

SEVA TIMES

THE ART OF LIVING INTERNATIONAL CENTER, BENGALURU



**A Policeman
Turns Reformer**

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**Bosch-Art of Living Skill
Center Inaugurated in
Bengaluru**

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DECEMBER 2020

SEVA SNIPPETS

2nd National Water Awards

At the 2nd National Water Awards organized on the virtual platform on 11th and 12th November 2020, by the Ministry of Jal Shakti to honor excellence in Water Management and Conservation across the Nation, Vellore district was awarded the first place in National Water Awards under the category 'Revival of River' for the revival of Naganadhi river – a project that was successfully completed by The Art of Living under the leadership of Chandrasekar Kuppan. The award function was inaugurated by Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, in the presence of Union Minister for Jal Shakti, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, and Union Minister of Environment, Prakash Javadekar.



Chandrasekar Kuppan conducting a capacity building workshop

The Art of Living's Naganadhi River Rejuvenation Project brought back to life a river that had been dead for over 15 years. Over 20,000 women toiled hard to resuscitate the river. 3,145 recharge structures were built across 19 panchayats 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 and nearly 9000 hectares of agricultural land has been reclaimed.

Arsenic-Free Water Filters Installed in Balitera, Nalbari



On October 29, 2020, The Art of Living Karmayoga team in Nalbari in association with Tezpur university installed a water filter system, Arsiron Nilogon, in Balitera village in Nalbari district in the presence of Deputy Commissioner Purabi Konwar. Every household will be provided with 20 liters of arsenic free drinking water daily from this unit. The Deputy Commissioner said that The Art of Living would be asked to conduct training programs for PHCs and local NGOs to propagate this method in all arsenic affected areas.

Arsiron Nilogon, a low-cost filtering system that provides arsenic-free, iron-free water, was developed by a team led by Robin Kumar Dutta from Tezpur University, Assam. It filters out 99.9 per cent of arsenic contamination from groundwater and makes it suitable for drinking.

Faculty Development Program 2020

A Program to Inculcate Indian Knowledge Systems in Contemporary Education and Practices

By Seva Times Correspondent

Cuttack, Odisha: The Department of Contemplative and Behavioral Sciences, Sri Sri University, Cuttack, along with the academic support of Inter University Centre for Teacher Education (IUCE; an autonomous body under UGC), had organized a 14-day program titled "Ātmanirbhara Bhārata: India in the 21st Century, Faculty Development Program 2020 on Indian Knowledge Systems in Contemporary Education & Practices," from November 5-19, 2020. The program was organized in collaboration with CPDHE, UGC-HRDC and Delhi University, with the additional support of regulatory bodies such as AICTE and ICSSR.

The online program was inaugurated by the Honorable Minister of Education, Dr. Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, in the presence of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar on November 4, 2020. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank said, "When we think about the traditions of the Indian knowledge system, we look back at the universities of Takshashila, Nalanda, and Vikramshila. People from all over the world come to India to learn philosophy, ideas, ideology and ways of living. India has been a world leader for the world despite the invasion of colonialism. We have continuously guided the world in the right direction. A unique thing about the land of India is that even when many civilizations came and went, this country stood steadfastly in the hour of examination. India is, and

always will be, a world teacher."

Chanting a verse from the Rigveda, 'Krinvanto Vishwamaryam', Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar said, "Our ancient sages and saints had said that we will create the best human beings." The best human beings cannot be created without the right education system." Gurudev also spoke about his vision behind the establishment of Sri Sri University, which aims to integrate the best of Western education and the knowledge of the East into higher education in India.

The objective of this Faculty Development Program was to provide the educational community with comprehensive insights into various Indian thought traditions to strengthen the knowledge base and create comparative perspectives for teachers and stakeholders in higher educational institutions (from India and abroad), enabling them to empower the students to become compassionate, fulfilled individuals, good citizens, and contributing members of the world order. The New National Education Policy 2020 also speaks of this imperative.

Delineating the legacy of the Indian Knowledge System, FDP 2020 examined the colonial narrative that underpins the Indian Education Systems and sought to unweave it. In 59 sessions conducted by 53 eminent speakers, 304 participants rediscovered the tremendous wealth of Indian Knowledge Systems and how it



could be incorporated into the current education system.

Dr. Richa Chopra, FDP Curator, Founding Head In-charge, Department of Contemplative and Behavioral Sciences, Sri Sri University, said that her department which offers programs in psychology and contemplative studies had successfully integrated and amalgamated tenets of the Indian knowledge systems that is rooted in philosophy, art forms, and religion, into Modern Mainstream Psychology. The thought that this could be similarly implemented in other disciplines was the motivating force behind organizing FDP 2020.

Sharing her experience, Prof. Mala Tandon, Deputy Director and Head of Institute, Amity Institute of Education, Lucknow, said, "Indian knowledge system is amazing and fascinating. We learnt such a lot during this FDP and it is the need of the hour because I think the spread of the Indian Knowledge System all over globe will help in attaining Sarva Jana Hitaya and Sarva Jana Sukhaya.

