

SEVA TIMES



P₂ Minding the Money Matters



P₃ Empowering Women in Jharkhand

SEVA Snippets

Gurudev Continues Efforts to Restore Peace in Venezuela

Continuing his efforts for peace and dialogue, Gurudev's second visit to Venezuela was marked by meetings with Juan Guaidó, the political leader of Venezuela and president of the national assembly, and with Maria Corina Machado, one of the opposition leaders. Both sides have assured Gurudev that the dialogue would begin again in the best interests of the nation. Gurudev requested President Nicolas Maduro to release political prisoners. "The suffering is mounting continuously. I urge political leaders to come to the table, talk, and resolve the conflict as soon as possible," said Gurudev.

Millions of Americans Meditate with Gurudev

Millions of people from all walks of life, religions, ages, races, genders, and political persuasions joined Gurudev in a guided meditation at "America Meditates" which was simultaneously organized in 129 nations across U.S. on July 24, 2019. The main event which was held at Denver City Park in Denver, Colorado, was marked by inspiring talks by leaders and uplifting music by celebrity artists. While thousands were physically present at the event, millions of others joined them online from over 116000 locations in 106 countries. As Gurudev always says, "When so many people meditate together at the same time, it brings so many positive vibrations, a lot of coherence in the atmosphere."

World Renowned Vastu Experts Gather for the First Global Vastu Conference

Under the aegis of The Art of Living, the first Global Vastu Conference was held at its International Centre in Bangalore on August 17th and 18th, 2019. Highly sought after and esteemed Vastu experts from all over the world participated in the conference and discussed contemporary applications of Vastu principles that have a significant bearing on various aspects of our life. Daivajna Sri. K. N. Somaya (Guest of Honor), Pt. Sanjay Rath, Sri Bangalore Niranjan Babu, Dr. N H Sahasrabuddhe, Sashikala Ananth, and Sudha Pai were some of the distinguished Vastu experts who attended the conference. Some of the topics discussed in the two-day conference were: Vastu and Spirituality, Global Vastu, Vastu for Everyone, and Remedial Vastu for Business.

Art of Living Rushes Relief to Flood-Affected States

 | Padma Koty

The year 2019 has seen flooded rivers, record rainfall, and cloudbursts inundating large areas in several States. Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka, Punjab, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Bihar were affected. Landslides and cloudbursts in States like Uttarakhand, and release of water from dams and barrages in others, have added to the danger. Hundreds of lives have been lost and thousands of people have been displaced.

Assam bore the brunt, with 30 of its 33 districts reeling under the flood fury which has taken lives, homes, standing crops and precious wildlife and displaced 54 lakh people. Art of Living volunteers distributed material to 75,000 persons from 17,000 families using various modes of transport like wooden boats, canoes, and even banana rafts. For Majuli, the goods had to be loaded and unloaded four times during transportation.

In Maharashtra, volunteers gathered from Mumbai, Pune, Satara, Solapur, Kolhapur and Sangli and distributed 35 tons of relief material which included food, groceries, mineral water and even animal feed. In Kolhapur and Sangli district alone, 35 workshops were conducted benefiting more than 25,000



Volunteers packing relief material in North Karnataka



Ferrying relief material across a swollen river in Bihar



Cleaning up after the floods in Kerala



Navigating across flooded streets to distribute relief material in Assam



Volunteers braving waist-deep waters in Sangli, Maharashtra

trauma-stressed people.

In Wayanad District of Kerala, where the River Kabini inundated homes and standing crops, YLTP teams distributed a large amount of relief material. In Kannur, they rescued 400 people from 100 houses and cleaned 150 homes of mud and silt. In Malappuram, where the river Chaliyar changed direction hundreds of YLTP volunteers worked

round the clock clearing homes and temples and distributing special kits. Several landslides took lives and destroyed homes and the volunteers cleared roadblocks caused by the landslides to enable the passage of rescue vehicles and equipment and held Ayurveda medical camps, meditation, and trauma-relief classes.

