

# SEVA TIMES



**P<sub>2</sub> Joining the Dots**



**P<sub>3</sub> Skill Training: Empowering the Nation's Youth**

## SEVA Snippets

### Gurudev to Mediate for Peace in Venezuela

At a meeting held at the Miraflores Palace in Caracas, on July 8, 2019, the President of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, invited Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar to act as mediator in the process of political dialogue undertaken by the National Government and sectors of the Venezuelan opposition in Barbados.

'We have agreed that Sri Sri Ravi Shankar will help us in all measures, in the process of peace talks, as he helped Colombia. He has been a mediator in several conflicts,' President Maduro pointed out.

### Prison SMART for Inmates in Bihar Jails

As part of the on-going jail reforms, the Prison Department in Bihar has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with The Art of Living to conduct their week-long Prison SMART program for 48,000 inmates lodged in 56 different prisons in the state. This program will be imparted free of cost by The Art of Living faculty. The Prison Department will provide space and other logistic support to the jail inmates. Under this program, the inmates will learn how to handle negative emotions, how to reduce stress, and how to contribute to society in a positive manner. The program is already being conducted in Buxar, Motihari, Siwan, Begusarai, Patna, and Purnia jails.

### Art of Living Partners with Neyveli Lignite Corporation to set up Gaushala

The Art of Living signed a broad term Memorandum of Understanding with Neyveli Lignite Corporation on July 4, 2019, for setting up a gaushala with 100 cows including 20 gir cows to start with, through which efforts will be made to reclaim mining land through integrated natural resource management. This project will stretch over a 5 year period. The company will be providing the funds for setting up the gaushala, procuring cattle, etc., while The Art of Living will be providing the expertise for setting up and running the gaushala and related integrated natural resource management.

## Ambedkar Jeevan Patham : Levelling the Playing Field

 | Padma Koty

Enthusiastic students studying for their college degrees and residing in Social Welfare Hostels, in 13 districts of Andhra Pradesh, are now acquiring foundational skills under the Ambedkar Jeevan Patham program. The program will help them get job-ready and gain workplace-related and interpersonal skills.

Launched on the occasion of Dr. Ambedkar's birth anniversary as a Skill Development Training initiative by the Social Welfare Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh, this program has been developed in collaboration with The Art of Living's SSRDP (Sri Sri Rural Development Program) Trust.

Pola Bhaskar, Director, Social Welfare Board, who is the mentor of the program, strongly felt that underprivileged youth should be given an equal opportunity to learn life- and other skills, just like the children from privileged homes, to brighten their future prospects. It was decided to add personality-development and capacity-building programs to the regular curriculum and thus Ambedkar Jeevan Patham was initiated to brighten the Jeevan Patham (Way of Life) of youth



residing in Social Welfare Hostels who come from remote nooks and corners of Andhra Pradesh and are first-generation learners.

Under this scheme, students in the first year of degree colleges undergo Phase 1 training consisting of English proficiency, and computer and life-skills. During the first 15 days, they undergo personality development training through The Art of Living's Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP.) In just 2 months (April-June) 1896 students were trained by 60 YLTP

trainers. Students who underwent this training say it was something they had wanted and waited for all their lives. They feel it has given them hopes of completing their studies and having a good career, besides enabling them to eventually contribute to society as responsible leaders.

Says Suresh Kore, State Council Member, YLTP, who is enthusiastically heading the Patham Project, "With this program, the students have begun to believe they have a bright future."

In the second and third years, the

students go through Phase-2 training which prepares them for competitive exams and for specific, industry-relevant job roles depending on the students' interests and available infrastructure. Creating effective resumes, searching for jobs through web portals and job drives, excelling in personal interviews and group discussions is also taught.

The Patham Project is, hearteningly, levelling the playing field for these enthusiastic rural and semi-urban youth, and greatly improving their "Jeevan Patham."

## Greening the Hills of Dharampur, Gujarat

 | Thojeja Gurukar

**Surat, Gujarat:** On July 8 2019, The Art of Living Women's Club of Surat distributed over 3600 saplings of fruit bearing trees like mango, custard apple, guava, jackfruit, cashew, chikoo, almond, amla, pipal, banyan, neem, moringa, lemon, etc to 170 tribal farmers of gram Pindval in Dharampur taluk, Valsad district. On July 14, 2019, the club members distributed another 2500+ saplings of fruit bearing trees to the tribal farmers of Parkhej village in Dharampur Taluk.

