Seva Times Network

Order of St. George for Gurudev

Gurudev was conferred the ‘Order of St. George’, the highest award given by Kottayam’s 452-year-old St. George Orthodox Church, as part of the Church’s Commemorative Feast. Former Kerala Chief Minister, Oomen Chandy, who was one of the dignitaries present at the ceremony praised Gurudev for working towards spiritual awakening and the betterment of society and acknowledged the humanitarian work done by The Art of Living in Kerala over the years.

Art of Living Signs MoU with Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University

The Art of Living has signed a MoU with Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University, Lucknow, to conduct programs for students and faculty. Gurudev says the purpose of universities is to create personalities with qualities of enthusiasm, patience, creativity, and compassion, which are appreciated universally. This initiative will go a long way in achieving that goal.

Peaceful Alternative for ULFA Youth who have Bid Farewell to Arms

The Art of Living has set up an Arecanut Plate Manufacturing Unit at an ULFA-designated camp at Kakopather, Assam. This project will empower rural youth to set up eco-friendly micro enterprises. It will also give direction to youth who have given up arms and are looking for a peaceful life.

Trauma Relief for Staff of Terrorized Hotels in Colombo

The Art of Living conducted trauma relief for the staff of Shangri-La, Cinnamon Grand and Kingsbury, the three luxury hotels in the commercial capital Colombo that became targets in a series of coordinated terrorist suicide attacks on April 21, 2019.

Rashtriya Karmayog Samagam 2019

Karmayogis Attend Brainstorming Sessions on Rural Development

Bangalore, Karnataka: The Art of Living’s Youth Leadership Training Program wing had organized a two-day Rashtriya Karmayog Samagam on May 13th and 14th at The Art of Living International Center in Bengaluru. Over 140 State Council Members and Seva Yoddhas attended the meet.

The Meet was a grand success with a lot of lively interactive sessions between the participants and members of the National Executive Board combined with presentations by the other trusts of Art of Living like Sri Sri Rural Development Program and Sri Sri Tattwa. The participants had brainstorming sessions about “Project Bharat” during which they shared their experiences and discussed the challenges they faced in making Pratinidhiyad in every village of India and how they were going to reach the target of making 50 lakh Pratinidhis.

Addressing the participants in the inaugural session, Gurudev asked the participants to focus on Project Bharat and said, “Our vision is to make 50 lakh robust Pratinidhiyad. These pratinidhis in each village will be our people at the ground level.” Another issue he asked them to focus on was providing employment to rural youth. He said it was vital to provide skill training to unemployed youth and added, “We have many Trusts in our organization and every Trust needs yuvacharyas... We have several training centers. We will think about setting up training centers in all our ashrams.”

In his inaugural speech, Com. H. G. Harsha, Chairman of VVKI, also stressed on providing means of livelihood to rural youth saying, “Army does not march on empty stomach. It is only on a full stomach that they can protect our country. This applies to spirituality as well.”

The Meet ended on a festive note with the felicitation of best performing states of the previous two years, best performing Mentors, and also each and every one of the participants.
Project Bharat: The Smart Age Rural Revolution

To knit our country together, it is of paramount importance to bridge the rural urban divide.

The great Rishi of this land dreamt of a one-world family, ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’; a dream that Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and The Art of Living are trying to make a reality. But in a country as diverse as India, with diverse concerns and objectives, this task needs a robust methodology and thus was born the Project Bharat. It is that ambitious thread that ties the unique diversity of India together. It works on the framework of creating five pratinidhi for every village to look into its myriad development needs. This concept originates from the practice of panch-parmeshwar charula that has roots in our tradition.

If you see, most of the secessionist movements like Naxalism happened because of the rural-urban divide and this is not just a geographical divide but a cleft of the heart. This division coupled with the hope of better income has also birthed the phenomenon of mass scale migration of village folks to the city. I see young people moving to metro cities from far corners of the country. They work in unhealthy conditions for a paltry sum, yet they are unwilling to stay back home as a farmer. The gravity of the situation hit me when I found myself in a village where not a single boy was available to shoulder a deceased man to his funeral prey! To knit our country together, it is of paramount importance to bridge the rural urban divide. Being a spiritual organisation, our organisation, our responsibility is to find the distance between hearts increases.