Volunteers in Karnataka distributed

more than 10 tons of relief materials to over 40,000 affected people in villages of Northern Karnataka. And in Bihar, relief materials were sent on boats to Darbhanga and Khagaria, besides other places. Medical camps were also organized. Corporates contributed with their CSR initiatives. The above pictures give you a glimpse of the flood relief operations by our dedicated volunteers in various states.

Development Project Begins in 133 Gram Panchayats of Jharkhand

 | Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti

The Art of Living has entered into a partnership with The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR), Government of India, to undertake development activities for the panchayats and rural communities in India. They will jointly execute an Action Research project for Sustainable Development through Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) across 133 Gram Panchayats of Jharkhand, in the tenure between 2019-2022. This initiative would be employed to orient the Mukhiyas and other elected representatives as leaders of Beacon Panchayats. It will also orient the Self-help group women, along with the Gram Panchayat coordinators and sarpanches on the better understanding of their roles and its functioning. Sensitization workshops would be conducted for making the gram panchayats gender-just and child-friendly. Selected local people will be trained on economic activities. People in these communities will be mobilized and provided guidance for skill development in collaboration with Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY). Along with these, costless development activities will be undertaken on a large



50 Art of Living volunteers trained as facilitators for Action Research Project for Sustainable Development through Gram Panchayat Development Plan in Jharkhand

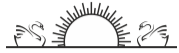
scale. As a curtain raiser to the project, a training of 50 project staff was concluded at the NIRD&PR campus in Hyderabad from 29th July - 10th August 2019. It was attended by the project staff of VVKI, officials of NIRD&PR as well as officials from the Department of Rural Development, Government of Jharkhand. On the occasion, W R Reddy, Director General NIRD&PR, Radhika Rastogi, Deputy Director General, NIRD&PR, Prawin Toppo, Secretary, RD(PR), Government of Jharkhand, Dilip Kumar Pal, Project Lead Consultant, NIRD&PR, Dr. C. Kathiresan, Associate Professor &

Head of the Centre for Panchayati Raj, NIRD&PR, Dr. Anjan Kumar Bhanja, Associate Professor, NIRD&PR, and several other subject experts addressed the participants.

The training included lectures, interactive sessions, brainstorming sessions, presentations, panel discussions, participatory reading in small groups and screening of audio and video clips on thematic issues. The trainees were made aware of the finer nuances of the workings of Panchayati Raj institution for the effective execution of the project. From the sessions spread across 13 days, the key objectives were to have a clear vision

about strengthened panchayat and work on the fundamental requirements like motivating behavioural change among individuals and society, facilitate gram panchayat offices to be kept open every day and staff to be available, harness the power of youth for overall development, target a 100% attendance in gram sabhas, make the standing committees more active, ensure all eligible children go to the anganwadi centres, implement the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution of India completely and, mainly, improve the life and livelihood of the people through panchayats. All participants were certified at the end of the training.

Temple Waste Management Project: Precious Compost from Floral Waste



| Padma Koty

Behind every Art of Living Project is a holistic cause-effect-solution approach. Consider the Temple Waste Management Project of the SSRDP (Sri Sri Rural Development Program) that is helping temples convert their floral offerings into compost, thereby averting pollution of water bodies while enabling the respectful disposal of flowers offered by devotees with love and respect to the deities of these temples. Further, the compost is used by the temples themselves for their agricultural farms. A win-win-win solution for the devotees, the temple authorities, and the water bodies!

The SSRDP Trust acts as a bridge between urban and rural India for inter-cultural interactions, knowledge, technology, and human values, focusing on rural empowerment. The Solid Waste Management (SWM) Project is part of SSRDP's Green Energy Scheme to create an infrastructure for rural income generation based on initiatives to revive, maintain, and keep a clean, green environment. The Temple Waste Management is one such SWM project.

What was the origin of this project? When Gurudev was approached with the suggestion of converting the large quantities of floral waste of temples into gual (organic color) or agarbatthis, he expressed that floral offerings to the Divine carried the sentiments and deep reverence of the devotees and so ideally should not be put to such end-uses. He advised that it would be better to convert it into manure and use it for fertilizing the earth. And this became the guiding principle for the Temple Waste Management Project.