On a recreational visit to the hills surrounding Pindval, members of the club were in for a shock. The hills had become barren due to rampant deforestation and in spite of receiving heavy rainfall the villages ran out of water in summer due to lack of proper water harvesting methods. Alarmed by the situation, they approached the forest department who generously supplied them with 9000 saplings of medicinal



trees and shrubs for afforestation of the region. In addition, they also arranged for laborers to plant the saplings and have given them the assurance that they will be building trenches to supply water to the saplings in summer. The students of Sarvodaya Parivar Trust helped the club members to transport the saplings to the hills. Taking it a step further, an additional 1200 saplings of bee-friendly trees and shrubs donated by the Navsari Agricultural University were added on for planting at the suggestion of Bela Golwala, Art of Living faculty and Natural Farming trainer. Dr B K Srivastava, Principal,

Navsari Agricultural University, who is a PhD in soil and water management, accompanied the club members and gave them his expert inputs for preventing soil erosion and harvesting rainwater pertinent to that area.

The farmers have been given the responsibility of ensuring proper growth and care of the saplings. In addition to preventing soil erosion, improving the environment, and increasing ground water levels, these trees will give the farmers additional income, improving the economic stability of the deprived tribal farmers, once they begin to bear fruit.

## Volunteers Step In as Assam Keeps Her Annual Tryst with Floods

 | Seva Times Team

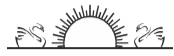


**Nalbari, Assam:** The Art of Living family in Assam has been working round the clock to provide relief to the victims of the floods in Assam which have almost become an annual calamity. Starting from June, as the monsoon rains arrive, disaster threatens the state with the Brahmaputra and

other rivers like Pagaldia flowing over the danger levels. The floods in Assam which began around June 25, 2019, have been particularly harsh this year with 30 of the 33 districts reeling under nature's fury. Braving heavy rains and flood waters, volunteers in Nalbari, one of the worst

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## Hydrate Your Soil by Afforesting... Then Your Rivers Will Flow



| Padma Koty

Amidst all the gloom-and doom news about whiplash climate change and human-induced natural disasters come some glad tidings.

Concerned citizens are uniting to convert barren lands into green paradises that offer a multitude of benefits like restoration of biodiversity, cooling of temperature levels, and reduced air pollution levels. But the most important benefit, and one not easily perceptible, is the renewal of soil moisture and porosity which gradually lead to improved groundwater levels.

Cases in point: In 2017, in Tetvali, Navi Mumbai, The Art of Living's partner organization, International Association for Human Values (IAHV) began one of the biggest urban afforestation projects in India. Today, the 33-acre tract, with 18,000 biodiverse, indigenous plants, stays green even in peak summer. Drip irrigation, specialized care, and, importantly, construction of 3 check dams and 18 bandharas, has resulted in increase in the water table levels!

In Nashik, the Municipal Corporation has, to help in the renewal of a river, taken up planting of 35,000-40,000 bamboo trees along the river bank with the participation of several NGOs, The Art of Living being one of them.

At Jharsa Bandh in Gurugram, 5000 Gurgaonites joined The Art of Living on 21st July, 2019, to create a "Healing Forest Walkway" by creating a mini forest of medicinal plants. Communities will ensure it grows into a forest with rich soil that will facilitate water infiltration while building up groundwater reserves.

The biggest proof of the inherent interdependence cycle between perennial water flow in rivers and the biodiversity on their banks is The Art of Living's River Rejuvenation Project. Mr. Nagesh Hegde, environmental communicator, stresses that river rejuvenation and restoration of the original biodiversity on

the river banks are interdependent. So planting local varieties of plants and trees is essential as is convincing local farmers to not plant monoculture, water-sucking crops like paddy and sugarcane on river banks.

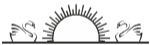
Ensuring plant biodiversity around water bodies ensures that the soil regains/retains its organic content, which restores the soil's water-retention abilities so that when the monsoons come, water is retained and has the chance to percolate into the ground. This regenerates the groundwater, which in turn refreshes the water flow in the streams and rivers and surrounding water bodies.

