it these, or programs like Spine Care and other Wellness Programs, Gurudev has given such a beautiful bouquet of offerings to address every stage of human existence. It is my sincere hope and prayer that in the coming time we can help people to wake up and reap benefits of these unique gifts that have come from the Divine.

Researchers at Yale and Harvard Find Sudarshan Kriya Most Effective in Controlling Stress in Students

University students are uniquely vulnerable to stress, both psychological and physiological. In addition to academic and financial demands, pursuing higher education often means leaving home and building new social networks. Campuses are increasingly offering wellness workshops to help young adults manage their stress, but few rigorously controlled studies exist to help determine best practices.

Researchers at the Yale Child Study Center and the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence (YCEI) conducted a study, which tested three skill-building training programs on 135 undergraduate subjects for eight weeks (30 hours total), found that the training program called SKY Campus Happiness, developed by The Art of Living, which relies on a breathing technique called SKY Breath Meditation, yoga postures, social connection, and service activities, was most beneficial. Following the SKY sessions, students reported improvements in six areas of well-being: depression, stress, mental health, mindfulness, positive affect, and social connectedness.

Davonne Lindo '22 B.A., a member of the Yale track team who participated in the SKY Campus Happiness program, said practicing breathing techniques helped her to manage stress from both academics and athletics. "Now that I have these techniques to help me, I would say that my mentality is a lot healthier," Lindo said. "I can devote time to studying and not melting down. Races have gone better. Times are dropping."

Another participant in the SKY program, Anna Wilkinson '22 B.A., said she was not familiar with the positive benefits of breathing exercises before the training, but now uses the technique regularly. "I didn't realize how much of it was physiology, how you control the things inside you with breathing," Wilkinson said. "I come out of breathing and meditation as a happier, more balanced person, which is something I did not expect at all."

At another study led by Michael R. Goldstein, PhD,



a student at yale

Research Fellow in the Department of Neurology at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC), the teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School, researchers found that The Art of Living's SKY Happiness Program which is a 4-day, 18-hour program that focuses on yogic breathing—a meditative practice that involves slow and fast patterns of breath—improved participants' ability to cope with stress, as measured by both self-report and heart rate data, compared to a workshop that focused on cognitive approaches to stress. 108 undergraduate and graduate students participated in the study. The findings appear in the Journal of American College Health.

"Due to the many challenges and transitions associated with life as a student, coping strategies become paramount in supporting young adults' health, developmental growth and social relationships," said Goldstein, who conducted the research as a graduate student at University of Arizona prior to joining BIDMC. "We investigated the effects of two wellness workshops with contrasting approaches to stress management, and while both were popular with participants, the one that incorporated yogic breathing demonstrated benefits that were stronger, longer-lasting, and evident across more measures of wellness than the cognitive comparison workshop."

Yuvacharyas Construct a House for a Helpless Woman

Sundargarh, Odisha: Devki Sahu is a poor, childless, 52-year-old widow who has been living alone for the last 11 years in Hamirpur village in Sundargarh. With the onset of the monsoon rains, her humble home made of mud began to crumble. Having no source of income, she approached the local government authorities for help but none was forthcoming. She then approached some volunteers of The Art of Living's YLTP. When these volunteers approached the government officials to find out what could be done to assist her, they were told that in the current situation where the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed all other matters to the background, it would probably take two years for her to get any assistance from the government. The volunteers then contacted the YLTP National Desk, Bengaluru, for help. The YLTP desk coordinated with their faculty in Rourkela, Girija Shankar, who readily offered financial assistance and the volunteers immediately set about constructing a house. On August 18, 2020, the yuvacharyas presented the newly constructed weather-proof, concrete house to Devki. She is now safely cocooned in her house without having to worry about the rain washing her shelter away.



Boosting Immunity Through Ayurveda, Yoga, and Meditation

Now that the lockdown is easing out and people are coming out, utmost importance must be given for immunity. Prevention is hundred times better than cure. You don't realize you have a headache until and unless you have a headache. In the same way, we don't pay attention to our health until and unless we get sick.

