**Roadmap for Restoring Joy in Punjab**

- Gurudev addresses 20,000 farmers from across Punjab at Kissauna da Sammelan in Jalalabad.
- Adopting natural farming, putting a halt to environmental pollution, and saving youth from drugs, will restore joy in Punjab, says Gurudev.

**The Wonder Wheat that Promises a Second Green Revolution**

- This 2000 years old wheat is rich in folic acid, minerals, fat, and protein, and has a low glycemic index.
- It was grown by SSIAST, they found that this wheat had some very special properties.
- It has 12% folic acid. What is folic acid? It is linked to deficiency of folic acid. This is naturally present in this wheat.
- The soil of Punjab should give the world this miraculous wheat by which health will be preserved and diseases can be prevented.

**Drug Awareness Program at Jammu Central Jail**

The Art of Living recently conducted a Drug Awareness Program at the Central Jail in Jammu Kot bhalwal. Inmates shared their experience with drugs and took a pledge to say no to drugs and also to keep the jails drug free. A yoga and meditation room was inaugurated in the jail premises.

**Student of Sri Sri College of Ayurvedic Science Bags 2nd Place in National Youth Parliament**

Ms. Anjanakshi of Sri Sri College of Ayurvedic Science & Research was recently honored by Hon. Prime Minister Narendra Modi for bagging 2nd place in the National Youth Parliament out of 57,993 participants.

**Solar Light Distribution in Karbi Anglong**

Supported by Sri Sri Rural Development Projects and North East Apex Honouilleirin Terpsi, IAS; volunteers of The Art of Living distributed solar lights to 92 tribal families in Umlapher, an extremely remote hilly area in West Karbi Anglong, on March 21, 2019. Umlapher has no proper roads or electricity. The tribals were joyful to have their homes lit up for the first time as night set in.

**SEVA Snippets**

- **Art of Living Programs for Chandigarh Police**
  The Art of Living has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Chandigarh police to conduct programs for their personnel. Chandigarh police recently rescued 280 children from drug abuse and plans are afoot to rescue a thousand more.

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**Talking to the farmers about the advantages of natural farming, Gurudev said, “To get a good crop, we use different types of chemicals/fertilizers. This gives us a few good crops initially but then the soil becomes poisonous. A good crop may be reaped, but the grains are tasteless and without nutritional value. Chemical farming has robbed the soil of nutrients. I therefore request all our farmers, for a short period of time even if we have to get less profit, we should put up with it. Later on we can get four to five times the profit, we will reap a good crop, we can save our soil from poisonous substances.” Addressing the health issues of the people in the region, Gurudev said that it is worrisome that so many people from the villages are afflicted with cancer. Offering solutions to this he said, “One way is to adopt natural farming. Second, make every effort to keep our water pure. Thirdly, keep our environment clean. Do not burn plastic. Wherever we burn even one small polythene bag, it produces so much dioxin it can cause cancer in at least 1000 people. Take an oath not to burn polythene bags.”

- He also encouraged farmers to make natural manure which is inexpensive and can save farmers from falling into the debt trap. Motivated by Gurudev, the farmers took a pledge to move in the direction of adopting natural farming techniques. Gurudev gave them the assurance that The Art of Living would provide them with the necessary training to do that. To stay in good health, he encouraged them to practice yoga, pranayama, meditation, and sumiran to keep the mind free of negative thoughts and build immunity against diseases.

Addressing the drug problem, Gurudev said, “Punjab is the land of courageous people. Punjab has come to the rescue of this nation many times. The youth of Punjab are full of passion and courage. Whenever enemies attacked the nation, rescue always came from Punjab… Unfortunately today the youth are caught in the trap of drugs. We have to teach our youth the art of living.” He guided all Art of Living teachers to conduct a Happiness Survey and counsel the youth about the hazards of drug addiction. Concluding his address, Gurudev invited all present to join in this battle against drugs saying, “All of you want to do something for this country. Society needs all of us right now. Together we should move towards a drug free Punjab… Jalalabad should become ‘Naya’- a ‘Khushi ki Nagari’. Work for self, society, and nation.”
Recharging Groundwater Supply – The Promise of Permaculture

This editorial space is not to present yet another article on or about permaculture, but to briefly explain why permaculture cannot just help conserve water, but actually recharge ground water in a proven pattern.