Dr. Shankar Narayan, Senior Associate Professor, Manipal Institute of Technology, another participant in the program said, "This is the right knowledge not only for India but also for the whole world. The first best time to implement Indian Knowledge System was 70 years ago. The second-best time

is today. If not now, when?"

Another participant, Nrithya Jagganathan, Director, KYM Institute of Yoga Studies, Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, said, "I have only one word 'Vismaya' - sheer wonder, sheer amazement at the scope and the depth of Indian knowledge systems. I'm extremely grateful to the Viveka Sopana Parampara for the wealth of knowledge they have given. It's extremely important I'd say in these times when we find ourselves pulled apart between media and politics; nobody knows what's true anymore... I think this is a remarkable effort."

Dr. Anuradha Choudry, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT, Nagpur, who was the co-curator of the program along with Dr. Richa Chopra, said, "There was so much to learn from each one of the stalwarts in these vast domains of knowledge from Indian knowledge systems but the most heartening thing for me was the importance that was given to Sanskrit as a master key to access any of those traditions. So, as we move ahead with NEP 2020, let's come together, let's study Sanskrit, let's know our own heritage so that we can become richer in ourselves and enrich the world."

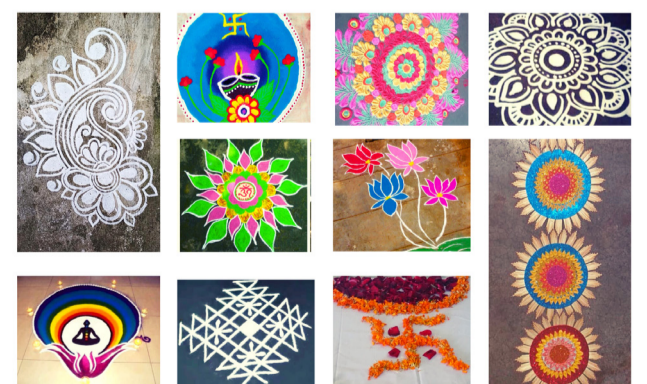


900+ participants from Pan-India YLTP started Diwali festivities with Indoor Cleanliness Drive

The Diwali Special Pan-India YLTP course, held between 5-11 November saw more than 900 participants from rural and semi-urban India. With the pandemic imposing a curb on outdoor activities, the participants undertook an indoor cleanliness drive in true Diwali spirit. Families came together to clean their homes, gardens, and wherever possible, the street just outside their homes.

Encouragement to local customs and traditions, folk art forms and above all connecting the youth to their roots with a sense of pride, stands as an integral objective of Gurudev Sri

Sri Ravi Shankar's vision for rural India through the Karmayoga platform and its flagship course, Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP). In view of this, the Indoor Cleanliness Drive was followed by each participant decorating their home as per the traditions prevalent in their region. It brought out a beautiful mix of Indian folk traditions that included, Rangoli, Alpona, Kolam, flower decorations, and a lot more. It also introduced people from one region of India to the home traditions of their fellow citizens from other regions eliciting a wonderful camaraderie and pride in India culture.



The youth participating from rural and semi-urban India displayed their artistic talent by decorating their homes with traditional Rangoli, Alpona, Kolam, and flower decorations after the Indoor Cleanliness Drive

Youthfulness Ends the Day You Stop Taking Challenges

By Padma Koty

In a recent online event, "Vista 2020: The Millennial Madness" with students of IIM, Bengaluru, the young presenters of the program asked Gurudev how youth should manage rejections that they might face in their careers or their relationships which may lead to depression or suicide.

Gurudev's response was that over ambitiousness can cause depression. "We have to widen our purview of life, see life from a wide-angle lens," he counselled. Once we have set the goal we want to achieve, we must know that on the path we are bound to face hurdles, so we should not allow ourselves to get stuck there or get depressed at any hurdle. He added, "Youth can take on big challenges. The day you stop taking challenges know that your youthfulness has ended." If we rekindle our spirit to handle challenges, that will be sufficient to overcome depression.

Gurudev also told his audience of 30,000 students from across India that they have the power in their mind to overcome challenges. The key is to not get their mind stuck to a certain framework and become unable to see beyond that. While analyzing their depression would help them, meditation would be more beneficial as it would take them beyond thought-constructs to an area where they would have more access to higher levels of energy and enthusiasm.

Gurudev has always advocated youth to develop the competence to take on challenges, and alongside, handle any mental depression and despair if they are to "feel the essence of happiness and joy in life." If we are strong from within and maintain inner peace and balance of mind, we can handle any tough challenge with vibrancy and resilience. For this, meditation is the key.

Recently, addressing young attendees of The Art of Living's Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP), Gurudev emphasized that readiness to tackle challenges is a quality of youth. The YLTP program, he said, is aimed at enabling youth to maintain the characteristics and the qualities of youth, which are: readiness to take on challenges, enthusiasm,

having high hopes, readiness to serve others, and not getting bogged down or losing hope because of a failure.