Ayurveda has always recommended *Swasta Vritta* – they don't believe in just curing diseases, they teach you how to live healthily. Treating disease is a secondary thing - when you fail to protect your health. Now to protect health, it is the immunity that we need to boost. Our food system itself, if we observe, gives us many clues on how we should keep ourselves healthy. You know, our grandmothers had a pattern of eating food - they knew if today is Ekadashi, tomorrow on Dwadashi the first thing they have to eat is certain vegetables, certain leaves, certain curries have to be made, certain spices have to be used in the food – these were all ingrained in our society. For example, turmeric. Without turmeric our cuisine does not start at all. When turmeric is administered with pepper, it boosts our immune system. There are many such practices that we have in ayurveda all of which point us towards a healthy living, a healthy lifestyle. Unfortunately, this has not been made available in a scientific language to the world population.

One in four persons today in the world is affected by mental illness. And 16 trillion dollars will be spent just on mental health by 2030. Depression and depressive disorder has become a global phenomenon. The World Health Organization is saying today that the biggest challenge to the world today is mental health. It is through yoga and meditation that we can boost our immune system – tremendously; along with that, Ayurveda. Ayurveda also recommends pranayama and exercise. So we need to pay attention and bring to the world the importance of ayurveda and yoga in boosting our immunity. When the immune system is strong, it can fight any disease.

Recent scientific studies on meditation have revealed that stress can be managed, or stress can be eliminated, by yoga and meditation. It is stress that brings down our immune system. If our mind is not in a proper state, then it affects our body, it affects our immune system. So, a strong mind is the key to having a healthy body. You may have a robust body but if the mind is weak, your health will be short-lived. So I would say it is the mental strength that is of utmost importance - the most important thing to pay attention to in these days of lockdown around the world when people inside their homes are getting depressed and suicide rates have increased – have skyrocketed – this has to be addressed and can be addressed through yoga, pranayama, meditation, and ayurveda.

The holistic style of living which is indigenous to this country needs to be brought to every home, to every door on the planet. This is our responsibility. Like anyone anywhere in the world might say, if there is a solution for any pandemic or any disease it is our responsibility to see that it reaches everybody.

Ayurveda is not some mumbo jumbo but a very scientific, proven, ancient system of medicine which can be scrutinized at any time applying scientific parameters. It has stood the test of time and helped people from all walks of life since ages to restore health and to prevent diseases.

Words of Wisdom



Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Same with yoga. Yoga is popular today around the world, more than ayurveda I would say. Two billion people around the world – nearly one-third of the world population practices yoga for fitness, for wellness, for mental peace, for robust health – may not be so much for attaining spiritual heights in life but definitely for health reasons people are practicing around the world. Even this has stood the test of time and scrutiny of scientific methodology.

Ayurveda and yoga together should be established in their rightful place in the world of health and wellbeing throughout the world - for that we need to take the right steps of scientific appraisal, testimonies, proper recording and documentation – much needed documentation in these days. In the past few years this has been done to a great extent.

Here, I would also like to mention one thing – there is a lot of prejudice about herbal medicines, about ayurveda. Same as it was with yoga also. When we started yoga and meditation around the world, there was a lot of prejudice about yoga. The mainstream population in the world, even including India, they thought it is not for common people. It is for some seekers, some sadhus on the banks of the Ganges, standing on one leg, with ashes on their body – this type of imagination or this type of perception was existing about yoga. I am talking about 40 years back. Then people started finding the benefits of yoga - health benefits – mental health, physical health, spiritual health, emotional stability - then it became popular. The product speaks for itself. Same is with ayurveda. We need to bring this to people around the world and work with the local governments of those countries who have prejudice against ayurvedic medicine. See, Chinese medicine, which is an offshoot of ayurveda I would say, has got more acceptance around the world. It is accepted by health insurance people, it is accepted by the government, but ayurveda is yet to be accepted.

As I said, the prejudice against ayurveda should be done away with. It should start in our own country. In this country also I find many practicing doctors who have a lot of prejudice against ayurvedic system of medicine. I would request them to take an unbiased, fresh look into this system of medicine.