At a time when potable water is in short supply almost all over the world, seventy per cent of the world’s drinkable water supply is used up by agriculture, as per some estimates. So why would nations and food-growing communities not switch swiftly to permaculture which has been proved to be a food-producing system with no parallel? Permaculture requires a bare minimum of inputs that need to be bought. It is a system of using waste vegetable matter and other biomass, and just sprinkles water, and combining smart design with proven land-use practices based on close observation of Nature. It is the answer that is staring a hungry Planet Earth in the face.

In permaculture, simple contour swales, ponds, micro-dams and other minimal, small-scale earthworks are constructed to use the natural flow of available water to conserve, store and regenerative water in the area under permaculture. It takes valuable pointers from ancient farming techniques and combines them with modern knowledge and understanding of earth sciences. It mimics nature’s ecosystems to grow food in a way that harmonises with Nature’s patterns.

What is at the heart of permaculture’s contribution to reformation of water? It is in philosophy of giving enough time to the water to soak into the land, enough time, that is, to keep the soil moist while replenishing the water table. In this design, is key. Permaculture experts explain that design is vital to capture soil moisture (through composting, mulching and other uses of biomass), and maximize availability of water while preventing evaporation. As explained above, strategic placement of small water bodies on the land helps collect and store available water. Using biomass makes available natural plant nutrients. Creating a catchment through these various systems and nature-friendly practices gives lasting benefits and ensures more or less reliable water supply.

Reckless drilling of bore wells has led India to become water-stressed, i.e. there is no more ground water in many parts of the country. Nature offers a huge lesson, an example we must learn from: all over the world, across climate-variations, we see forests, grasslands, jungles, prairies that yield tons of biomass year on year without any irrigation whatsoever. Does it not tell us to rethink our emphasis on over-irrigation and over-watering?

Once the plants and trees grow, and even as they grow, minimal watering is sufficient. Plants need moisture, not water, to sustain,” says a permaculture expert. Next time you water your tomatoes, know that they are desert plants! Serious thought, concerted action, and a blueprint for India to take up permaculture in a planned and purposeful manner alone can ensure that our drinking water needs will not be severely threatened in the very near future.

Learning from the Experts

Moving the Margins

Sandep Sabharwal has over 25 years of experience in working for the development of marginal farmers and farming practices in India. His endeavours range from cooperative institution building, to grassroots program conceptualization, development and management. He has served as a Manager for National Dairy Development Board in Gujarat; Senior Manager for Reliance Life Sciences; Program Leader Disaster Response Centre of Reliance Foundation in Mumbai along with several other responsibilities. He has made significant contribution to The Art of Living’s development initiatives for more than a decade.

Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti in conversation with Mr. Sandep Sabharwal

What has been your core area of intervention as a development professional?

I started working for marginal farmers about 27 years ago. Since then, farming areas of India have been my primary work field. India has a huge potential in the rainfed farming districts. Incidentally, it might rain when it is not required and not rain when it is required. Therefore these are also the drought prone areas and also the areas where 100% of the forests need safeguarding. Thus, throughout my career, I have focused on seeking solutions to a few key concerns, like – helping farmers reduce the cost of cultivation, increase the productivity per hectare of land, thereby bringing more area under production, get better market linkages for the farmers so as to harness optimal crop prices sustainably and how to reduce the dependency on external input for farming by becoming self-sustained. Most importantly, I have looked forward to organize farmers in the manner of cooperatives or collective for better functioning.

What are the key challenges for marginal farmers in current times?

First, communities are unorganized and that does a huge disservice to them. Whenever I talk to the villagers, I ask them that if each family in a village of 100 families together saves the Rs. 20 that they might be spending on addictions, how much they can save as a community. I bring to light instances when they came together as a community and volunteered to erect a grand place of worship or organize a local festival; then why can’t they be organised for development work. I leave them with these questions and let them ponder upon it.