Even a few youth who are full of vibrancy and who want to do good work in society are enough to make so many people's lives better. "Every youth can create so much love, light and laughter in society. When the sun is shining, when everything is fine and beautiful, then there is no role to play for youth," he told the young participants. But when things are not going well, then youth have the role and responsibility of bringing light and the much needed comfort in the world.

Wanting comfort and looking to taking things easy are the signs of old age, Gurudev opined. Youth, on the other hand, do not look for comfort - they give comfort to others. Here too, it is meditation, which forms part of the YLTP curriculum, that helps all the qualities of a youth to stay with you. So even if you are aging physically, you will still remain youthful.

"I consider myself a youth," Gurudev declares emphatically! That explains how, at 64, he serenely manages one of the largest non-governmental organizations in the world arching across 156 countries, inspiring, leading and overseeing hundreds of thousands of projects under dozens of verticals, while simultaneously being a sanctuary of hope and forward-thinking to pandemic-struck individuals and institutions.

An illustrative page from Gurudev's life: he too was young when he took on "many, many" challenges. On the occasion of Deepotsav 2020, outlining the 40-year old journey of his world-mission, he shared: "We started in a small way and it spread throughout the world. We had many challenges, but nothing could deter The Art of Living movement. It started like Gangotri, and is now going towards Gangasagar." He was just 25 when he started The Art of Living on 13th November, 1981, and willingly faced and overcame every tough situation and roadblock on the way. This should surely inspire and lead onwards the youth of today to confront their own challenges with confidence and determination, and build big!

Project Bharat: Kerala's roadmap for a greater efficiency

By Indrani Sarkar

Kerala has been silently scripting a success story in Project Bharat. Of the 1664 villages, pratinidhis have already been appointed across 844 villages. Moreover even amidst the pandemic the objectives are being met with full conviction and commitment. While the entire exercise of building the pratinidhi base may seem ordinary and monotonous, there is a lot more to it than meets the eye. Biju Kumar, YLTP State Council Member (SCM) says, "The ongoing pandemic challenge has not deterred the Kerala team. Online registrations of pratinidhis are going on in full swing. The best part is that efforts are very well orchestrated. From volunteers to teachers to YLTP SCMs, and the Apex body members all are taking concrete steps to ensure that there are no roadblocks during implementation."

Kerala has developed a model that facilitates in expanding the pratinidhi base in an easy and effective manner. Every district of Kerala has a President and Secretary who oversee the implementation of social projects. While the President is an Art of Living Teacher, the Secretary is a volunteer who also works as a financial facilitator. Under them there is a District Council Committee that comprises of 5 members. And in addition there are 5 YLTP District Council members who are also contributing to the cause. Besides this Kerala has been divided into three regions. Every region has a Regional Coordinator who is focused on developing their respective area. Each region is further divided into three zones under the supervision of three Zonal Coordinators. This way all villages of Kollam district have been reached, and the team is on the verge of completing Kottayam district next."

On 2nd October, 'Sevanavarm' a special online

pratinidhi registration campaign was launched to give thrust to the task. Keeping in mind social distancing requirements, social media was used extensively for a greater outreach. The team now aims to complete the task of creating pratinidhis by December. Once that is done the focus will be shifted towards engagement programs and courses that will lay the foundation of creating a model village.

Sudheer Aravind, Project Bharat State Committee Member and State Teachers' Coordinator exclaims, "There is no block in people's minds; people are just waiting for inspiration and guidance. The gram mukhiyas already have a vision for their village. We approach them to understand their vision and assure our support in it. And that is how we are welcome with open arms."

Recently, even amidst the pandemic challenges, 763 participants from the state completed an online mega YLTP. They are now being motivated to take onus as pratinidhis of their villages.

Suresh Babu, former Project Bharat Committee Member and Kerala Apex Body Member, who has been instrumental in giving a direction to Project Bharat in the state is quick to observe, "We have had our share of challenges. The initial days it was difficult to break the ice in places where we had no acquaintance or connections. You needed immense patience to overcome the odds and it is finally bearing fruits now." Anil Kumar who started as a seva yodha and is now the Kerala South Region Coordinator says, "It has been 21 years since I began service activities in my village, Ezhukone and from what I have learnt, I can say that now I am proud to be part of a movement that is so acceptable to people." The vision of Project Bharat is to create a wave of sattva and Kerala is leaving no stone unturned to make it into a reality.

Learning from the EXPERTS

A Policeman Turns Reformer



P N Singh

Shri P N Singh, currently an Expert Mediator with the Ranchi High Court, retired from his services as the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Ranchi. He came into the Police Services from Bihar Public Service Commission as the topper of the 1981 batch. In 1988 he represented Bihar Police in All-India police competition and was awarded the gold-medal in police investigation. Several laurels followed including President Police Medal in 2008 and being declared best expert mediator of the state in 2018. Shri Singh has been a teacher of The Art of Living and has conducted Prison SMART programs for prison inmates and worked extensively for their rehabilitation. He has been a driving force behind the surrender and rehabilitation of several extremists in the region.