A fundamental change in the way we understand a source of water (wells, ponds, lakes, rivers and so on) as different from a water resource (say groundwater), and realize the relationship between them, will help communities take informed decisions and better steps towards sustainable water management.

What destructive habits is mankind willing to change to renew its fresh water resources and save itself from sure extinction - sand mining, deforestation, monoculture crops (which have been called "green deserts"), reckless pumping of ground water, water-pollution, and unsustainable industrial practices, to name a few?

Living the sustainability principle has been an intrinsic part of Indian civilization, and our Nature-worshipping ancients knew how to effectively integrate water-use with water-regeneration. We must now urgently re-align with this principle to conserve our water resources. Ensuring the water retention abilities of the soil, that is, the ground, through afforestation and biodiversity is essential for this. Many rivers are groundwater-dependent ecosystems, and robust groundwater management alone can save us From Cape Town-like scenarios.

## Young Farmer Produces 1 Ton of Wheat from ½ Acre of Land



| Ruchira Roy

Amrut Gamble, a farmer in Latur who has been trained by The Art of Living under the INRM (Integrated Natural Resource Management) project, has been able to produce 1 ton of wheat from just half an acre of land. While other farmers in this area are struggling with shortage of water, crop failure, and debts, Amrut has been able to gather 1.5 times the average yield of an Indian farm at par with high-yielding farms from the West. The Art of Living Foundation's INRM program that creates awareness and encourages natural farming has made this possible with single seed sowing and utilization of home-made enzymes.

As per reports from World Bank, India has the highest agricultural land in the world with 1.89 M sq km. India uses 60 per cent of her land in agriculture with 47 per cent of labour resource finding their bread and butter in the sector. With figures like these, India needs to create many farmers like Amrut Gamble to be able to do justice to her people.

Amrut had lost interest in agriculture. "With scarce water resources and low yield, I was losing hope and interest

in agriculture," he shares. Like a lot of other farmers, Amrut was looking at alternative sources of income and took up a job in a petrol pump. With sugar factories around, the farmers in this area were cultivating sugarcane. The clueless farmers were not aware of the water needs for sugarcane cultivation. "The awareness programs helped us understand that wheat needs lesser water and is ready to yield in three months. Poor yield isn't just a result of water shortage but ill informed decisions too," he says.

As a trial, Amrut decided to sow wheat and use enzymes on just 0.5 acres of his 3 acres of land. The farmers were oriented into use and benefits of home-made enzymes. They had to spray these three-four times within the three months till the harvest was ready. "The enzymes can be readied at home using substances like jaggery, compost etc. I didn't need to add medicines or fertilizers to ensure a good produce," he recalls. In three months, a magical spell unfolded with the produce of 1 ton of wheat which he could sell, keep for his



personal consumption and for the villagers!

Amrut was the only one in the village who dared to do this trial. One seed eventually lead to 48 seeds of wheat! "The villagers who were discouraging me to do this unheard of trial are now regretting not taking the decision to sow wheat and use enzymes," he says enthusiastically. Inspired by his success, the villagers are now enthusiastically waiting for the first spell of rains to sow wheat in the entire belt.

"The quest to look for alternate sources of income has ended. I make enough to support the education of my two children and lead a happy life. I feel relaxed and I am looking forward to a comfortable life ahead," he shares.

## Learning from the EXPERTS

### Joining the Dots



*Answering the call of service, and seeking a greater meaning of life, Ruchika Gupta shifted base from Goa to The Art of Living International Centre. In the last one and a half decades, she has served in several capacities towards the growth of the organisation. Ruchika Gupta currently leads the Monitoring and Evaluation operations of the organisation's Social Projects. Her task basically entails innovating tangible means for bottling infinity!*

Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti in conversation with Ms. Ruchika Gupta

#### ■ How are the requirements of quantification unique for an organisation like The Art of Living?

The Art of Living is a large organisation with a pan India presence and is also operational across 156 countries. It is working in multiple projects, across different geographies, and in every possible field that an NGO can work in, be it agriculture, natural resource management, rural development, skilling, youth leadership, capacity building, disaster relief, rehabilitation and several others. Each project has its own unique timeline and myriad social requirements that it needs to meet. The gigantic scale juxtaposed with finer nuances make it challenging to have one single process or framework to collect all the data and make sense of it in terms of what really is being done.

