

SEVA TIMES



P₂ Initiating the Initiatives



P₃ Koreya – a Village Where Every Child is Learning Yoga

SEVA Snippets

Glimpse of Vasudaiva Kutumbakam at Navratri Celebrations

Over 1,50,000 devotees from 78 countries came to The Art of Living International Center to rejuvenate and refresh themselves during the Navratri celebrations at the Bangalore Ashram. As they soaked in the blissful atmosphere created by the chanting of vedic mantras and performance of homas in the presence of Gurudev, all narrow barriers of gender, race, culture, and religious backgrounds vanished and all that remained was a mass of humanity filled with inexpressible joy and peace. This year Chandri Homa, the grand crescendo of Navratri celebrations, was organized in six countries. It was performed in 31 locations across Mauritius, UAE, US, and Canada; and in over 200 locations in India and Nepal.

Fluoride Nilogon in Karbi Anglong


The Art of Living in association with Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) will be providing fluoride free drinking water to over 6500 homes and 50 public campuses in Karbi Anglong, one of the most fluoride-affected districts of Assam. Long term ingestion of fluoride in drinking water and cooking water causes dental and skeletal fluorosis in addition to other health problems. Fluoride Nilogon (removal of fluoride from drinking water by Phosphoric Acid – Crushed Limestone method) is a low-cost and simple method developed by a group of researchers lead by Prof. Robin K. Dutta from the Department of Chemical Sciences, Tezpur University.

The Art of Living Hosts First Rain Water Harvesting Seminar

The Art of Living organized a Rain Water Harvesting Training Seminar in Mumbai on September 16, 2019. The initiative was the first ever training on rain water harvesting in urban areas. The event was attended by a range of stakeholders including students from K.J. Somaiya College of Science and Commerce, M.H. Saboo Siddik College of Engineering, and Universal College.

After the 2-day training programme these individuals formed groups of 10 and pledged to participate in various rain water harvesting projects and to stop concretization of urban areas.

Gutsy Women of Vellore Revive a Dead River

 | By Thoheja Gurukar

On his recent visit to Vellore, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar felicitated women leaders from around 300 villages in Vellore district for their participation in The Art of Living's Naganadhi River Rejuvenation Project which has brought back to life a river that had been dead for over 15 years.

Naganadhi was once the lifeline of the farmers in Vellore district. They relied heavily on cash crops like paddy, wheat, and pulses that required an abundance of water to thrive. Digging deeper and deeper every year resulted in a steady depletion of groundwater and by the early 2000s Naganadhi had disappeared. Agriculture was no longer a reliable source of income. Farmers began to migrate to the cities in search of work. Those who stayed back had no motivation to work and, overcome by frustration, took to alcohol. Women were in despair with no economic security and hungry mouths to feed.

The Naganadhi River Rejuvenation Project which was launched by The Art of Living in 2014 proved to be a godsend to the women of Kammavanpettai village. As participants of the project they would have a regular source of income. Driven by the motivation to save their family and their land, the women came together to work with the organization to replenish the groundwater and resurrect the river that was once their lifeline.

The women worked at all stages of the



project — right from digging recharge wells to a depth of 20 feet, making and placing cement rings, putting the stones, to finally closing the well with a cement lid. Their aching limbs at the end of a hard day's labor did not in any way deter them. Yoga, pranayama, and meditation techniques taught by The Art of Living faculty ensured that their energy levels remained high. "The cement rings, which are the primary components of the recharge wells, were built in-house to the desired thickness

and height, solely by the womenfolk," notes Chandrasekaran Kuppan, the team leader for River Projects in Tamil Nadu.

When the rains came in 2015 and 2016, water started flowing into the recharge structures. The groundwater levels began to rise. Seeing their success, women from the surrounding villages also joined the project. The number of women working on the project steadily grew until there were finally 20,000 women toiling hard to resuscitate the

dead river. In a span of four years, 3,145 recharge structures were built across 19 panchayats in the area and hundreds of hardy, drought-resistant saplings were planted around and across the river basin.