Dr Hampi Chakrabarti in conversation with Shri P N Singh

■ Tell us about your journey from a police officer to a prison inmate reformer?

I did my first Art of Living program in 2008. What touched me deeply there was the knowledge that nobody is born a criminal; people turn to crime because of their circumstances or factors like stress and anxiety. Like Gurudev often says, "Behind every culprit there is a victim crying for help". Those days I was serving as a police officer in Bokaro district of Jharkhand, where extremism and Naxalism was at a peak. At a time 10-12 policemen were killed by them. After my experience with Sudarshan Kriya, I felt if these extremists too had a chance to practice it, we would definitely see a transformation in them. With this thought I began organizing The Art of Living program in the prisons. My perspective towards general inmates too changed when I started asking them why they committed the crime for which they were here. Many of them replied that they didn't even realize how it happened in the moment. One of the extremist who had attended a course I had conducted, came straight to me for guidance after being released from the prison. I made him participate in an Advanced Meditation Program. There was so much transformation in him that in the due course of time, he himself became a teacher of The Art of Living. Seeing this I realized that there is so much more that I can do! Also, in those days, Jharkhand Govt. had introduced a surrender policy for extremists. Then in 2008 within 20 days of Gurudev's visit to Bokaro, one area commander of Naxalites surrendered followed by many others. We began coming more in contact with them and teaching them Sudarshan Kriya. That is how a police man was reborn as a reformer. I became a bridge between the administration, the police, and the extremists and criminals.

"I became a bridge between the administration, the police, and the extremists and criminals."

■ How do you rate The Art of Living program as a correctional measure for prison inmates?

The Art of Living programs begin with the understanding that all crimes are reactionary to the criminal's life circumstances or stress and anxiety. So, I began working based on this understanding. You see, interrogation is a primary activity of all police investigation or any investigating agency. Hence, I started talking to the inmates, thoroughly, trying to figure out the story behind them. You will not believe how many inmates I saw began transforming just because of my behavior towards them. Once while interrogating I asked the inmate if he had had any food. Then I asked someone there to get one samosa for him and a cup of tea for me and went to the washroom. When I came back, this man was in tears. When I asked him what was wrong, if anybody had misbehaved with him or abused him, he kept quiet. Only after some moments when he had calmed down, he said that it was the first time ever that anybody had asked about his food with so much care! It was eye opening for me to see that how a little good behavior changed their attitude towards me. Then he again broke down, confessed of his crime and helped us recover all the arms and ammunitions that were in his possession. Had I personally not experienced The Art of Living program, I would have behaved in the customary manner and discovering this aspect would have been lost to me.

■ What are the things that you keep in mind when approaching this issue?

The most important thing here is the experience of love and then expressing it. This gives you a broader perspective and a bigger roadmap. Along with that is the wisdom imparted by Gurudev, which he beautifully brings to your experience of life. Like I did not stop at the knowledge that behind every culprit there is a victim crying for help. I actually went ahead to probe further into their circumstances and bring it to my experience. You have to keep in mind that the person who committed the crime is not the same person standing in front of you now. In the present he is a new person with fresh possibilities. Also, you as a teacher and counselor have to be prepared and ready to give back to society. You will be happy to know that recently, 79 inmates who were on life imprisonment and had already spent at least 16 years in prison were made to undergo The Art of Living program on the request of the Government. It had such a huge impact on them, that these people who had stayed away from their families and the society at large for 16 or more years, we were able to reintegrate and rehabilitate them into mainstream society. All of them are now willing to do good work and give back to the world. They have begun living better lives. When you are able to make an impact in this manner, you feel good that you have been able to help somebody at least. I am happy that in Jharkhand, senior officials are very much interested in these kind of ideas and the opportunity that these provide for the inmates.

■ Over the years what are the challenges that you have faced in accomplishing this task?

Yes, this is a very important aspect. I was still in service as a Police officer when I started this work. During the initial days this thought would definitely cross my mind that knowing that I am a police man some disturbed inmate might attack me or harm me inside the prison. I was hesitant knowing that there were chances of something dangerous actually happening. But with time their perspective towards me changed; they began realizing that I was there to actually help them. Gradually they became comfortable with me and trusted me. Initially sometimes even the Jail authorities doubted my intentions. But over the passage of time, with persistence, things became very smooth.

■ Other than The Art of Living program are there other measures that we implement to help rehabilitate the inmates into mainstream society after their prison term is over?

I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to make good connections with the prison administration, state administration, judiciary and other officials and people of the city. With help from all these people, we are able to do rehabilitation work. For example, if someone is eligible for senior citizen pension schemes, Indira Awas Yojana, Ayushman Bharat and the several other Govt. schemes, we make it possible for the released inmate to avail them with help from people in the legal and administrative offices. We also coordinate with the jail authorities to help identify the inmates who can reap benefits of these schemes and opportunities after they are released from the prison. We also provide skill training to the eligible inmates, like gardening, agriculture, cattle rearing etc. All of us come together to make this possible.