#### ■ What are the measures taken to bring in transparency in this quantification process?

We are employing technology to make the quantification process realistic and real time. We have now chosen a tool which allows us to not just quote numbers any more, but talk by means of pictures, signatures, documents, video, audio, GPS and as much proof as possible. For example, if we have made 100 borewells and an auditor needs to identify each one of them, the tool helps to do that. Along with GPS location we have developed a questionnaire that takes in the data of the adjoining lands, landmarks and neighbouring farmers. This enables the exact spot and work to be identified with accuracy. So for every structure that we are building we are first defining the structure and then also every activity that happens on that structure is getting captured separately. It is not easy for anybody to fake it out. The information that is being collected is being stored in servers. Nobody else, not even the owners, can touch that information. Even the edit steps are recorded with precision including details about which person made the edit and from which device it was done. Thus the entire trail of activity is recorded. This is what gives it credibility.

*"Whatever has been collected across the country gets displayed on a website in real time, without any human tampering with it or blocking its way. It cannot get more transparent than that!"*

#### ■ What kind of ground work is put in place for effective monitoring and evaluation of activities that have a pan-India outreach?

We have chosen a tool that is easy to be used and made keeping in mind the requirements of rural India, where most of our projects are operational. It is user-friendly and is available in several local languages, so that people can relate with it quicker. The tool is mobile application based and is not very heavy, thus, everybody can have it in their phone. Rural India is still grappling with internet issues. Thus, this app is not heavily dependent on the internet. One can submit the information offline and as soon as there is internet connectivity, it gets synced with the servers automatically. It is a wonderful tool that has been recommended by the United Nations and is also being put to use by the government.

We had to provide some initial orientation sessions. Frankly, rural India adapts very quickly. Thus, having our volunteers and resource people use the tool has not been a big task. In my experience, most of the requirements of training have been about what are the aspects of the project that one needs to capture. How to do that was much simpler for them; that has rarely been a struggle.

#### ■ How will the current measures impact the growth of the organisation?

This tool will get a lot of project management into place. It is a reverse process - because we need to collect information in a particular manner, automatically the deliverables start coming out of it. The NGO environment is so large, there are hundreds of NGOs out there. The biggest question that arises in the donor's mind is that does the benefit reach the right people. Data collected by our tool, including video, audio, photographic and documentary evidence answers this question in the most beautiful way. Whatever has been collected across the country gets displayed on a website in real time, without any human tampering with it or blocking its way. It cannot get more transparent than that! On the basis of this merit a donor can join us with full faith that their contribution is meeting the desired result. These measures will open gates for many more partnerships and funds to flow into the organisation.

#### ■ What difference does it make to the field volunteer?

For the field volunteer, because the space they are working from is very positive, they might not be expecting credit. But at the same time seeing the work being made possible by another person from similar circumstances can be a huge inspiration for many others. If a village has gone alcohol free, why not ten other villages take inspiration from the same? To make this happen, this tool also collects information of all the teachers and volunteers who are part of this organisation. Again, this is done from an audit perspective, wherein the PAN card, ADHAR card and other similar documents including bank passbook are collected. We are also working through databases where everything talks to each other. Thus, the chances of repetition and falsifying are eliminated. If a person wants to input his work, he has to select his name from the registered database. Thus, if there are 1 lakh trees planted by 100 people and the world wants to see who these 100 people are, their pictures actually show up. Being thus acknowledged for your work gives a lot of motivation to the volunteer. He can show it to his family and folks which in turn motivates them. Moreover, a lot of times people who speak more take away the credit, whereas they may not have been the people who really did that work. So, this also ensures that the right people are acknowledged.

## SEVA Snippets

### 3-4 Crore Liters of Water Saved with 150 mm of Rain

Thanks to the desilting of nals of a total length of 7 kms done by The Art of Living volunteers in Chinchala, a small village in Washim district of Maharashtra, conservation of nearly 3-4 crore liters of water has been made possible with just 150 mm of rainfall.