Today, the Naganadhi river is flowing in full spate once again. Nearly 9000 hectares of agricultural land has been reclaimed and there has been a staggering rise of 6 feet in groundwater levels. There is enough water now to grow multiple crops.

Art of Living Provides Relief to Flood Victims in Bihar

 | Ram Asheesh

Patna, Bihar: As incessant monsoon rains continued to wreak havoc across India, large parts of Bihar including its capital, Patna, have been reeling under floods. Volunteers of The Art of Living have been working day and night in Ara, Buxar, Khagaria, Darbhanga, and Katihar districts, braving several hardships, reaching out to over 22,000 families with flood relief material. They have distributed relief bags packed with essential items like cereals, pulses, jaggery, biscuits, soap, salt, candles, plastic sheets, and drinking water.

As heavy rains lashed Patna, shops, homes, and hospitals were submerged in knee-deep waters, and roads turned into rivers. Using the boats of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) volunteers distributed nearly 5000 food packets and 4000 bottles of drinking water. They went around the city disinfecting several areas with bleaching powder and also organized 6 free medical camps under the aegis of Darbhanga Medical College.

Volunteers had to cross three turbulent rivers to reach some villages like Nonha, Pahattar Diara, Katghara, Bhuriya, and Gulariya where over 6000 people were waiting for help. In Kanhauli, a village in Gogri Block, Khagaria district, a whole week of continuous rain left over 100 cows dead. Cattle owners were desperate as there was no fodder to feed the cows. With the help of some local farmers, volunteers were able to provide cattle feed.

Nearly 2000 solar lamps were distributed in areas where electricity had been cut off. Hundreds of bottles of drinking water were distributed in Khagaria city where drinking water was in short supply. Clothes were also distributed in some areas. Medication was arranged for people who started

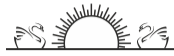


developing swelling and infection of their feet and legs due to staying in water for long hours.

According to the India Meteorological Department, India has recorded its

highest monsoon since 1994. After a short respite, floods have once again returned to Bihar. Seva Yoddhas, Pratinidhis, and volunteers are still engaged in flood relief work in Manihari Block, Katihar.

Dung of *Bos indicus* more valuable than A2 milk! Its Urine too



Padma Koty

Since ancient times, and through to the present day, crores of Indians have revered the desi cow (*Bos indicus*) as Go Mata (mother) and as Kamadhenu (the sacred cow which fulfills all desires). Each region of India celebrates and honors its cows and bulls, in appreciation of their socio-economic value and their centrality to all aspects of life and culture. Gauseva – service to cows – has always been an important part of our culture. Significantly, the cattle breeder/cowherd was considered the first citizen in a village!

The superior health benefits of the A2 milk of the desi cow are well known today, but its dung and urine have, since ancient times, been regarded by scholars and practitioners of indigenous medical systems as more valuable. The Upanishads mention that Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, dwells in the dung of the (desi) cow – “Gomaye Vasate Lakshmi.” Far from being impure, this dung actually purifies every kind of impurity.

Both the Gomaya (cow dung) and Gomutra (cow urine) of *Bos indicus* are antibiotic, antiseptic, antifungal and antioxidant, and of immense value in treatment and prevention of diseases, and also in our nation's type of agriculture (small holdings and small-scale farming). Five products (Panchagavya) from the cow – milk, cow dung and urine, and two derived products, buttermilk and ghee, are combined in varying formulae for agricultural, medicinal, domestic and even environmental purposes.

Since 2001, over 22 lakh farmers have been trained in Sri Sri Natural Farming, which is derived from Vedic Agriculture, and based on the twin fundamentals of desi cow and desi seed. Participants, employing dung and urine, learn to make Jeevamrit, used as fertilizer, and Beejamrit, to treat desi seeds. This enables low-cost farming with high productivity and profitability, while improving the soil and biodiversity and reducing water usage by 5 times. The preparation of Panchgavya, Agniasthra, and

Neemastra is also taught.