Thus today the discarded floral offerings that

would have ended up in water bodies and caused pollution are being converted to high-quality soil conditioning fertilizer. These composting plants have been installed at various temples across India and have the capacity to generate 200-400 tons of organic manure in a day. In approximately eleven days, 80 per cent of the organic matter is decomposed and converted into manure. It is worth noting that in temples in south India, banana leaves are also being composted.

The sales proceeds of the compost make these projects viable and at some temples the compost is sold to rural farmers while local youth get employment opportunity at the projects. The participating temples' precincts are kept clear of waste with non-biodegradable waste being segregated at source. Yet another benefit: rural communities are heavily dependent on water bodies and the TWM Project prevents organic waste matter from entering them.

The first such plants were set up at Dakshineswar Temple in West Bengal and Kamakhya Temple in Assam. Today a total of 19 plants have been installed - 15 in places of worship and four in municipal corporations.

The differentiator for the entire Temple Waste Management Project is that Gurudev's approach of keeping in mind the sentiments and sensitivities of devotees towards their temple offerings has resulted in the generation of tons of valuable compost! With the methodology of the project being reliable and replicable, it can be expected that more and more temples across India will join this praise-worthy initiative.

Encouraging Farmers to go the Natural Way



| Seva Times Network

Shobha is one of the successful farmers in Maharashtra trained in natural farming techniques by The Art of Living's Sri Sri Institute of Agricultural Sciences & Technology Trust. Ever since she and her son underwent Agri TTP under the guidance of Dr. Prabhakar Rao just last year, they have been reaping good profits by adopting natural farming techniques like mixed cropping and mulching to grow a variety of crops on their agricultural land.

After completing her training, Shobha was eager to share her new found knowledge with other farmers in her area. On talking to them, it struck Shobha that though the local farmers were interested in giving natural farming a try, they they did not have the confidence or the support system to start with. What better way to convince them than by showing them through example? So, she decided to develop a model farm and prove to the local farmers that not only does Sri Sri Natural Farming reduce farmers' investment, it also increases their produce. In fact, it enables them to plough back their entire earnings into

their crops unlike chemical farming which entails heavy expenditure on fertilizers and takes away a significant chunk of their income. In addition, natural farming protects the soil from degradation whereas repeated use of chemicals robs the land of its fertility and makes it unfit for farming over time.

"I learned that if you really want to grow something, you don't need chemicals. You just need to observe nature and understand how it works, like our ancestors used to. Natural farming enriches the soil and reduces the cost of investment," says Shobha.

Shobha has seen an increase in production of both vegetables and sugarcane on her field. This has helped strengthen her belief in natural farming and she is now encouraging other villagers to learn more about this technique. She is training the local farmers in natural farming techniques and is teaching them all about making natural fertilisers, insecticides, and pesticides. She gives inspirational talks to the farmers, telling them about the advantages of natural farming. She motivates farmers to try natural farming on a



small patch of land to start with - if they have five acres of land, they could begin with just half acre and see how it works out for them, comparing the difference between natural and chemical farming. She goes to the village three days a week to spread awareness and conduct training sessions.

Sri Sri Natural Farming borrows from the wisdom of the Vedas and our ancient Rishis a methodology that comes from a deep understanding of how nature enables life through mutually beneficial relationships. "Most farmers here had lost their connection with nature, but now many of them are getting motivated to go the natural way," says Shobha.

Learning from the EXPERTS

Minding the Money Matters



Prakash Balwani lead an illustrious career as Vice President-F&A with Reliance Industries Ltd. and headed the Project - Accounts Payable department at Mumbai involving investment of more than 150000 Crs. A financial wizard, he has graced several roles in his experience of more than 40 years. Recently, post his retirement, he has busied himself as the COO of The Art of Living Social Projects. Between pushing project prospects and ensuring no muddling in money matters, he keeps the team enthralled with anecdotes of a lifetime.

Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti in conversation with Prakash Balwani.

■ What are the best financial practices that an organisation like The Art of Living can adopt for implementation of its social projects across India?