■ What has been the most moving experience for you in all these years?

Oh! There have been so many. There was one Naxalite who was the area commander of the region and his wife too was a Naxalite. She approached us and told us that they wanted to surrender but were not able to find a way to do so. So we assured her of support, we prepared her mentally for the task ahead. Then she along with her husband participated in our program. Upon surrender, the husband had cases on him so he had to go to the prison. With support from our network of people, we helped the husband go to trial. For the wife, we enrolled her in skill training as a beautician. Today, so many years later, they are living as a happy family, integrated into mainstream society and building their life with honest means. They also have a child now! All this was made possible because of the wisdom and spiritual practices that Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has given to us. His inspiration guides our path, without which we are nothing.

Bosch-Art of Living Skill Center Inaugurated in Bengaluru



Bengaluru: The Art of Living, in partnership with Bosch India, has set up a state-of-the-art skills training facility in Bengaluru to provide training in BRIDGE and includes Artisan Training for Carpentry as well as a collaboration center to promote multi-stakeholder collaborations on skill development. The center was inaugurated by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar on November 2, 2020.

In his inaugural address, Gurudev said, "The coming together of companies and NGOs is vital for the society to support government's initiatives of tackling unemployment. Bosch, which is renowned for precision, has always set a high standard for skills. Our values of enthusiasm, commitment, caring and sharing very well resonate with Bosch, leading to this CSR partnership. We are delighted to have developed this center for creating opportunities for a brighter future for our nation's youth."

Launching the skill programs, Soumitra Bhattacharya, Managing Director, Bosch Limited and President, Bosch Group, India, said, "In India, CSR is not just a nice to have, but a must have. Bosch India has developed replicable skilling models like BRIDGE and Artisan Training for upskilling youth. At Bosch, we are committed to take forward skill development with clear defined timelines and outcomes for greater social impact and scale."

BRIDGE is a three-month program (2 months of classroom and 1 month of on-job training) designed to help youth who do not have access to higher education to learn fundamental employability, domain and soft skills. To date, over 30,000 youths have been trained and placed through 466 BRIDGE centers across India.

The newly inaugurated center also houses a state-of-the-art Artisans Training Center of Carpentry where youth who have passed X/XII/ITI can undergo a 9-month training program which will groom them into highly skilled, professionally-certified artisans.

Community Sensitization Underway in the Intervention for Stone Quarry Workers Project

Bijolia, Rajasthan: Under The Art of Living Interventions for Stone Quarry Workers project, Village Survey and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) with the help of 5 tools – Resource Map, Inflow-Outflow of income and expenditure through Leaky Bucket, Village Timeline, Seasonal Calendar, Problem Identification and Pair-wise Ranking was completed in the villages of Kerkhera, Heminiwas, Devnagar, Kasya, Mogarwasa, Baniyon ka Talab and Bahadur ji ka Khera of Bijolia Block, Bhilwara District in Rajasthan. The local community was encouraged to join in for the PRA exercise with help from prominent people and elders of the village.



As according to the unique, integrated and holistic approach of The Art of Living social development projects, creating inspired community leaders and fostering community ownership is central to the way any project is implemented. It is executed with the vision that empowered local change agents continue to be torch bearers for their community long after project timelines are over, making the impact and achieved transformation, sustainable. In view of this a group of motivated youth from the community were identified to undergo the Youth Leadership Training Program. These youth were further groomed to join the project team as volunteers to assist the team in reaching out to locals and conducting thorough village surveys.

After completion of the first phase of the ISQW project, the second phase commenced. Herein extensive Bal Chetna Shivir and Nav Chetna Shivir were conducted for the community members across all the seven villages to guide both children and adults respectively, in physical and mental health boosting yoga, meditation and other exercises. To create better bonding between the project team and the community, as well as between individuals of the community, satsangs were conducted in the villages. The community members participated in large numbers in singing bhajans, and folk songs from their traditions, dancing and celebrating with each other. The satsangs were reported to be successful in breaking the ice between individuals for a smoother implementation of the project.

In the upcoming phase, Rural Happiness Program will be conducted for the community members and more YLTPs would be rolled out for the youth for them to emerge as empowered leaders and change agents.

Self Reliance, Passion, and Surrender

Passion makes you weak. Dispassion is strength. For your passion to be fulfilled, you have to depend upon so many things. Passion and self-reliance do not appear to go together. If you are passionate, you have to forget about being self-reliant. If you want to be self-reliant, you have to drop your passion. This is generally so.

That which brings together these two completely different aspects in you, is your spirit. The same spirit that wants to be self-reliant is also passionate. It is only in spirituality that passion and dispassion can happen together. This is the rarest combination.

When you are dispassionate, you have strength, and strength is self-reliance. True self-reliance is realizing that nothing is excluded from the Self. And when you realize everything is part of the Self, then you can be passionate about everything! Even to fulfill your passion, you can only rely on the Self, for Self alone is non-changing.