How do cow dung and urine acquire such amazing properties? The answer lies in the distinctive Surya Ketu Nadi (nerve) along the cow's back, just under the skin, which absorbs harmful radiation and cleanses the atmosphere.

Satish Kumar KVN, software engineer and State Teacher Coordinator for Sri Sri Natural Farming, comes from an agrarian family owning cows since forty five years. He shares his experience on the deep interrelation between desi cow and agriculture: “Cow dung and farmyard manure are the main input in our agriculture. One cow is sufficient to fertilize 30 acres of land and one gram of cow dung contains 300 to 500 crores of different useful bacteria for agriculture.”

Moreover, biogas from dung can reduce deforestation and depletion of non-renewable energy resources, while the complex degrading substances in dung and cow urine can reduce soil and water pollution and aid in safe degradation of rural, urban and hospital wastes. A 2008 study showed complete biodegradation of biomedical waste using cow dung!

Sri Sri Ayurveda Hospital and Sri Sri Panchakarma have successfully treated several chronic ailments with gomutra. Further, the Sri Sri Gaushala has been set up to preserve and protect indigenous cows and can assuredly upscale its financial viability with pharmaceutical and beauty products made from dung and urine.

Research and its astonishing findings substantiate what Ayurveda, the most ancient and scientific medical and medicinal system known to mankind, had established centuries ago. Uninformed derisiveness and ridicule about desi cow urine and dung must give way to a scientific and dispassionate approach. These two invaluable byproducts offer infinite possibilities for addressing the grave problems of mankind with brilliant, sustainable solutions.

(With inputs from Satishkumar K.V.N.)

Gujarat Farmer Discovers the Benefits of Natural Farming



 | Rahul Sejwani

Natwar Bhai hails from a village in North Gujarat. After completing college he worked for about 5 months in a private company. Not satisfied with his job, he quit in 1995 and started farming on his 17 acre piece of land. Like most farmers, he was using chemical fertilizers and pesticides. After about a decade of chemical farming the deteriorating quality of the soil and high costs involved in chemical farming, left him with little or no profit.

A devotee of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Natwar Bhai turned to Sri Sri Institute of Agricultural Sciences & Technology Trust for guidance. In 2009 he underwent training in natural

farming techniques and learnt to prepare natural fertilizers, enzymes, Jeevamrut, and Beejamrut. He also learned about crop rotation, selection, and land utilization.

Returning home, Natwar Bhai started growing potato, wheat, green gram, groundnut, and millets using natural farming techniques. His organically grown produce were in great demand in the market and were selling at double the cost of chemically grown produce. Having to send his produce outside for grinding and packaging was proving to be cumbersome as his customers grew in number. His trainers at SSIAT suggested that he start his own grinding unit which would also be a business

model for others.. He followed their advice.

The input cost for his farm produce was almost nil. He also undertook grinding and packaging for other farmers which added to his profits. He then started training other farmers in natural farming. To date he has trained more than 3000 farmers in Sri Sri Natural Farming.

“I want to set up a good market for these farmers by having a good and clean packaging and processing unit. Farmers are now more aware about natural farming. Organizations like The Art of Living are playing a key role in making this shift happen,” shared Natwar Bhai.

Learning from the EXPERTS

Initiating the Initiatives



Rugmani Prabhakar began her journey as a journalist covering news on politics, business and issues of human interest. In 1997, she started the first Art of Living programs in the Gulf from her home-base, then in Dubai. She has served as the Executive Director of the International Association for Human Values - Middle East and collaborated with Governments of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, with UN and corporate organizations in the region to launch several successful programs. Moving back to India in 2012, she took charge as the National Director of Projects Management Unit of The Art of Living. In her current role as Head of The Art of Living Sustainable Development Programs, she collaborates with key stakeholders in government, industry and the UN towards a shared agenda for sustainable development.