We are accountable to society and to the donor for judicious use of the money that they have entrusted us with. To ensure this, organisations can adopt a few practices, like, first, separate accounts should be maintained for receipt and expenditure of each project and also for each source of funding. Second, it is important to predefine the process of using funds for the projects with proper authorisation matrix for the money that has been spent. Third, the original vouchers and bills should be retained for a certain period of time. Next, for soft projects i.e. other than brick and mortar project, like a skill development program or a program for awareness on menstrual health and hygiene practices, documentation, like photographs, participant details, attendance sheets, recording of GPS locations should be done with utmost care. Above all, there should be strict compliance with all commercial laws.

■ What are the key points to be kept in mind for making the budget of a project?

It might be an uphill task to make an absolutely accurate budget, nevertheless, we can make it reasonably accurate by ensuring a few things. It is very important to first study the finer requirements of the project and then take guidance from a subject matter expert. Thereafter, all possibilities of expenses in the project should be detailed out carefully. Based on this, quotations for every expense should be collected from the market. Along with these necessary steps, few crucial aspects should not skip the mind. Like, the inflation factor should always be considered while planning a budget. The budget you plan today might not hold good the next year, more so for long term projects. Today an item might cost you Rs.100, next year it might become Rs.110. So if you don't plan for that, your budget will go offset. You should be careful not to be in a shortage of funds at the end of the project. The time taken for obtaining various approvals from different agencies, government and others should also be considered. However, no matter how carefully you chalk out a budget, you cannot predict everything in advance; some or the other development will surprise you. Thus, some provisions should be made for the contingencies of finance, time or manpower.

“Who will request for the money and who will be authorised to approve the expenditure, all these should be unambiguously defined in advance.”

■ How can a field volunteer engage in better financial management at his/her level?

A field volunteer needs to feel total belongingness with the work that he is doing and the finances that are at his/her disposal. When he/she inculcates the culture of ownership and accountability and knows that there is an accountability that lies towards the donor and the society at large then every penny will be spent wisely with thorough consideration.

■ How to safeguard a project against financial pilferage?

By putting the detailed expenditure process and authorisation matrix to spend the money in place. Besides this audit tools can be used, two-way matching concept etc., as far as possible. How to spend the money, who will request for the money and who will be authorised to approve the expenditure, all these should be unambiguously defined in advance.

■ What can the two very different environments of a corporate and non-profit learn from each other?

Ah! (*long sigh*). There is a day and night difference between the two environments. Nonprofits can learn a few things from the corporates. Like the corporates, the NGOs can implement yardsticks and mechanisms to monitor that the activity is finished within timeline. There is a difference in attitude, i.e., in a corporate somebody is accountable for the task to be finished as required and within time; whereas, in an NGO, most times people function with the thought process of 'we are doing something, let us see how much we can do'. This difference should be mitigated. In the corporate sector, a fixed authority is given to someone at every level for liability. NGOs too can have that in place.

What coportates can learn is that like the NGOs they can work keeping the attitude of service on their mind. A corporate sees the growth of the organisation and the growth of the employee, mostly in terms of money. Here they can learn from a non-profit to also look into the parameters of satisfaction of the society they are working in. Now, of course the corporates have been mandated to work for the society under the CSR activities, but the service attitude has to come to the forefront, from within. Very few corporates think for society directly, first they see the numbers in profits.

■ Most of our projects are operational in rural India, mostly by volunteers. Sometimes having proper invoices for every penny spent becomes a challenge. What is the solution in such cases?

Effort should be made for procuring proper invoice for every expenditure. We as an NGO are accountable to the donor and the society. Therefore, even a field volunteer when he/she spends money, should be very careful about the fact that the money is spent in the right place. Everyone should exercise due diligence while making any expenditure and keep proper record of it. If, let's say they buy stationery from a village shop that does not have an invoice with proper GST registration, the volunteer should at least get a voucher signed. But the occurrence of such cases should be reduced to a minimum. In every project we need to educate our field volunteers about these things. One may not be able to do everything perfectly, but there is a means to control the finances.