### Compost from Temple Waste

The Art of Living has installed an organic waste management plant at the Sri Mangaladevi temple in Mangalore, to convert flower offerings made by devotees into compost. The plant was inaugurated on June 14, 2019. This is the 14th temple in which such a unit has been installed.

## Seva Highlights

### Medical Camp in Budbud

The Art of Living's Karmayoga wing led by YLTP trainer, Amit Chatterjee, had organized a free medical camp as part of the Guru Purnima celebrations on July 14, 2019, at Sri Sri Gyan Mandir in Budbud, East Bardhaman District, West Bengal. Over 200 people underwent free ECG and diabetes tests as well as general medical checkup at the camp. Medicines were also provided at a nominal cost. Seva Yoddhas Moley Senapati and Rajat Sardar played an active role in organizing the camp.

### Blood Donation as Seva on Guru Purnima

The Art of Living family in Bharatpur, Rajasthan, had organized a blood donation camp at the RBM Hospital on the occasion of Guru Purnima on June 16, 2019. 21 units of blood was collected.

### Stationery Gifted to Children of Sri Sri Gyan Mandir, Sankara

The Bank of Baroda's branch in Sankara, a village in Balod Tehsil, Chhattisgarh, celebrated its 112th Foundation Day on July 20, 2019, by gifting stationery items like notebooks, pens, pencils, and school bags to the students of Sri Sri Gyan Mandir in Sankara, one of the free schools run by The Art of Living. Nikita Thorat, Branch Manager, and other officers of the Bank visited the school and gave away the gifts.

### Ek Vriksh, Ek Mitra Campaign

Under the "Ek Vriksh, Ek Mitra" campaign launched by former State Council Member of YLTP, Manish Aggarwal, in Sivani, Madhya Pradesh, 3500 saplings of a variety of fruit-bearing and shade-giving trees including Pipal, Banyan, and Neem, will be distributed free of cost between July 1st to August 31, 2019. The saplings are being distributed to citizens who are willing to take the responsibility of caring for the trees.

### Food for the Ailing on Guru Purnima

The Rapti Chapter of The Art of Living in Gorakhpur, Lucknow, had organized Annadan on the occasion of Guru Purnima on June 16, 2019, for the poor patients and their aides at the BRD Medical College, Gorakhpur.

## Skill Training: Empowering the Nation's Youth

 | Padma Koty

*Emphasis on vocational training should begin at the school level itself so that even a school dropout is able to contribute to society and earn a living.*

- Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

This wise suggestion of Gurudev goes straight to the heart of the challenge facing the education system in our country today: not every child who enters the schooling system will want, or be able, to graduate out of high school, if not college, and even out of those who complete their education, a considerable proportion are neither employable nor have entrepreneurship skills.

Gurudev's practical observation on early vocational training has inspired The Art of Living to partner with government agencies and companies (to implement their CSR initiatives) to set up several holistic initiatives to address this unemployability gap by imparting skills to youth, enabling them to seek jobs or become entrepreneurs. It is authorized by the National Skill Development



Corporation (NSDC) to issue certificates for different job roles in over 30 sectors.

There are 95 Skill Centers providing hands-on training in industry specific skills, incorporating the latest technology trends. To date, 2300 beneficiaries have received training under the PMKVY and 6400 youth have been trained under Corporate-sponsored and institutional tie-ups. Under the 'Skill Sathi' Project more than 1,53,000 youth across India underwent psychometric assessment to identify their aptitudes and personality types to help them choose appropriate careers.

Under project 'Srijan', skill centers

have been set up in 16 prisons across India to provide skill training to inmates. Hundreds have been assessed and certified under PMKVY's

### Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

in various sectors such as Yoga, Agriculture, Textiles, Apparel, Retail, Tourism, Hospitality, etc. For instance, 9200 Yoga practitioners who did not have formal certification, and 11,840 active volunteers, Yuvacharyas, and teachers of The Art of Living have been certified through RPL as Yoga Instructors or Yoga Trainers.

In the **Access to Employability Program**, college students in Andhra Pradesh have learnt interview skills, spoken English and so on, to prepare them for the job market. 1896 youth underwent this training along with the YLTP (Youth Leadership Training Program) as part of the "Ambedkar Jeevan Patham" project.