Dr Hampi Chakrabarti in conversation with Rugmani Prabhakar, Head of The Art of Living Sustainable Development Programs

■ **What, according to you, are the key strengths of The Art of Living as an organization that drives social development?**

There are, in fact, several points that distinguish The Art of Living's work in the developmental space:

- We empower individuals and communities with a holistic developmental approach
- We are a people's organization that works across boundaries and barriers
- We operate at high levels of economic efficiency
- We have a wide geographic outreach
- We integrate volunteering with an accountable and sustainable model
- We have a huge network of influencers at all levels of society
- We have strong advocacy and organizing capabilities
- We have credibility and expertise in dealing with global issues
- We collaborate for unified solutions through multilateral stake-holding
- We have an all-inclusive strategy that aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals to reach the last mile and leave no one behind. In fact, we have a footprint in all 17 Sustainable Development Goals
- Our conflict resolution and peace building initiatives are the foundation for a sustainable developmental approach

“The time has come for us to move from an organic model to a more structured, accountable model.”

■ **What are the key points that should be kept in mind while pitching a project?**

The most important task is to research and understand who we are pitching to. Who have they partnered with earlier? What are their priority areas? What kind of budgets do they have? Why would they want to partner with The Art of Living? What unique value do we bring to the project that gives us a competitive advantage over their other partners?

Our homework could influence our style of pitch, our focus areas, and potential challenges we could face during the pitch and later during negotiation.

■ **In managing a social development project, what are the prime factors that you look into?**

Today, all funders are looking to see what kind of impact – both short term and long term – their projects have on beneficiaries and communities. Some of them actually ask for an ROI (Return on Investment) for their investment which is a rupee value impact for every rupee invested. So today, the prime factor for planning is to think long term and strategize on how to demonstrate impact and make our intervention sustainable beyond the duration of the project. This is not difficult.

Development schools have developed training programs that are extremely interesting and can be practically applied on the field to measure this impact. We have also successfully built capacity of so many of our rural leaders through various such courses where they are taught developmental tools like PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal), Accounting, Monitoring, Impact Measurement, Reporting etc.

There is a lot of funding out there both nationally and globally available to organizations like ours with a great track record of excellent work inspired by committed, passionate resources who work with integrity.

So, managing a project through globally recognized frameworks and reporting it through the same framework is critical for the success and sustainability of our interventions.

■ **How do you make a cluster of people with different skills, interest, and commitments work together as a team?**

There is really no standard formula for this and it pretty much boils down to strong leadership skills. Staying continuously engaged with the team, building their capacity through technical and inspirational programs, traveling to project locations, and understanding and acknowledging the work that they do are just some ways. Our organization has the unique challenge of working with both paid resources and volunteers within the same project or geographies. This requires some bicycle management which no management school can teach you. Understanding what makes people tick and managing their expectations is key for The Art of Living model of social development. You just need to watch Gurudev to learn this.

■ **For The Art of Living, with its extensive outreach, multiple overlapping projects and governing bodies, it often becomes a challenge to define or evaluate the various initiatives. What solution do you suggest for this?**

The time has come for us to move from an organic model to a more structured, accountable model. Admittedly, this cannot happen overnight. But the process has begun. Since the time when I came into my earlier role of heading PMU in 2012, we have come a long way. Now, when I look around, not just within the project teams based at the Bangalore Ashram Headquarters, but also at rural leadership teams across India, I find our project teams are more sensitive to working with donor funds and reporting in an accountable way. But we still have a long way to go.

We are currently in the process of preparing a strategic document on The Art of Living and IAHV social projects along with a leading consulting house KPMG. We have been working for almost a year towards this and, in the process, a lot of streamlining is happening within and between our various teams and trusts to align to the frameworks recommended by them. We are at an early stage of this evolution. But our stakeholders, both internal and external, can expect to see many changes for the better in the years to come.

SEVA Snippets

Leadership Excellence Award for Mawahib Shaibani



The World Women Leadership Congress presented Mawahib Shaibani, Art of Living faculty, the Women's Leadership Excellence Award in recognition of all the work she has done to empower women in Iraq and Syria.