Second, there is leadership crisis at the grassroots. It is not that leaders are not there. It is needed for them to come in front and take charge. There are many youths with phenomenal leadership potential awaiting our attention across the country.

Third, the farmers don’t often get professional assistance at their doorstep in terms of how to better utilize their water, their farms, and natural resources. This is in spite of the best efforts of the government and other non-government organisations.

Fourth, the farmers often get exploited not having enough information where to go and whom to approach. We can safeguard them once they are organised as a farmers-producers organisations.

Is the process uniform or unique across geographies?

The process needs to have certain elements of both uniformity and uniqueness. The first principles (which cannot be compromised) need to be the same. For e.g., if it calls for rainwater harvesting for water security; it is definitely required across all geographies. But in terms of the specifics to be practiced, if the geography allows you to have a river rejuvenation model, like desilting of a river where the silt can go to the farms and the river basin can hold more water, so be it. But if there is no river basin to be desilted, one can go for farm ponds, wells, trenches and so on. Depending on the topographical realities, rain water harvesting methods can change, but the principle remains same.

Now that The Art of Living has got mandates in many states to work for doubling the farmer’s income, what methodology do you suggest should be applied?

The methodology should be targeted at reducing the cost of cultivation, which Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the founder of the Art of Living, is very particular about. The methodology is also about increasing productivity and thereby bring more land under production. A farmer may have 5 acres of land, but all his land need not be in the same place. 1 acre could be on a hilltop which he might never have tried for agriculture. Giving him hope that even if he acre can be brought under cultivation could be good additional income for the farmers. Apart from that we can teach farmers that seeds and fertilizers can be locally produced, reducing their dependence on external inputs. We also need to make available information and linkages for farmer to be able to bid at the competitive market to get incentive driven prices.

How does the cultural and spiritual context affect your work and its outcomes?

I am glad that people are thinking in this context now. In the corporate context, it does not matter much. But to me, it does matter. The moment I talk about de-addiction to farmers or any behaviour change, it is not going to happen by mere words. They will have to be helped which can only come through spiritual practices.

In this domain, what is your vision of the work for the future?

I definitely want to be actively involved in identifying and encouraging leadership and helping youth to realise their potential. Youth as social leaders need to be encouraged to sharpen their entrepreneurship skills in the villages, in areas like seed entrepreneurship, nursery raising etc. A farmer in Nalanda, Bihar, grew about 224 quintals of paddy by mere words. They will have to be helped which can only come through spiritual practices.

What has been your biggest learning?

That I do not know a lot! Every village, every farm poses a new set of challenges and needs to be given a tailor made solution. There are so many youngsters in our country. If everyone can understand the basics of it correctly, it can happen…
Celebrating Parents’ Worship Day with the Elderly in Chhindwara

Chhindwara, Madya Pradesh: Youth volunteers of The Art of Living in Tapi, Gujarat, have organized a Parents’ Worship Day for elderly in Chhindwara on March 16, 2019. The program was sponsored by Madhav Helping Hands Foundation. The activity is an annual function on the occasion of International Women’s Day every year. At the function, volunteers offer their selfless service by distributing drinking water and cleaning the temple premises on the occasion of Mahashivratri. Every year, volunteers offer their selfless service by distributing drinking water and cleaning the temple premises on the occasion of Mahashivratri. For more info, contact Sweta Chadda, Faculty, Art of Living, Belapur, Maharashtra. Tel: +919821099995.

Art of Living Programs in Rural Punjab

The Art of Living’s Vyski Vikas Kendra has organized a seminar on the occasion of International Women’s Day every year. The Art of Living Kendra organized this year’s event on March 5, 2019, in Solapur, Maharashtra. The Kendra, which is a part of The Art of Living International Center, offers a platform for women to participate in various programs and activities aimed at empowering them. The event included a keynote speech by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, a series of workshops, and a panel discussion on various topics relevant to women’s rights and development.

Free Coaching for Migrant Children in Una Slum

Apologies for any inconvenience caused. This is a special section for The Art of Living programs and Satsangs were held in Una Slum. The children were given free coaching in Hindi, English, Math, Science, and Social Sciences.