In addition, Community of Rural Enterprise (CORE) has trained Clean-Energy Women Entrepreneurs who have installed thousands of smoke-free chulhas (stoves).

Several skill centers are operating in remote, border, hilly and inaccessible areas including unrest-affected regions of North East India. The Art of Living's Bengaluru International Centre is becoming a big draw for livelihood training.

Interestingly, the 'Van Dhan Vikas Yojana' project adds technology and machinery to the skills training-mix for tribals, which enables them to connect their NTFP (non-timber forest products) and other artifacts to new markets.

With many strong USPs (Unique Success Points) like a strong and committed volunteer base, experts from every field, a clear and practical vision for scaling and sustainability, low administrative costs, experience, expertise in implementation, and organizational credibility, The Art of Living's mission of helping youth, including dropouts, to achieve financial agency is proving to be a great success.

## Cleaning Tapi

 | Seva Times Team

The Art of Living's partner organization, International Association for Human Values (IAHV) in association with ONGC has launched a project to clean the river Tapi. On July 14, 2019,

over 300 volunteers led by Art of Living faculty, Falguni Nanavati and Manish Pastagia, removed 25 tons (5 truckloads) of garbage from the banks of the river at Navdi Ovara, Surat.



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### Volunteers Step In as Assam Keeps Her Annual Tryst with Floods

affected districts, reached out to the victims, extending their support in moving them to safe locations and relief camps. Flood relief material was distributed to 300+ affected families in Sotaibari and Borsiral villages.

In Bodoland, volunteers visited relief camps in remote areas with bags full of groceries, reaching out to 200+ families. Another team reached out to more than 165 tribal families in Kothuri, a village in Karbi Anglong.

According to the Assam Disaster Management Authority (ASADMA) officials over 1,14,179 hectares of agricultural land, including land with standing crops, have been affected by the floods in various parts of the state. The death toll has risen to 75+ and there has been a loss of precious animal life with over 200+ animals dead including 17 one-horned rhinoceros at the Kaziranga National Park. Over 54 lakh people have been displaced and several farmers have lost their homes and crops and are totally in the dark as to what the future holds for them. The immediate concern is the spread of diseases like diarrhea, fever, and



pneumonia as people have no option but to live surrounded by stagnant water.

In all, relief operations were carried out by volunteers in Morigaon, Kaziranga, Bokakhat, Nalbari, Barpeta, Majuli, Kokrajhar, Dhemaji, North Lakhimpur, Dhubri, and Bongaigaon. Over 5000 families were provided with flood relief material; they plan to cover 25,000 families in the coming days. In the second phase of relief operations, volunteers plan to organize free medical camps and provide appropriate shelters in their villages. The relief operations are spearheaded by Col.(Retd). Dr. M. Medhi, Trustee, Sri Sri Rural Development Program, ably supported by The Art of Living family in Assam.



Words of Wisdom  
Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

### The Ultimate Purpose of Life

#### What is the purpose of life?

Our first and foremost commitment is to do seva (service) in the world.

The very thought "I am here in this world to do seva (service)", dissolves the "I", and when the "I" dissolves, worries dissolve. Seva is not something you do out of convenience, or for

pleasure. The ultimate purpose of life is to be of service.

If there is fear in your life, it is because of a lack of commitment. If there is confusion in your life, it is because of lack of commitment. An uncommitted mind is miserable. A committed mind may experience rough weather but will reap the fruits of its toil.

When you make service the sole purpose of your life, it eliminates fear, brings focus in your mind, purposefulness to your action, long term joy and may be short term problems!

#### What to do when Seva seems like work?

When you feel tired doing seva, relax and meditate for a while. When you become bored of meditating, then get up and do some seva. When you grow tired of both, then read or listen to knowledge. There are so many options

given to you here. Why is it so? It is because we know that initially it all feels like you have to strive and put in efforts to get something. Over a period of time, you yourself will realize by your own experience that in the beginning it does take some efforts. And you should make some efforts in the beginning as well. After some time it will all seem so effortless to you, as if it is your very nature.

#### Balancing your profession and Seva

You can balance between seva (service) and your personal and professional life. You can do both.

At one point in time, when you feel you don't want to do anything but just want to dedicate (your life) for the sake of the world, then do it.