And there cannot be a more effective medium for this, than Project Bharat. It is a cross-functional movement across The Art of Living which includes all the verticals and in the long term will uplift rural India.

In the villages too, several interventions have cropped up in people’s lives. The sense of belongingness, the essence of aatmaniyata, is dwindling in the face of rapid commercialisation. Places like Haryana and Punjab are grappling with drug and substance abuse. Moreover, laziness too has made its way into the village youth’s lifestyle. They will google the internet on his smartphone till late at night, but will not get up early to work hard in the farm. It is unfortunate that even though an agrarian society, today in most cases the farmer has to buy vegetables to eat. If the enemies of the country wish to destroy it, they will target the most vulnerable of its population, i.e., the rural youth. Therefore, it becomes an additional responsibility for us to protect our villages and rural population.

Over my years working in rural India, I have also observed synecdoche making home in a rural folks’ mind, owing to his experience of being exploited. He fears being exploited by yet another city dweller. Therefore, in Project Bharat we assure them at the very onset that what we have brought to them is a pan India pursuit for the development of rural India. We keep the nation in front in this project.

Moreover, we also need to address the alarming climate decline with urgency. Places in north India, which were 30-40 feet some years ago, has now receded to 400 feet. But people, caught up in everyday chores are oblivious of the most pressing needs of a worrisome future. And the most unfortunate divide but a cleft of the heart. This division coupled with the hope of better income has also birthed the phenomenon of mass scale migration of village folks to the city. I see young people moving to metro cities from far corners of the country. They work in unhealthy conditions for a paltry sum, yet they are unwilling to stay back home as a farmer. The gravity of the situation hit me when I found myself in a village where not a single boy was available to shoulder a deceased man to his funeral prey! To knit our country together, it is of paramount importance to bridge the rural urban divide. Being a spiritual organisation, our organisation, our responsibility is to find the distance between hearts increases.

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Menstrual Health and Hygiene for Girls in Sonagachi

Sonagachi, Kolkata: As part of The Art of Living’s ongoing project Udyan, Project Pavitra recently held sessions on menstrual health and hygiene for girls aged 11-19 years in Sonagachi, Asia’s largest red light district. Pavitra sessions typically involve breaking the myths surrounding menstruation and teaching the participants how to maintain proper hygiene and sanitation during menstruation. After conducting a session for the children of the sex workers, the volunteers felt there was a need to extend these sessions to the mothers as well. The living conditions in Sonagachi are very unhygienic to say the least and it was essential to make women aware of the importance of hygiene and sanitation. Therefore, conducting these sessions to attend the sessions was not an easy task.

After concerted efforts, around 10-12 ladies came forward to attend the session on the first day. The attendance dropped to just 8 the following day. Because of the nature of their work, the women shied away from interacting with the team and were not at all forthcoming to share anything about their professional or personal life. Although it took some time and effort to break the ice, the team finally managed to build a rapport with the women and by the third day they did open up to some of them. Could even been seen cracking jokes and laughing away. The women were full of appreciation for the sessions which are a combination of yoga, meditation, and knowledge. They did express a desire that such workshops be conducted more frequently. They requested the team to come more often and teach them something new and plain and simple. They were afraid to conduct more such workshops in the near future, providing an opportunity to interact with them and understand the problems faced by them and find ways to help them.
Waste Management Plant Installed at Kateel Sri Durgaparameshwari Temple

A two-day Project Bharat Meet was organized on May 12-13, 2019, on the occasion of Gurudev’s 63rd birthday, at The Art of Living International Center in Bengaluru. It was a moment of jubilation for the Project Bharat team as 35 NPOs performed Seva Yoddhas from 25 states and State Committee Members from six best performing states and union territories, namely, Maharashtra, West Bengal & Sikkim, Karnataka, Kerala, Gujarat and Daman & Diu and Dadar Nagar Haswadi, and Haryana, were presented with mementos, gifts and certificates for their valuable contribution in creating Pratinidhi. They were felicitated by Cmdre HG Harsha ji, Chairman, VVKI; Krishna Shastri and Karthik Krishna from Gurudev’s Secretariat; Air Cmdre Rabindra Merani, Chairman, SSRDP; Subhash, HOD, VDS Trust; and Jigish Barot, from the Karnataka Executive National Bureau, at the prior distribution ceremony.