SEVA Snippets

Wave of Bliss Sweeps the Nation

Over 75,000 people from diverse backgrounds participated in the pan India Happiness Program from August 16-18, 2019. Participants joined the program from over 2500 locations and learned the powerful Sudarshan Kriya and life-transforming practical wisdom directly from Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar himself.

Desilting by Volunteers Creates Water Storage Capacity of 7.7 Cr. Liters

Volunteers of The Art of Living with the support of CSR and Overseas Volunteer for a Better India (OVBI) carried out desilting of nalas and a river in Pangri Gosavi, a village in Partur Taluk, Jalna, Maharashtra. Volunteers cleared 47,443 Cu.M of silt from nalas, 2947 Cu.M of silt from Deep CCTs, and 26,939 Cu.M of silt from the Nangartash river, to create a water storage capacity of 7.7 Crore Liters.

Desilting of Nalas in Mauda Creates Water Storage Capacity of 160 Cr L

In 2018 The Art of Living family in Nagpur led by Manish Badyani and Sandeep Shirkhedkar started desilting canals in Mauda Taluk in Maharashtra as part of a water conservation project. With CSR funding, contributions from the State Government, and support of the local villagers, a total of 80 km of desilting in 13 nalas across 38 villages of Mauda has been carried out until now creating a water storage capacity of 160 crore liters.

Seva Highlights

Blood Donation Camp in Molela

Volunteers of The Art of Living had organized a Blood Donation Camp for the eighth time in Molela on the occasion of the 77th birthday of Bhanwarlal Dalichand Bohra, a social worker and two-time Bhamashah Award winner, on August 18, 2019. A total of 67 units of blood was collected. Gulab Chand Kataria, former Home Minister of Rajasthan, who was the chief guest on the occasion, was full of praise for the many service projects undertaken by The Art of Living.

Sanitary Napkin Vending Machine Installed in Abu Road Girls' School

Inspired by PM Narendra Modi's Swachh Bharat and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaigns, The Art of Living family in Abu Road, Rajasthan, installed a sanitary napkin vending machine in Arbud Girls' Higher Secondary School to make life easier for the girls during their monthly cycle. Sangeetha Aggarwal, Art of Living faculty, had an interactive session with the students during which many myths surrounding menstruation were dispelled and the students were given a demonstration of how to use the vending machine. The team intends to install such machines in five more schools in the region.

Sustainable Indigenous Seed Innovation Conference 2.0

 | Dr. Prabhakar Rao

Coming on the heels of the impetus given to Natural Farming by Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman in the Union Budget 2019, it was propitious for The Art of Living to hold the Sustainable Indigenous Seed Innovation 2.0 Conference on July 30, 2019, at The Art of Living International Centre, Bengaluru. Hosted in collaboration with the University of Leeds, UK, and supported by the UK Global Challenges Research Funds, this conference was the fruition of the outcomes and developments that resulted from the Sustainable Seed Innovation 1.0 conference held two years ago at the same venue.

The Art of Living has been promoting Sri Sri Natural Farming for over 11 years and today works with over 22 lakh farmers across the country. One of the main bottlenecks that hinder the widespread deployment of Natural Farming in the country is the non-availability of reliable Desi (indigenous) seeds in sufficient quantity. This is primarily because of two reasons. The first is that farmers have lost the tradition of themselves making seeds from seed, and resort to buying them every season from the market. The second reason is that in its present form, multiplication of Desi seeds does not provide a sustainable business opportunity. However, Desi



Trustees, Project Team, and delegates from Leeds University, UK, with Ashish Bhutani, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, and AP Singh, Advisor-Agriculture, Niti Aayog

seeds offer immense potential because the farmer can multiply them, unlike hybrid or GMO seeds that only the seed companies themselves can multiply.

The Art of Living has undertaken a game-changing initiative to positively impact this landscape. One of the outcomes from the 1.0 conference was to identify the pain points in indigenous seed innovation. The Position Paper that was the outcome of the 2.0 conference was aimed to provide innovative solutions to these pain points using cutting-edge technology like Block Chain and Smart Contracts. Prof. Gregory Radick, Leeds University, in his address, emphasized that even the way we teach genetics in the universities need to be

re-assessed. The key take away from his address was the need to re-look at the Gene-Environment interactions and recognition of the benefits of genetic heterogeneity.