Seva Highlights

Aid to Flood Victims in Rajasthan



The Art of Living family in Kota, Rajasthan, distributed over 500 packets of essential items like groceries, clothes, and footwear to the needy in Khand Gawadi where floods had caused heavy damage. They had also organized a free medical camp in which over 225 people underwent medical checkup for seasonal ailments and received free medication.

Cleanliness Drive by Volunteers at Chakarwadi Mauli Maharaj

Beed, Maharashtra: The Art of Living family in Beed undertook a cleanliness drive in Shree Mauli Maharaj Samadhi Sthal located in Beed, Maharashtra. Every Amavasya (New Moon Day) thousands of devotees come to this temple from near and far seeking blessings. During the rainy seasons, pools of stagnant water are formed in various areas of the temple and combined with the litter omit a foul smell. Yuvacharyas in the area led by Art of Living faculty, Sopan Babu Kadam, have taken this matter into their own hands and have resolved to clean the premises of the temple on the day following Amavasya every month. A tank that was leaking has been fixed. They are also carrying out awareness drives to educate the people about keeping the area clean and spotless.

Honored for Haryana's Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao

Kaithal, Haryana: Art of Living faculty Bharti Gupta has been honored by the Education Department of Haryana for her exemplary contribution to the Prime Minister's Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign. Bharti Gupta has been conducting Art of Living programs in villages around Kaithal for the last 14 years.

Koreya – a Village Where Every Child is Learning Yoga

 | Ram Asheesh

Surguja, Chhattisgarh: Koreya, a nondescript village located in Surgapur Tehsil of Surguja district, Chhattisgarh, shot to fame when 10 participants belonging to this village won as many as 12 medals in the National School Game Yoga Championship 2019. This apart, there are around 50 participants hailing from this village who have brought glory to Surguja in state-level yoga events. If any one person can be given credit for this, it is Vijay Das.

Vijay Das started teaching yoga to students of a private junior high school in Koreya soon after he completed Art of Living's Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP) in 2007. Vijay says that children

of this village first got an opportunity to compete at the national level in 2009 and ever since then they have been regular participants in the annual National School Game Yoga

Championship organized by The Games Federation of India. A few of his students, all of who have undergone YLTP, have done him proud by winning medals, namely Manju Rajwade (3 Silver, 3 Bronze), Kavita Singh (1 Bronze), Gopal Ram (2 Silver),



Dinesh Rajwade (1 Bronze) and Ashish Rajwade (2 Silver) at the games.

Vijay proudly adds that the success of these children in yoga increased awareness of yoga among the people of the village and

they also started practicing yoga. Many of the villagers have been freed from chronic ailments. Along with yoga, Vijay is also training children in traditional games like Kabaddi and Kho-Kho

3156 Street Food Vendors Undergo Training for RPL Certification

 | Seva Times Network

Ranchi, Jharkhand: The Art of Living in association with National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) will be training 3156 street food vendors from 8 municipal bodies of Jharkhand in micro entrepreneurship skills, health, hygiene, and digital financial literacy. Jharkhand Urban Development Minister C. P. Singh launched this unique up-skilling initiative at the Rajya Yoga Kendra, Ranchi, on October 19, 2019.

Addressing the gathering, C.P. Singh said, "Training of street food vendors is an essential step. By undergoing proper training, the vendors will not only take care of maintaining hygiene with respect to the food items and their stall but will also learn to conduct their business smoothly in their designated area without obstructing traffic and breaking the rules of the municipal corporation. Expressing his gratitude

to Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar he said, "All of us want to live a healthy life and The Art of Living teaches many skills to stay healthy. From them we need to learn the art of living life. For this I bow down to Sri Sri."

Praveen Kumar who is heading this project said, "RPL certification will give the street food vendors an identity. All participants will have to undergo an online exam on the final day. Successful candidates will receive a certificate and also a cash award of Rs. 500 to encourage them." Art of Living faculty Rupesh Kumar and volunteer Nikhil Raj are playing a major role in the project. The whole project is being implemented by the YLTP wing. The first batch of 50 street food vendors participated in the 3-day training program that was organized at the Rajya Yoga Center from October 19th to 21st.