Cloth Bags – an Eco-Friendly Alternative to Polybags

Tapi, Gujarat: On May 13, 2015, The Art of Living family in TAPI district, Gujarat made a resolution to promote a plastic bag free Tapi district. They started out by making paper bags and have so far made and distributed over 2 lakh paper bags. The mission is led by AOL Anumala. In May 2018, they took another innovative step towards making Tapi plastic bag free.Inspired by Art of Living faculty, Belaben Prakash Golwala, they started promoting cloth bags as an alternative to polythene bags. The cloth bags are stitched with the help of villagers in the surrounding villages. So far, workshops have been conducted in Unchamala and Waghiera to teach the villagers how to make these bags. There are five ingredients for success:

1. Function as a Team: Peace and prosperity are interlinked. Prosperity cannot flourish in a disturbed atmosphere. While working with others, you need to function as a team. Have a sense of respect for your team members, and do not indulge in blame games. As a team leader, you need to create an atmosphere of trust, cooperation, a sense of belonging, and celebration. Nothing can last if the focus is only on productivity and net result.

2. Manage your Mind: The whole essence of the Bhagavad Gita is to act without being attached to the fruit of action. If you can manage your mind in a war-like scenario, then you can manage any situation. This skill in action is called yoga. It is this wisdom of yoga that transforms one’s attitude from arrogance to self-confidence; from meekness to humility; from the burden of dependence to the realization of interdependence; from a limited ownership to oneness with the whole. When performing action, if the attention is only on the end result, then you will not perform. Just give yourself fully to the task with 100 percent sincerity and commitment.

3. Be Courageous Like a Lion: There is a saying in Sanskrit that says, “Great wealth comes to one who has the courage of a lion and who puts in all his efforts.” Passion and disposition are complementary like the in-breath and out-breath. You breathe in but you cannot breathe out; you have to breathe out. Similarly, you need to have passion to make things work but also the disposition to let go. When you don’t crave for abundance, it comes to you.

4. Develop your Intuition: If all that is needed for prosperity is one’s own effort, then why are so many people who put effort not prosperous? This unknown factor or lack is enhanced by spirituality. The whole material world is run by a world of vibrations which is subtler than all that we see. Spirituality enhances intelligence and intuition. Intuition comes to you when you balance your passion with disposition; profit with success; aggressiveness to get things with compassion to give back to the society. Intuition is the right thought at the right time, and is an important component for success in business.

5. Meditate: There are three challenges you have, greater is the need for you to meditate. In ancient times, meditation was used as a way to find the Self, for enlightenment and to overcome misery and problems. Meditation is all the more essential in today’s hectic lifestyle full of stress and tension. Meditation not only relieves you of stress and pueda. Meditation also helps us get in touch with our inner space – the source of joy, peace, and love.
The Slumdog Changemaker

A quintessential Dharavi child, Reshma Parab had an upbringing that epitomised the life of an underdog in India's shining metropoli, Mumbai. Dharavi is reputed as Asia's largest slum. Inside this over burgeoning mass of humanity, young Reshma grew up like any other Dharavi kid - with more family members than their shanty could hold, playful with a sense of abandon, imitating the coarse mannerisms and language used by adults around them and witnessing crime as a normal way of life.

Nothing would have changed; Reshma would have lived without knowing the possibilities of life had The Art of Living not ventured into Dharavi in 2001. They had organised a mediation workshop for the adults. But the adults, most of them daily laborers, were not interested. Instead, it was the children who showed up out of curiosity! That is how Reshma took her first steps towards a different life.

Very soon, at a tender age Reshma completed the Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP) and started working in earnest to uplift the people around her in the slum. She reminiscences, “Some magic happened by the end of the program. My mind stabilised and gained focus. It brought a sea change in my perspective of life.” Reshma became an integral part of a very inspired team of dynamic volunteers. Soon enough they were able to bring to life a free school for the underprivileged slum children. After knocking doors at about 400 homes and trying to convince parents about the importance of their child's education, the team was able to procure admission for 50 students. This path was never bereft of curiosity! That is how Reshma took her first steps towards a different life.

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