In truth, there is neither reliance nor passion. In one state, you can either be passionate or you can be self-reliant. But in an elevated state of consciousness, you can be neither, or both!

Self-reliance needs enormous courage. When there is nobody else or you want to depend on yourself for everything, you need a lot of courage.

Surrender needs less courage.

A person who cannot surrender cannot be self-reliant either. If you don't have enough courage to surrender, then it is not possible to be self-reliant; you simply fool yourself. If you don't have a hundred dollars, you cannot have a thousand dollars. Even a little fear is detrimental to self-reliance.

Self-reliance contains surrender. Fifty dollars contains ten dollars.

Often people think that surrender is a way to escape from their responsibilities; they then end up blaming the Divine for all their problems. In fact, true surrender is taking total responsibility for everything.

You take responsibility and you pray for help.

Surrender eventually leads you to self-reliance because there is nothing other than the Big Self.

What is it that you have to surrender? Anyway everything belongs to the Divine already. But when you think that something belongs to you, then I say, 'Let go'. When you are holding onto something so tight, that

Words of Wisdom

is when I say, 'Hey, relax'. Relaxation is called surrender; it is nothing else.

If something is bothering you in your head, offering that botheration is surrender.

It is just like offering *aahuti* (the act of making prayerful offerings to the sacred fire). So whatever bothers you or troubles you, offer that as *aahuti* to the Divine.

That which you cannot handle by yourself; that which has become a burden for you; that which you are tired of carrying on your head, just put it down and let go! That is what is meant by surrender.

Otherwise what is there to surrender? Your body belongs to God. Even your mind belongs to God. Everything belongs to God. But you think it belongs to you. Just let go, relax and smile.

In Buddhism, it is said '*Buddham Sharanam Gachhami*', which means whatever burden you cannot handle by yourself, offer it to Lord Buddha, or offer it to God, or offer it to the Guru, or offer it to anyone who is dear to you. This is for you to feel that there is someone who belongs to you and is very dear to you, and you are very dear to them.

I will give you an example.

A child, when it knows that mother is at home, it feels so comfortable. The child will roam about here and there and play happily. But when the child does not see the mother, and mother has gone somewhere, then it starts looking for her and starts crying. Though nowadays the children actually become happy when they find that mother is not around! (Laughter) Then they can do even more mischief. But this happens when the children grow a little older.

Small children often keep a watch to see whether mother is around, isn't it so? One eye will be on the mother. This is because the child feels comforted to know, there is someone for them, who is sitting there.

Letting go, relaxing and smiling is what the meaning of surrender is.



Seva Highlights

'Har Ghar Dipawali' Campaign in Molela



Molela, Rajasthan: Amidst of the economic crisis caused by the Corona pandemic this year, The Art of Living family in Molela organized a 'Har Ghar Deepawali' campaign to bring festive cheer to the children of daily wage earners. With the generous help of people from Molela and surrounding villages, volunteers of The Art of Living were able to distribute Deepawali kits to around 50 families. Each kit contained groceries, sweets, pooja items, and 11 lamps. This apart, around 200 garments, toys, footwear, and woolen clothes were also distributed to needy families. The Art of Living team in Molela has been engaged in such service projects for the last 11 years.

Children's Smiles Brighten Diwali in Ahmednagar

Ahmednagar, Maharashtra: Volunteers of The Art of Living in Ahmednagar, led by Prakash Lokhande, distributed new clothes and sweets to over 40 children living in the slum areas. The broad smiles on the faces of these children brightened Diwali for their families and for the volunteers alike.



'Blankets of Grace' Bring Warmth to the Needy



Karbi Anglong, Assam: Volunteers of The Art of Living in Karbi Anglong launched a campaign aptly titled 'Blanket of Grace.' 1008 blankets were distributed under the campaign among the needy people of 18-20 villages of Karbi Anglong lying along the Assam-Nagaland border. The blankets that were distributed were of a good size and quality, each blanket enough to keep 2-3 children of a family warm for the next 15 years or so. Only women were chosen as the beneficiaries of this campaign. Dressed in their traditional finery, women from remote tribal villages of Karbi Anglong arrived at The Art of Living

ashram in Diphu on different dates in November to collect the blankets. Some of them brought flowers and fruits to express their gratitude to Gurudev. Dr. J. P. Singhvi, The Art of Living faculty from Chandigarh, played a major role in this campaign. Vishnu Prakash, Art of Living teacher in the North-East conducted this campaign with the support of the Diphu ashram team and local volunteers.

Diwali Faral for the Footpath Dwellers in Mumbai

Mumbai, Maharashtra: Diwali is one of the biggest festivals in India. Due to the pandemic, many daily wage earners were left jobless and there was little to celebrate, especially for those homeless people who have made their 'homes' on the sidewalks of Mumbai. To cheer them up in these dismal times, on Naraka Chaturdashi, the first day of Diwali, The Art of Living family in Mumbai distributed the traditional Diwali Faral, an assortment of sweetmeat and savories, to 500 homeless families in Sewri, Parel, Hindmata, Wadala, King Circle, Sion and Mahim.