Excerpts from Gurudev's inaugural address at the launch of 'Ayush for Immunity' e-campaign launched by the Ministry of AYUSH

Sanitization Drive in Damoh



By Ram Asheesh

Damoh, Madhya Pradesh: In the times gripped by the Corona Virus, 15 volunteers from Kurmi Kshatriya Samaj organization in Hatta, Damoh, along with The Art of Living volunteers, Rajbahadur Patel and Udaybhan Patel took up the task of sanitizing their villages and nearby crowded areas. As soon as the lockdown was imposed in March 2020, these volunteers contributed funds to get a 500 litre tank and mounted it on their tractor to which they added a medicine sprinkler, ones that are used in agriculture farms. In a day 1500+ litres of sanitizer was sprayed across the streets, hospitals and other public places. Between March and the end of May, sanitization was conducted continuously in all government offices, vegetable and other markets, quarantine centres and crowded places of Damoh district and specifically at the residential areas of police personnel, doctors and officers serving at the frontline. This covered several areas including Patera, Patharia, Batiyagarh, Magaron, Fatehpur, Gaisabad, Kumhari, Narsinghar, Madiyado, and

Hinota. A total of 55 villages were sanitized in this period.

Volunteer Udaybhan Patel mentions that the villagers were so overwhelmed with this service that in many places they were welcomed with garlands, tilak and aarti. In several places, people expressed their gratitude by offering Rs 10 or 20, which also helped the volunteer team in meeting some percentage of the expenses. Villagers also reported that with regular sanitization the menace of mosquitoes and flies was also eliminated from their villages. One of the volunteers who got married during this time, donated the money from his wedding gifts to this cause. The volunteers are still continuing the service on Sundays when the district is under lockdown.

Members of this volunteer team were honoured under the direction of Union Minister (Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India) by District Panchayat Head Shivcharan Patel, Hatta MLA P L Tantwai, Patharia MLA Rambai Parihar and District President of Cooperative Bank Patharia, Gaurav Patel.

Drug-Free Campus Campaign Launched in Chandigarh University



As a second edition of the 'Drug-Free India' campaign that was launched in Chandigarh University in 2019, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar on 24th August launched the 'Drug-Free Campus' national campaign at Chandigarh University. 45,000 students and faculty from all over India participated in the live session which was jointly convened by The Art of Living Foundation and the university. Encouraging the students Gurudev said, "Challenges are a part and parcel of youth life. Drugs rob you of your youthfulness, valor and creativity. Meditation makes it easier for one to come out of addictions."

Seva Highlights

Shramdaan and Tree Plantation by Volunteers in Bilaspur

Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh: On August 9, 2020, the Taru Foundation Group, which is a group of volunteers created by The Art of Living family in Bilaspur for their tree plantation project, did Shramdaan (donation in the form of labor) at the Dnyaneshwar Shiva Temple complex. Shramdaan was followed by planting of saplings.



Throughout the year, once a week, members of this group set out to clean local temples, public places and roads. In addition, during the rainy season they plant trees for the conservation of environment. Part of the campaign includes going to each and every home in their village and donating two saplings of fruit-bearing trees to each family. They plant the trees along with the family members and make them take the sankalpa to nurture the saplings. In this manner, both the volunteers and the villagers take on the responsibility of caring for the saplings that they plant. Yogesh Kannauj, The Art of Living faculty, says the team has been engaged in cleanliness drives and tree plantation campaigns for the last 5 years. They have planted more than 50,000 trees so far. Just last year alone, they planted 12,000 trees. This year, they have planted around 5000 trees so far.

Tree Plantation on Independence Day

Umbergaon, Gujarat: The Art of Living family in Umbergaon in association with Human Rights Association for Protection celebrated the 74th Independence Day on August 15, 2020, with a tree plantation drive titled "Let's Serve the Nation by Planting Trees." The



campaign was set off by planting saplings at the Primary Health Center, Umbergaon, and Sai Baba Temple, Dehari. Elaborating on the project, Farooq, The Art of Living faculty, said that the team of 45 volunteers had taken a pledge to nurture and take care of the saplings planted at both these sites. After planting the saplings, the volunteers also cleaned both the premises.