Mrinalini Kochupillai, Technical University of Munich, emphasized the unlimited potential of AI and Block Chain in bringing innovation into Desi seed production. She highlighted the fact that indigenous bio-diversity does not just mean seed bio-diversity, but also the soil microbial diversity, which is also capable of being monetized.

Unlike usual conferences, this conference adopted the innovative "Un-conference" format, which had everybody participating and contributing equally, making the

WE CAN USE
BLOCKCHAIN TO

ESTABLISH A PUBLIC
CREDITING SYSTEM

FOR INDIA'S SUSTAINABLE
SEED INNOVATORS

AND INCENTIVIZE THEM

#SSI 2.0

sessions participatory and lively.

The concluding session with the addresses by Mr. AP Singh, Advisor-Agriculture, Niti Aayog, and Mr. Ashish Bhutani, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, were testimony to the success of the conference. They assimilated the inputs from the conference and acquainted themselves with the impactful work being done by The Art of Living in indigenous seed innovation. They were presented the copies of the Position Paper and undertook to take the information and learning in it into consideration while formulating future policy on Natural farming.

(Dr. Prabhakar Rao is Trustee, SSIASST and the organizing force behind both the Seed Conferences.)

Rural Women Weave their Way to Financial Freedom

 | Chandni Agarwal



Ranchi, Jharkhand: An Art of Living skill training center in Ratu Block, Ranchi, is imparting training to women, under PMKVY, in the handloom sector. Within the short span of five months since it was set up, over 120 women have been trained in handloom skills of which 80 are now working in a cooperative society.

Junaid Alam, who is running the Skill

Center, says that initially it was a challenge to motivate the rural women to undergo training at the center. He and his team had to work hard to mobilize women and girls of the village to upgrade their skills and become economically independent.

The persistence of Junaid and his team has paid off and today, women trained at the center earn around Rs. 5000 per month, depending on the time they are able to devote to weaving after completing their household chores. Bed sheets, blankets, towels, dhotis, and saris are some of the products woven by them which are in great demand. Jharcraft, a government undertaking that aims to create sustainable livelihood opportunities in the rural areas of Jharkhand, provides handloom machines to these women at subsidized rates and also purchases their finished products. The raw materials i.e. threads etc. are also supplied by Jharcraft.

Apart from the handloom sector, women are also being trained in solar

uptight. And when you are uptight, you are not aware of how you behave.

It is better to keep oneself on a higher pedestal – smiling, laughing, accommodating, and accepting that there is politics. Let politics be there, so what? You have to create this confidence that you will move through it.

How to rise above politics?

Our trouble is that we expect everyone to be Mr. or Ms. Perfect! We expect everyone's behavior and dealings to be perfect. We expect everyone to be saints, but they are not. This expectation is the trouble. And when anybody does anything different, we say, "Oh, there is politics!" People's actions are nothing but politics – it doesn't have to be dirty all the time, though sometimes it is. So let it be! It takes quite a bit to rise above all this



Women undergoing Solar Technician Training at the Center

installation and power distribution. After the initial challenges, the Sri Sri Kaushal Vikas Kendra in Ranchi is running successfully and has helped

and keep your mind on the infinite, and that is enlightenment! You rise above it all.

Water is never scared of mud. So, if something is muddy, assume you are water – and you can wash it all off! Just remember this, politics is mud and I am water, I will run over it.

There is a beautiful poem in Kannada, *If someone has built a home on the mountain top and is scared of wild beasts, what can I tell them? If someone has built a home on the sea shore and is scared of the waves, what can I tell them? And if someone has built a home in the middle of a market place and is complaining about the noise, what can I tell them?*

Similarly, when you live on this planet, people will give you compliments and people will give you derogatory

the rural women in gaining skills and earning a livelihood, alongside carrying out their household duties.

remarks – they will create politics. How can you be afraid of politics when you are on this planet? Never complain about people playing politics – that is what they have been doing and will continue to do.