“We Are Pioneers in Personal Coaching: We Have the Guru-Shishya Parampara”

By Padma Koty

Our Three Powers – Secrets of Lord Kartikeya



Lord Kartikeya is an important figure in the ancient Indian lore with supernatural stories about his origin and incomparable deeds of heroism. From November 20-23, 2020, Gurudev gave a discourse on - Our Three Powers - Secrets of Lord Kartikeya. Gurudev revealed the true meaning of what Kartikeya represents in our life and unraveled the mystical truth that the unbelievable stories about him convey to us. Revisiting ancient Puranic stories with esoteric symbolism and explaining their essence with a contemporary perspective, Gurudev gave this talk in both Hindi (in the morning sessions) and in English (in the evenings.)

November 2020 saw a stream of online events in which Gurudev exchanged views with and gave guidance to people from varied walks of life – corporate executives, the Honorable Governor of Karnataka, Ministers, education faculty, Ayurveda experts, enthusiastic youth from IIMB, and students of NIFT, among others.

A review of two online events in the last week of October 2020:



On 23 October, Gurudev had a sparkling discussion with model and popular actor Ganesh Venkataraman on the Colors TV series, ‘Sinthanaigal Simplified.’ Sharing his own experiences, Gurudev clarified

that knowing more people does not translate into having many companions and friends and that an extended period of time is necessary to nurture any relationship to significance. When Ganesh queried Gurudev on the negativity that technology can spread, Gurudev affirmed that social media may appear to have a negative influence, but it can benefit society if it is used responsibly. Identifying one’s passion can also give more fulfillment in life, he said.

On 27th October, in a program organized by The Art of Living with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Gurudev interacted with Arjun Munda, Cabinet Minister for Tribal Affairs and Renuka Singh, Minister of State for Tribal Affairs.



Gurudev said that we have to help tribals preserve their culture and simultaneously give them modern education. He mentioned The Art of Living School in Ghatshila where the students study and at the same time learn skills in agriculture and horticulture. So, they can never be unemployed as this combination of schooling and skilling ensures they can establish their livelihood once they leave school. He suggested that if NGOs and the Government get together to implement this, society can be uplifted swiftly. Life is fleeting; before it is over we should do something through which we can bring

happiness to people and wipe their tears. He quoted a Sanskrit shloka that said that true pooja is bringing happiness to people’s lives.

Online events of November 2020:

On 1st November, Gurudev had a live-wire discussion with students of IIM-Bengaluru who triumphantly got Gurudev to answer not one, but two rounds of rapid-fire questions! 30,000 students from over 100 colleges were logged in to watch the event titled ‘The Millennial Madness’ with Rishikesha Krishna, Director, IIM-B introducing Gurudev to them. “How can I be the next Sri Sri?” asked a youngster and got the reply: “Wake up and see, you have a Sri Sri inside you who is compassionate.” Gurudev told the youngsters this pandemic has done some good too – it has compelled us to rethink our priorities and family values. Also, because of technology, social connectivity has been maintained. Among the great number of troubling issues raised by the youth, he said: Meditation gives us the same altered state of consciousness as drugs do, but without destroying one’s bio-energy. Abilities for attention, intelligence and social behavior patterns are adversely affected by drugs, but meditation can easily help you come out of addiction. Young people should start owning the country before it becomes irreparable. Youth in this country are taking to meditation and spirituality in a big way. Significantly, “The day you stop taking challenges, know that your youthfulness has ended,” he advised the youth.

On 2 November 2020, Gurudev, with Soumitra Bhattacharya, President and MD, Bosch Ltd, inaugurated the new state-of-the-art skill centre of The Art of Living, Bengaluru. Gurudev said, “The coming together of companies and NGOs is vital for the society to support the government’s initiatives for tackling unemployment.”

On 4th November, at an event ‘Atma Nirbhar Bharat – India in the 21st Century’ which highlighted the online inauguration of ‘Faculty Development Program 2020,’ Gurudev interacted with other eminent attendees, among them Dr. Ramesh Pokhriyal, Hon. Minister for Education; Sonal Mansingh, noted dancer; and Mukul Kanitkar, Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal. Gurudev welcomed the New Education Policy and said it had made many happy as it put the education sector on a strong basis. He stressed on the importance of education and strengthening our roots. Shiksha and deeksha ennoble an individual’s existence and change the personality. Education alone can bring

peace and comfort in the world, said Gurudev.

Event on ‘Yoga and Ayurvedic Medicine for Mental Wellness’ was organized on 5th November by All India Institute for Ayurveda (AIIA) to discuss the latest research in mental wellness and the use and role of yoga and Ayurveda medicine. Hon. Shripad Y Naik, MoS, AYUSH; and Geoff Lee, MP, New South Wales, also attended among other eminent persons. Gurudev said our rishis and munis have gifted Ayurveda to us, and we should take this science forward to the whole world. Health is not defined as just absence of disease, it is being happy in life, he added. Through seminars and webinars, we need to remove the stigma attached to mental health, he proposed.