Sweets and New Clothes Bring Cheer to These Daily Wager 'Sisters'

Ambah, Madhya Pradesh: This year, volunteers of The Art of Living along with members of Anand Club and Rotary Club decided to celebrate Raksha Bandhan with women daily wage laborers. On 3 August 2020, 100 women laborers tied the sacred Raksha Sutas on the wrists of these volunteers and in exchange received new garments and sweets. This gesture put a bright smile on the faces of these women who are facing a hard time due to the pandemic. The daily wagers also received masks and were taught to use them properly. They were also made aware of the importance of washing hands to prevent getting infected.



Raksha Bandhan with Frontline Workers

Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh: On August 3, 2020, volunteers of The Art of Living Jhansi and members of Uttar Pradesh Jila Udyog Mahila Vyapar Mandal celebrated Raksha Bandhan by tying Rakhi on the wrists of frontline workers including army personnel, police personnel, doctors, nurses, police, grocery shopkeepers, yoga instructors, sweepers, auto rickshaw drivers, and others. Kanchan Ahuja, The Art of Living faculty, stated that this year the pandemic prevented many sisters from going personally to tie rakhi on their brothers and as such this year's Raksha Bandhan had provided an opportunity to open our hearts to others.



Gurudev Says: We Have to Move Towards Atma Nirbhar Bharat



On Janmashtami

By Padma Koty

During August 2020 Gurudev interacted with influencers who head institutions and associations as well as individuals from diverse backgrounds and guided them towards moving their valid concerns to productive, proactive action. Without exception, those who sought his counsel received his insights and pragmatic solutions to their specific questions about the way forward in the crisis. There were existential questions aplenty, too.



On 2nd August 2020, Gurudev hosted noted film director, Madhur Bhandarkar. To Bhandarkar's query on competition, stress and one-upmanship in the glamour industry, Gurudev said, "Don't be afraid of competition. Life is bigger than victory and loss. A little Vedanta – asking 'Who am I?' or 'What is life?' will keep out depression and suicidal tendencies."

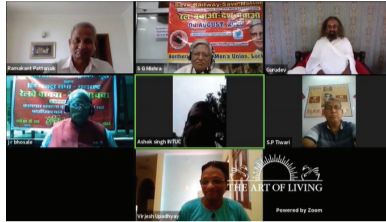


'Mental Health and Well-being in Covid 19' was the theme of a discussion Gurudev held with Jagan Chapagain, Secretary General, Federation of Red Cross

and Red Crescent Societies which was moderated by Filiz Odabas-Geldiy, Executive Director, IAHV. Gurudev, commending Red Cross for its service to humanity, said, "Mental health plays an important role, especially during disasters and pandemics. Meditating during crises is like wearing a PPE kit." He also recommended that volunteering should start at a young age. Then one gets the tendency to put others above self.

On 8th August, Gurudev delivered the inaugural address at an event titled 'Manthan' on the significance of communal harmony and national integration in present crises, which was also attended by Umar Siddiqui, President, ACA India & Founder, Idea of India; Deepak Sandhu, Former Chief Information Commissioner of India; Dr P S Pasricha, Former DGP, Maharashtra; Richard Stockdale, Chartered Fellow CISI UK; S Sathyamoorthy, CEO, ACA India & Former Deputy CAG; S M Khan, Former Press Secretary, President of India and Maulana K R Sajjad Nomani, Renowned Islamic Scholar. Gurudev said corruption is like a cancer and destroys all values by uprooting them. When corruption affects the economy, moral and ethical standards also fall.