Lord Krishna never complained to anyone about the politics played by the families. He didn't say, "Don't play politics, I will not come to you." No! He was right there! Even during the time of Jesus and Buddha, there was politics.

Wherever there are people, politics is bound to be there. Don't shy away from it and don't worry about it – you be rock solid. What appears to be politics will find its own way out. Have faith that only the best will happen to you and you will be able to do only the best! Keep these aphorisms with you as a treasure.



Words of Wisdom

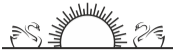
Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

How to Handle Workplace Politics

What is politics?

Different people have different mindsets, and they air their opinions. For a while, these opinions remain and then it all changes. Some people praise you and the same people will make nasty remarks about you – all this is very common. You should take this for granted or you will become

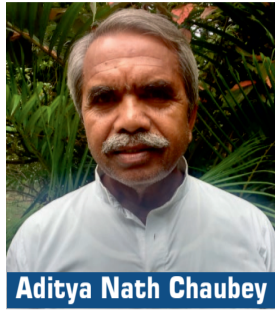
Purging with Peace



| Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti

“Rajni se adhyatm mein aane ka koi matlab nahi hota”, Aditya chuckles as he reminisces on his days in student politics. Aditya Nath Chaubey was born to a God-loving, businessman father and a homemaker mother. Pursuing his higher studies in Varanasi, politics was a far cry for someone like him. But a time came when he could no longer bear to see his fellow student leaders indulge in dirty mudslinging politics and misuse the platform. Thus began his journey. He dived in with the intention to do clean politics and work for development. During his active days in politics a number of wells were constructed, tube wells installed and schools were brought to life. But, in no time his sojourn into politics took several wrong turns. Before Aditya could even realise he got embroiled in violence and like everyone else around him began playing the sordid games of politics. Consequently, a number of cases were lodged against him.

This was the time, in 1999, when Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar was visiting Varanasi. A friend took Aditya to meet him. Gurudev instructed him to undergo the Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP). Being skeptical of the motives of these holy men,



Aditya Nath Chaubey

There was nothing unusual about the affair until he found out that a few of the participants were carrying small country made pistols in their pockets!

he ignored it! The larger part of his family too was against it. His father had already donated a huge amount of his life's savings to a spiritual organisation. Aditya laughs out loud as he recalls how his mother warned him, “sadhū santan ke chakkar mein jaoge to jo bacha kucha hai wo bhi nasht kar doge”. She feared if he got entangled with these holy men, he would waste away whatever little savings they were left with. Aditya had started hating his life by then and nothing seemed to bring back hope or positivity. In such a time when Gurudev said, “If you do good deeds, the impact of the evil deeds that you might have done will diminish on their own.” These words struck him as that tiny flickering light at the end of the tunnel, and in spite of the sceptic voice inside him, he held on to it dearly.

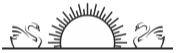
Soon enough he found himself at the other end of violence; a perpetrator had embarked on the journey to become a messenger of peace. After completing his YLTP training, he started volunteering for The Art of Living social initiatives. He wanted to help the youth see life from a more positive perspective and develop a more humane character. And as life would have it, he was immediately sent to work in Sonbhadra of Uttar Pradesh, a place that was brutally tormented by naxalite activities. Entire families and society at large were affected; the naxalites themselves were not having a gala time. Aditya along with a team of volunteers conducted Nav Chetna Shivir for more than 20,000 people from several of these villages. Albeit the naxals would refrain from undergoing the shivirs themselves, but they would send their families across. Once it so happened that the local authorities assumed that some fishy business was going on behind the walls. They threatened the young volunteers with dire consequences. At last, to convince them, they had to be allowed to witness the sessions.

When Aditya qualified as a YLTP trainer, his first task was to conduct the YLTP training in Ballia. The training commenced at one of the local school buildings. There was nothing unusual about the affair until he found out that a few of the participants were carrying small

country made pistols in their pockets! These pistols were infamously put to use to settle internal feuds. Allowing those participants to continue the session would mean putting things in a danger zone but, at the same time, they couldn't be denied for this was the path that lead to transformation. The situation was tricky. Aditya, however, with the experience of working in naxalite regions knew that if several hardened criminals could be transformed, these men could be transformed too. And Sudarshan Kriya did the rest. On the third day of the course, they surrendered their pistols in front of Gurudev's picture that was placed in the room and vowed to walk the path of non-violence.