On 5th November, Gurudev addressed the staff and students of Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) at an online event ‘Making India a Global Knowledge Superpower.’ The webinar was graced by the Hon. Governor Shri Vajubhai R Vala; Hon. Dy. CM Dr. CN Ashwathnarayan; Prof. Anil Sahasrabudhe, Chairman, AICTE; Prof. MK Sridhar, Hon. Member, UGC and NEP Draft Committee; and other dignitaries. Gurudev stated that spirituality is not a negation of life. Instead, it supports all aspects of life. He added that the purpose of technical education is to create comfort in society.



Gurudev also interacted with young panelists Bryant Wood; Kat Graham, actor; and Frank Elaridi in ‘Modern Nirvana’ on 5th November. Replying to Bryant’s query, he said that when they experience negative energy, they can engage themselves in deep breathing, music or service activities. On a good technique to transcend fear, he said we can attend to our breath as it has a definite breathing pattern attached to it; even the emotion of fear can be transmuted into an all-encompassing feeling of love. When you don’t limit yourself to the country you live in and you consider the entire globe as part of your family, you can’t help but go there and help people.

On 6th November, ‘Fashioning Your Life’ was the title of an event organized by the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), in which Gurudev interacted with the Directors, faculty and students. Gurudev expressed that there is nothing wrong in aspiring for materialistic growth as long as you keep in mind the values of sincerity, integrity and compassion. Replying to a query, he said, “When you don’t want anything for yourself, you become like me.”



On 8th November Gurudev interacted with Manoj Ladwa, Founder and CEO, The India Inc. Group. Replying to Manoj’s question on the US elections, Gurudev said

that ultimately democracy wins. American citizens should embrace the democratic process as they move forward, he added. The event being themed on the topic of identity, Gurudev dwelt on the importance of keeping multiple identities in balance. He said human beings take on many identities and the first and foremost is that of being a part of the universal spirit, part of one light. The second identity is that of human being followed by gender, language, religion, nationality and so on. Societal violence and terrorism stem from forgetting our basic common identity as human beings and identifying more with our religion, race or country. Priority of identity and keeping all these identities intact are essential.

On 11th November, interacting with Kanchan Rai, mental wellness coach and Founder of ‘Let us Talk’, Gurudev dwelt on how young people are taking to spirituality, and said that mental health is impossible without spirituality. Youth of today, though they are not so materialistic, are high on exploring. They get into drugs because they are looking for a higher, altered state of consciousness. On the issue of mental well-being he explained it can be addressed through eastern practices. We are pioneers in this personal coaching having had the ancient practice of Guru-Shishya Parampara, he highlighted. Interestingly, he said even retired people can create heaven or hell within the family! “Let us talk” (the name of Kiran’s organization) should go with “Let us meditate” He suggested. When it comes to expression, we should go for the middle path as over expression is as disastrous as not expressing.



On the occasion of Deepawali, 15th November and on the subsequent day of Deepotsav, Gurudev joined the online celebrations. He said, “Diwali is an occasion to remind ourselves that just one lamp is not enough to dispel the darkness, many lamps are needed to dispel it. So, if one person is happy, it is not enough. Everyone must be happy. This collective happiness and collective prayer are what makes Diwali very special.”

On 19th November, Gurudev had a wide-ranging discussion with noted film personality Yugi Sethu. The interaction covered many relevant and interesting topics, including the 40 healing properties of rasam, the efficacy of the Siddha formulation Kabasur Kudineer in treating Covid-19, the importance or otherwise of money, existential issues, and so on.



Online Convocation of Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT)



On 21st November, Gurudev was conferred an honorary doctorate from the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) at their online convocation ceremony. Gurudev told the students and faculty, “Improve your professionalism, then you will be appreciated and adored in the whole world.” He also said the purpose of education is to build a strong personality which could turn challenges into opportunity. “Dream big, hold on to the dream, and encourage others’ dreams,” he counseled. Among other dignitaries were Chief Guest Prof. Mohammed Younus, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate; and Prof. Ved Prakash, Chancellor, KIIT. Prof.



Subrato Kumar said Gurudev is the “Guru of Life and Livelihood.”

Speaking at the launch of ‘Guru Nanak Chair for Studies in Universal Development’ at the International Seminar on Guru Nanak’s Philosophy and UN Agenda for Sustainable Development organized by the Chandigarh University on November 23, 2020, Gurudev said that the Chair was something close to his heart, as Guru Nanak’s teachings have timeless wisdom and are much more relevant for the world than ever before. “God loving” was the mantra he gave to the world. Gurudev also opined that when we talk of sustainable development, it has to be backed by a strong philosophy. Eminent persons who were at the online event were S. Satnam Singh, Chancellor, CU; and RS Bawa, Pro Chancellor.

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