Jharkhand State Election Commissioner N.N. Pandey said,



"The Art of Living is imparting free education to many children in Jharkhand. Examination results of many children in these schools are very good. Seeing these achievements of the school, the Jharkhand government has given 5 more acres of land to The Art of Living so that more people may benefit."

Also present on the occasion were Mrityunjay Kumar Varnwal, Director of Urban Administration Directorate; Sanjay Kumar, Assistant Director of Urban Administration Directorate; State Mission Manager Kumar Vam; former IPS officer N. Sinha, members of CTET, and several The Art of Living members including Baby Kumari and APEX Member Kumud Kumar Jha.

Over 300 Saplings Planted under 'Adopt a Tree' Project in Balod

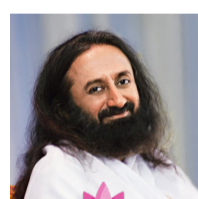
 | Ram Asheesh

Balod (Chhattisgarh): The Art of Living volunteers of Balod have planted over 300 trees so far under the 'Adopt a Tree' project launched on July 1, 2019. What is unique about this project is that each sapling has been provided with a tree guard and steps



have been taken to see that the plants are watered regularly and flourish. Lakshmi Taru, Peepal, Banyan, Neem, Indian Gooseberry, and Karanja are among the saplings that have been planted in various places in and around Balod including hospitals, schools, stadium, temples, banks, colonies, and banks of the river

Tandula. This is an ongoing project. "We only exploit the earth and environment from birth to death. It is our duty to pay attention to the safety of the earth and environment and the best way to do that is to plant more trees," says Dheeraj Sharma, Art of Living faculty in Balod.



Words of Wisdom
Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Who Are You and What Do You Want?

The dire need of today is to awaken the society and the world to the reality of who we are, and what do we want! If you ask anybody, why do they do what they do? And if they ponder upon this question, the answer is happiness. Spiritual people are looking for happiness in liberation. Religious people are looking for happiness in scriptures. Socialists are looking for happiness as absolute comfort in technology. Commerce and industry are looking for happiness by making more profits. Politicians are looking for happiness in creating a happy society. So, who does not want happiness? Everybody wants it! But, are we finding that happiness?

If you are not happy, why is it so?

The answer is we have too much to do and

too little time and energy. As a result, we are getting stressed and are not reaching where we want to be.

We started asking questions about life from the age of three – where did we come from, what is this and what is that...? These questions indicate that our intellect is maturing. These questions are pure and inquisitive questions. But later on in life, we don't ask these questions, instead, we ask questions that indicate misery and sorrow. We ask questions that have no answers – "Why am I having this problem, why am I unhappy?" And we don't ask these questions to others, we ask them to ourselves! Unanswered questions ferment in the mind and become violence.

From low energy to high energy.

When the energy (prana) in us is high, we ask questions that lead us to the truth. When energy is low, we ask questions that only bring us more misery.

What is that one thing that can shift the energy (from low to high) and make us more positive? What can bring that sense of happiness that we all had when we were children?

It is meditation. Meditation is that which shifts our energy from negative to positive; from a state of despair to a state of hope and joy, and from a state of worry to a state of vision for a better life!

Tap into the enormous strength within you.

Take an oath today – "Come what may, I am going to be happy! I am not going to lose my smile no matter what happens." If you do this, you will see that your life starts taking the direction that you always wanted!

You may have several failures, you may come across several stumbling blocks, you may not be able to be happy every day and all the time, but this very commitment – I am not going to lose my peace for anything in the world – will bring such enormous strength from within you, that it will start changing the situations around you.

One very important thing we need is the faith that only the right thing will happen!

Today, can we all make this commitment (to be happy)? Can we instill the faith within ourselves that only the right thing will happen to us? Once you start on this journey, I tell you, things will fall in place.

Stop counting your failures.

We keep on doubting ourselves and remembering all the failures that we have had. When we do this, we are sowing seeds of doubt and failure into the consciousness. Right away, stop counting your failures. In fact, don't even look at any setbacks as failures because they are all stepping stones

towards progress.