This experience made Aditya's resolve grow even stronger. Since then there has been no looking back. He has been training rural youth across UP, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Delhi and other places to lead with positivity, confidence and human values. A beaming Aditya says, “After the training the same boys who would while away their time or engage in negative activities, ask what seva they can do for their people and community. They don't just ask me, they go to the villages, ask the villagers what they can do for them and then do shramdaan.” He has also inspired more than 45 youths to become Art of Living Trainers. This journey could not have been more rewarding.

Scoring on Seva Miles



| Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti

A failure in 12th standard had thrust young Tina in a whirlpool of questions. What would happen to her life and career now? Was it all over for her? Little did she know that she was standing at the threshold of a bright new life. Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's visit was planned for Gujarat and as a build up to the visit a large number of The Art of Living programs were being conducted all over town. Tina's elder sister has participated in one of those and then being hugely benefited by it, she inspired here sister to also participate.

However, it was January 2001 and as nature would have it, when the program was only midway, the state was hit by a massive earthquake. The Art of Living immediately mobilized its pool of volunteers and dived into rescue operations. The new participants were also motivated to join in by sourcing funds and aid materials. This was Tina Chauhan's first brush with seva. But Tina had never before spread her arms before anyone; never before asked strangers for help. This was uncharted territory for her; a space she realized within the next couple of days that she could navigate effortlessly and it suddenly opened her up to a new dimension. On the last day of the program, she was asked whether she wanted to continue doing seva. All of a sudden, all doubts about the future went away and a lifetime



Tina Chauhan

“Hum to Guru ke bande hain; hamein kya dar hai!”

yet accustomed to the toils and rigours of living on the field. To begin with, the family that hosted her were accustomed to eating non vegetarian food and Tina was strictly vegetarian. She recalls an often overheard phrase on the streets of Nepal, “Surya ast aur Nepal mast”. The moment sunset happened, alcohol bottles would come out and the ugly face of addiction would show up. With every passing day, Tina learned to find her way through these huddles. In no time she had managed to win many hearts. Her host family, inspired by her, chose to turn vegetarian and one of them even began pursuing the path of seva to become an Art of Living teacher in the coming years. Several people she reached out to in those days were healed of physical ailments through the yoga practices and Sudarshan Kriya that was taught. Today, as an Art of Living teacher, Tina travels unfazed by the prospects of hardship. She says, “hum to



dedicated to seva began.

Within a few years, Tina was instructed to go to Nepal with a few other volunteers. Nepal in 2004 was reeling under Maoism. She started working in Feta, near Birgunj. Though it had been a couple of years now that Tina had been actively volunteering with The Art of Living, yet she was not

Guru ke bande hain, hamein kya dar hai!” She has conducted programs for more than 2000 people across the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bihar and lately she also trained the inmates of a prison in Motihari in East Champaran of Bihar. Her work did not stop there. Tina has been the driving force behind the construction of several toilets in a remote hilly area, 30 kms outside of Dharampur in Valsad district of Gujarat. In 2009, she again worked with her team for the construction of 30 homes in Umarpada of Surat district in Gujarat. Before all these, even when she was still a volunteer, Tina had taken the onus for the construction of several wells and Gobar Gas plants.

Over the years, Tina has experienced grace and abundance spontaneously flow into her life. She recalls a time, many years ago, when she had been working near the border of Gujarat for several days; she had not been able to go home and was running low on cash. It was the festival of Diwali and she had no means to celebrate. A very young Tina was missing her family and the festivities. However, as a true sevak, she continued working without a break. On the day of Diwali, out of the blue, an acquaintance showed up at her door and asked her to come to his place, which was nearby, for the festivities! Tina's smile grows wider as she narrates, “That Diwali I gorged on so much good food and had so much fun!”

Her personal journey of transformation has been no less amazing. From an angry and unsure young girl, Tina has evolved into a calm, confident and dynamic leader.

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