What are your needs? You need some bread, butter, jam, a nice quilt, a good car. All this will be provided. Nature

will provide it.

We should know that we are a part of a grand universal plan. Our needs will be taken care of, but nobody's greed can ever be quenched. Greed is different. Needs will always be taken care of. If you have an intense need and you pray for that, it will come. It may take time, but not always.

#### Balancing your duties towards your family and your daily Seva

Do what you can do, nobody is asking you to do what you cannot do!

If you can do more and you are not doing it, then it is laziness. If you cannot do, then do not do it. However, when you can do, but you are simply watching television for an hour, or sitting at home for two hours, in that period you could have done something better. You should do it, rather than sit at the tea table and gossip.

## A High Five to Life



| Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti

June 2013. A sudden cloudburst followed by flash floods had wreaked havoc in Uttarakhand. Almost no one had seen it coming and no one was prepared. Within a matter of minutes devastation had engulfed life and property alike. But human crisis is what best begets humanness. Reema Panwar, couldn't bear the plight of her motherland and rose to the call of humanity. She had recently completed her training as an Art of Living teacher and thus along with other volunteers and teachers, rushed into disaster relief action. Making Guptkashi in Rudraprayag as the base, they began travelling with food, medicines, lanterns and other utilities with the aim to reach out to people stranded in the calamity. She ventured out to remote villages, supplying relief material door to door. The landslides were only adding to the existing challenges. Once when she and her team couldn't find a route to reach a village, they had to carve out one for themselves.

Even years later, Reema's voice assumes a note of concern as she describes the horrors of death and destruction that she had witnessed among the people she was serving.



Reema Panwar

*She slept wherever she found a welcoming home, ate whatever was available, whenever it was available.*

A pregnant lady had lost her husband, another lady had lost her child. Losses that she couldn't make up for. Yet, the rescue operations continued unwavering. The team worked tirelessly in Ukhimath, Sitapur and several other places. She slept wherever she found a welcoming home, ate whatever was available, whenever it was available. After a couple of months when the volunteers and teachers who had travelled there from other states went back to their bases, Reema was determined to continue all by herself. She recalls a time when everyone told her not to travel to a village since there was nobody there. Reema couldn't agree to it until she had seen it for herself. She travelled up a treacherous path to reach the village. On

arriving it seemed that the people were in fact speaking the truth. There was nobody to be seen. But her heart wasn't yet ready to accept it. She waited with a gut instinct only to find out that there were 26 people in that village waiting for help!

Reema continued the rehabilitation work for one and a half years, until she was summoned to Punjab, in December 2014, to work there. Looking back, her biggest achievement has been overcoming the demon of fear. Her effervescent smile grows bigger in gratitude towards her Master, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, and his wisdom. It was his wisdom that carried her to possibilities beyond her imagination. "Ek rasta sa khul gaya", Reema says reminiscing on the direction and meaning this wisdom and The Art of Living had given to her life.

She had grown up as an extremely sensitive and shy kid. She would sleep under the trees and talk to them. In moments of despair she would cry her heart out to them. Her hobbies included learning up all prayer books. However, with the passing years, her shyness gave birth to an uncanny scepticism. She even found it hard to believe that a Guru, whom she had only seen in pictures so far, could actually speak to her!

From beginnings as these, to becoming a woman who reaches

remote places and spends days only trusting the goodness of absolute strangers, Reema's life has traversed a phenomenal journey.

She currently conducts the Utkarsha Yoga, Medha Yoga, Karmayog and other programs of The Art of Living and is also a significant force behind Project Bharat and the trainings of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). She also serves as a State Council Member for The Art of Living's rural initiatives.

Her current enterprise in Punjab too is not devoid of its own set of challenges. People there are grappling with rigidity and hard edges in their personality, not to mention the menace of addictions. However, it has been a big challenge to make them accept the path of Yoga as a solution. Reema points out the reason that since Sikhs already have their Guru, they don't look forward to the teachings of another Guru. In spite of this, her work continues. Many people have been healed of several ailments with Yoga and Sudarshan Kriya. This has begun to make a difference to the local people's perspective. Reema of course has her hopes high. When asked how she manages to do that, she bursts out laughing saying, "I never felt that this was work. Main to sirf masti kar rahi hun."