Do away with negativity!

Today, scientists say that if you are talking negatively or listening to negativity or indulging in any negative conversation, the hypothalamus, which is located at the back of your head, starts shrinking. And if the hypothalamus starts shrinking, then the body gets susceptible to many illnesses. Hence, it is very important to get away from the cycle of negative thinking, negative conversations, and dwelling or taking pride in any kind of negativity.

Meditation and breathing techniques help us get out of the vicious circle of negativity so that we can move towards a more positive state of mind.

Uncertainty is as important as certainty.

Life is a combination of certainty and uncertainty. When everything is fixed, then life is dull and mechanical. But when there is some factor of uncertainty in life, then you feel "Wow!" That WOW factor - that surprise and wonder - brings more juice to life.

For those who are strong, uncertainty does not shake them too much. But for many others, uncertainty shakes them inside. It is meditation that turns the fear into wonder and makes you look for an opportunity in uncertain situations.

Making Merry with Maths and Meditation

 | Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti

On one hand an academically excelling maths lover and on the other a vivacious and dynamic agent of social transformation; Ashwini Barot wears many hats. Growing up as she watched her parents live life with the spiritual ethos of service, the seeds of spirituality began growing in her. Years later it was the Youth Leadership Training Program of The Art of Living that gave her the first thrust in that direction.

Ashwini combined her love for Maths and service and in 2006 she became a Vedic Maths teacher for the organization. She travelled across Maharashtra and Gujarat conducting workshops on Vedic maths where not just students but elders also joined in. She has reached out to more than 50,000 people through online classes and Facebook live. Once a sceptic school principal was so moved after seeing how Ashwini made Maths so much fun for the children by helping them to overcome their phobia, that he came up to ask her for an autograph!

Since then, with one responsibility after the



Ashwini Barot

"Kaise ho gaya! Purusharth se bhi jyada prasad mil gaya!"

other, seva has become the lifestyle that Ashwini lives by. She has strived towards organizing several initiatives and programs, 'Antarnaad' being one of her most memorable, which even bagged a Guinness record!

A few years ago, people from Idar in Gujarat, where Ashwini had been tirelessly working for more than a year, requested Gurudev to visit their place. To everyone's surprise Gurudev immediately agreed to visit them for Diwali which was just 20 days away! Now, Diwali is a day that people spend with family and friends; this made the task of organising a public event on that day even more difficult. Ashwini dived into the preparations along with her husband and

senior Art of Living faculty, Jigish Barot. They travelled to around 300 villages to invite as many people as they could reach out to. They would head out early in the morning and travel beyond midnight; unheeding to hunger, thirst or fatigue. Publicity, sponsorship, venue management, everything had to be done by the handful of available volunteers. As the day dawned, they held their breath, doubtful about how many people would actually turn up. And then, within hours, 15,000 farmers arrived to meet Gurudev at the Rishi Krishi Utsav.

Another time, she and her team had barely 15 days to organize a Project Bharat event from scratch. They went ahead with the target of having 1000 attendees, only to have more than 2300 people come from 900 villages of Gujarat! Ashwini's eyes light up as she exclaims, "Kaise ho gaya! Purusharth se bhi jyada prasad mil gaya!"

Ashwini, now a dedicated teacher for The Art of Living for more than 10 years, a CST therapist and Sahaj Samadhi meditation instructor, has taken up the onus to combat the menace of addiction that is slowly destroying the youth. It is appalling as she mentions, that children as young as in the 6th standard are getting addicted. She recalls a

few days ago at a petrol pump she cautioned a man who was smoking against its hazards. The man immediately retorted, "Madam, jo log cigarette nahi peete, unhe bhi cancer hota hai!" She says with a concern that this is what happens when you get in the grip of addictions, your logic becomes distorted. Awareness, yoga and meditation are the ways to deal with this. Thus, Ashwini is now helping people to become NSDC certified Yoga trainers through the Recognition of Prior Learning scheme. In the last 4 months, she has helped over 1400 people to get certified.