On 9th August, in a program watched by lakhs of *shramiks* (workers), Gurudev conferred with prominent Trade Union leaders including Shiva Gopal Mishra, Ashok Singh, S P Tiwari, R N Parashar, J R Bhosale and Virjesh Upadhyaya who represented 5 crore workers of India. He told the leaders that the current situation is like an emergency, so we have to stay united if we are to take the nation towards the objective of Atma Nirbhar Bharat. Gurudev likened the migrant laborers to Narayana



and said where the laborer and the farmer are not respected and where they are sad, that country cannot progress and that society cannot be healthy.

On 9th August, Gurudev interacted with film director Ashwini Iyer Tiwari. He opined that when you want to be liked by others, that is the way to disappointment. We should not expect enlightened behavior from everyone. On being trolled he said, "It will make you stronger emotionally." Gurudev shared that he engages with young people on social media to bring about a sense of connectivity and also to bring them to wisdom and knowledge which they can integrate into their lives.



'Equanimity in Uncertain Times' was the theme of a discussion that Gurudev had with 18 noted ophthalmologists from across India on 9th August 2020. He agreed that anxiety, tension and depression are part of the medical profession, but giving attention to our breath, he said, gives us a say on our involuntary nervous system. The in-depth sharing by the doctors gave a peep into the private side of the profession and into Gurudev's empathic understanding of the concerns that beset them. He emphasized that the doctor's positive vibrations and prayerful state of mind will give solace to the patients in fear.

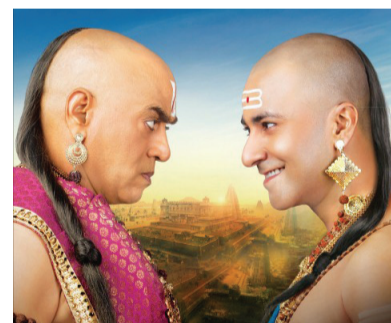
On 10th August, Gurudev spoke at 'Velundu', an online celebration of music and wisdom with revered Gurus, spiritual leaders and artistes from Tamil Nadu. Bhakti is the *Saaram* (essence) of life. When we think of Muruga we get rid of fear and sorrow. In Muruga Tattva, there is Iccha Shakti, Gnana Shakti and Kriya Shakti and it brings beauty,

bliss and happiness in life.



On 11th August, leading the Janmashtami celebrations, Gurudev said Krishna is a *Chitchor* who steals minds. The highlight of Nandotsav celebrations was a grand Annakoot Darshan where 4500+ dishes that were prepared by families from across Gujarat were presented together via video conference. Gurudev said that this is the first time when, with the aid of technology, such a creative event is being held. "This is the spirit of The Art of Living, that nothing can quell us, not even Corona," he said.

On 13th August, in 'Tenali Rama and Tathachary', Gurudev had a humor-filled and lively chat with Krishna Bharadwaj and Pankaj Berry who essay the lead roles in the popular TV serial 'Tenali Rama.' Gurudev said that everything that has passed is like a *smrithi*, a memory. Keep aside this *smrithi* and come into the present moment. Just remembering that the whole of life is a dream, we will become calm. This is the *Leela* of life.



On 14th August, Gurudev addressed an event 'Ayush for Immunity' organized by the Ministry of Ayush. Gurudev said Ayurveda gives primacy to *Swastha Vritta* – which prescribes how to live a healthy life and maintain good health. Treating disease is secondary in Ayurveda.

Heart to Heart, on 16th August saw Dinesh Vijan, film director,



asking several existential questions. Gurudev said, 'Don't fight with negative emotions. They come when you are not in your natural state, when your energy is low, so practices will help us enhance our energy.'

On 23rd August, The Art of Living and NASSCOM held a conversation of Gurudev with industry leaders on 'Distributed Workforce and its Impact on Mental Health, Motivation and Culture'. The Welcome address was given by U B Prawin Rao, Chairman – NASSCOM Executive Council Chief Operating Officer & Whole-time Director of the Board – Infosys The session was moderated by Jagdish Mitra, Member – NASSCOM Executive Council Chief Strategy Officer & Head of Growth – Tech Mahindra. Gurudev conveyed to them that conflict is present in all aspects of life. When one has acceptance and the right intention, then any conflict can be resolved peacefully.

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