## From Addiction to Empowerment



| Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti

He was barely in eighth standard when the enigma of intoxication entered his life. When asked how so early, Santosh Andure even today has no specific reason. It was just the place and peers that pulled him into the darkness. Anger and violence were the next to walk in. A guilty, nostalgic smile escapes his lips as Santosh narrates, "I had beaten up my teacher when in high school and not just that I would even beat up boys bigger than me!" A few years later, when he was in the twelfth standard, Santosh was caught red handed by a teacher while he was stealthily drinking alcohol sitting in the last bench of the classroom. The teacher promptly held him by his collar and dragged him out of the class. As a natural progression to his state of addiction, his family grew increasingly disappointed with him. Before long, even his friends and peers began deserting him. Thus ostracized, the young Santosh was left alone and helpless.

Like Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar says, "Behind every culprit, there is a victim crying for help", this teenager too was crying out for help, but he could not express it yet. Moreover, there was nobody who could understand him. One day, around



Santosh Andure

*"Art of Living totally U-turn diya mere life mein"*

the time of The Art of Living's silver jubilee celebrations, Santosh came across a newspaper with Gurudev's picture on the front page. In the picture, this white robed saint with a serene smile gently held a globe on his palms. It also advertised The Art of Living program. Something moved inside him and he decided to undergo the program. But he had lost his parents' trust and consequently found no way to get the required money or permission from them for the eight-day program. Had he asked, they would have refused assuming it was another ploy by their addict son to get money for his indulgences. Nevertheless, a determined Santosh went ahead without informing his parents and to his own surprise the organisers made an exception for him. He was allowed to participate for free!



"Art of Living totally U-turn diya mere life mein", a beaming Santosh says. Soon after the first program he did the Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP). But addiction was

however a difficult foe to fight. For two months he held his will strong after which it started giving up. And that was when the difference came up. Now even if his mind craved alcohol or drugs, his body would refuse it. He vomited every time he tried consuming them. This was a new life for Santosh and he couldn't believe what was happening to him. There was hope, after all. He couldn't let this new lease of life go to waste and thus resolved to take this knowledge to everyone who was in need.

Santosh became an Art of Living teacher in 2011, and today teaches the Happiness Program, YLTP, Medha Yoga, YES + and Utkarsha Yoga. He has touched the lives of more than 20,000 people in need. He travels extensively in his home district of Bidar as well as in Gulbarga, Raichur and Yadgir districts of Karnataka. It is a region where too many youngsters are grappling with the menace of addictions. Santosh made it his life's mission to bring light into the lives of these youngsters. He says with a grateful heart, "Their parents are so thankful for our interventions." The region

has other challenges too. Agriculture in North Karnataka has been at the receiving end of scanty rainfall. Seeing this, Santosh put his efforts in bringing Sri Sri Natural Farming training to the farmers and other interested people in the region. For people who were not involved in farming, Santosh has been working to encourage and train them in micro entrepreneurship, making them re-sellers of Sri Sri Tattva products.

In less than a decade, life has come full circle for Santosh Andure. Recently, he went to conduct an Art of Living program in his alma mater, Basava Teerth Vidyapeeth, Hallikhed (B). The teacher whom he had beaten up was left spellbound at witnessing this transformation in him. He went on and on telling the current batch of students to practice The Art of Living and become like Santosh. As a surprise to him, the school authority even felicitated his parents! His parents couldn't have been more proud of their son. Santosh feels that the life of divine service has just begun for him. Seeing how well he connected with the youth in the region and his remarkable oratory skills, a national level political party has made him the Vice President of their Yuva Morcha. No more alone and helpless, Santosh Andure today is the shining beacon that everyone loves to follow and befriend.



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**Published by:**

 Commodore H. G. Harsha,  
 Chairman, Vyakti Vikas Kendra India

**Concept:**

Debjyoti Mohanty

**Editorial Team:**

 Thoheja Gurukar  
 Ram Asheesh  
 Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti

**Design layout:**

Suresh

**Contact:**

 Ph: 9035945982, 9838427209  
 Email: editor.sevatimes@yltp.vvki.org, seva-times@yltp.vvki.org