It's not that challenging times don't come to her or her enthusiasm doesn't give up for moments. It is during those times that she adheres religiously to the path of sadhana, seva, and satsang that Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has shown. "I quickly sit through a course," Ashwini adds, "recalling the immense grace that I have received also helps." And this ever-supportive Art of Living family is always there to hold you every time you stumble.

Currently, as a State Council Member of Karmayog wing of the organization, there is no halting for Ashwini, just a passionate onward march.

A Tale of Turning Tides

 | Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti

What happens when you are treading on the normal course of life, and unawares you bump into the spiritual path? Chandrasekaran Kuppan, an electrician by profession, was called upon in his regular line of duty to arrange the mike and sound at the DAV school in Chennai where an Art of Living program was about to happen. He dutifully did his job and sat outside as the session commenced. Moments later curiosity got the better of him and he quietly stepped inside. The teacher saw him interested and asked him to continue for all six days; even offering to lend him the course fees. Chandrasekaran participated and by the end of six days, to his own surprise, found himself getting healed of several of his nagging medical ailments! It was 2005 and since then the Sudarshan Kriya has been his daily friend.

With Sadhana, seva too became a regular feature of his life. He began with helping to sell books on the wisdom taught by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and then went on to conduct several Navchetna Shivirs. When the 'Mission Green Earth' project was launched by The



Chandrasekaran Kuppan

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi also spoke of it in 'Mann Ki Baat'."

Art of Living, Chandrasekaran took it upon himself to distribute 1000 coconut tree saplings to households in his native place of Arani in Tamil Nadu. And in 2009 he became an Art of Living teacher. Soon after, as instructed by Gurudev, he moved base to the Bangalore ashram and found himself as the Tamil Nadu co-ordinator for YLTP. He was hardly aware of what that entails! He nevertheless went to impeccably serve in that capacity for almost five years assisting projects like the pilot project on financial inclusion where Art of Living collaborated with Indian Bank and Tata Consultancy Service. It went on to become the Jan Dhan scheme, that we know now. He even trained 128 people, one from each Gram Panchayat for this project, managing to open

50,000 bank accounts in a span of just 4 months.

Once few of his YLTP students went to a school to conduct a few sessions, but the school authorities wanted to meet their trainer. So Chandrasekaran was summoned. They were so inspired by him that they requested him to conduct the training in the school and within a week Chandrasekaran conducted Navchetna Shivir for 1300 students. This was much needed as the school was in utter shambles. It had only 12 teachers to manage 1300 students. Some students had climbed up on trees while some were drunk and sleeping in the classrooms! The picture however was much different after the shivir. A few days later, there was the Yogathon event where Chandrasekaran had prepared for around 1400 participants only to be surprised by 2500 people registering for the event. He had to work with a quick presence of mind to swiftly arrange multiple sessions across different venues. He had only 20 certificates for people who would complete 108 Surya Namaskar and 987 participants ended up doing it! It took him 2 months to make the certificates available to all of them.

All this hard work led him to be invited for

the first orientation for the introduction of Art Excel and YES course for rural India. Several of his students have gone ahead to champion social development works themselves. He says with a mentor's pride, "two of them are now working in the river rejuvenation project." In another school, the pass percentage of students was only 56%. Shortly after Chandrasekhar's mentoring, it saw a 30% rise in the pass percentage.

In 2014, looking into the water crisis situation in Tamil Nadu, much before the world took notice of it, Chandrasekaran started work for river rejuvenation in Vellore district on the Naganadhi river. It went on to become one of the most successful river rejuvenation projects by The Art of Living, bringing respite to thousands of people. The team started with constructing five recharge wells and three boulder checks. Within a few months' time, the Panchayat members called Chandrasekaran to inform that the wells which had run dry for several years were now showing rising water! Next year they constructed 349 recharge wells and 200 boulder checks. Chandrasekaran informs with modest enthusiasm, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi also spoke of it in 'Mann Ki Baat'."






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A portion of your earnings given in service,
 brings abundance
 - Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar



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