Prior to the felicitation, the Seva Yoddhas and the State Committee Members participated in an interactive training program called Self Reflections – a simulation exercise aimed at fostering team spirit and collective leadership while at the same time offering a healthy learning experience. There was a positive and heart-warming response from the participants.

The event also saw a series of discussions and exchange of ideas for the next phase of implementation of Project Bharat activities. Senior representatives of SSRDP, SHAST, VDS, SST, Karnataka, and SocialProjects talked about how they would engage Pratinidhis through various projects and activities to encourage community development. The activities would range from providing skill development opportunities and career counseling to upholding traditions and culture through fearlessness and yagnas. It will also provide training in natural farming techniques and other agricultural aspects on works towards water conservation and resolving water scarcity issues, as well as promoting Swachh products and organizing Youth Leadership Training Programs and several other activities that would bring about a visible change in society.

The discussion was followed by a question and answer session that was jointly addressed by the attending officials. Various challenges pertaining to budget allocation and fund generation were addressed. Tangible solutions for making Project Bharat more sustainable and vibrant were also highlighted in the session.

The meeting was concluded by a Vote of Thanks by Project Bharat national team.

The Project Bharat Seva Yoddhas and State Committee Members gathered on stage for a group photograph with Gurudev during his birthday celebrations on 13th May. Gurudev emphasized the need for making pratinidhis in every area and create a wave of sattva for re-establishing dharma and bringing prosperity to the nation.

Volunteers Celebrate Gurudev’s 63rd Birthday Doing Seva

What greater gift can you give to a Master who has dedicated his life to the service of humanity other than offer selfless service on the occasion of his birthday? Like in the previous years, this year too volunteers of The Art of Living engaged themselves in various seva activities on May 13, 2019, as an expression of their devotion to Gurudev, organizing blood donation camps and distributing essential items to the needy.

Blood Donation Camps: Nearly 1000 units of blood was collected by volunteers in blood camps organized in various locations across the country.

Distribution of Basic Necessities

Volunteers in Saharanpur, UP, celebrated Gurudev’s birthday by distributing odd bheret to passerbys.

Volunteers in Mathura joined hands with Sri Radha Rani Rati Kapada Bank to distribute stationary, biscuits, fruits, and shubh to 120 needy children.

In Purnia, Bihar, too volunteers distributed stationary to needy children.

In Sri Ganagam, volunteers distributed durries, fans, water campers, and stools to the Sanskar Kendra Skill Center for Women run by Seva Bharati Samiti, Himalayan Dhim Trust.

Free Eye Camp

The Art of Living family in Patiala, Punjab, in association with Global Eye Hospital had organized a free eye camp at the Government Senior Secondary School. 245 students underwent free eye checkup and 27 students received free eyeglasses.

Anger

All anger is about something which has already happened. Is it of any use getting angry about something which you cannot alter? The mind always vacillates between the past and the future. When the mind is in the past, it’s angry about something that has already happened, but anger is meaningless as we can’t alter the past. And when the mind is in the future, it’s anxious about something that may or may not happen. When the mind is in the present moment, anxiety and anger appear so meaningless.

The Secret of the Breath

Breathing techniques and meditation are very effective in calming the mind. Learning something about our breath is very important. Our breath has a great lesson to teach us, which we have forgotten. For every rhythm in the mind, there is a corresponding rhythm in the breath and for every rhythm in the breath there is a corresponding emotion. So, when you cannot handle your mind directly, you can handle it through breath. Meditation is letting go of anger from the past and the events of the present. Meditation is accepting the moment and living every moment fully with depth. Often anger comes because you do not accept the present moment. Anger comes when one seeks too much of perfection. When you are joyful, you don’t look for perfection. If you are always looking for perfection then you are not at the source of joy.

The world appears imperfect on the surface but, underneath, all is perfect. Perfection hides imperfection shows off. The wise will not remain merely on the surface but will probe into the depth. Things are not blurred; your vision is blurred, infinite actions prevail in the wholeness of consciousness, and yet the consciousness remains perfect, untouched. Realize this now and be natural.
North Star of the North-East

“After a score of Advanced Meditation courses, I am now used to keeping silent”, Amarendra says with a naughty chuckle. That sums up his strategy to dodge the daily criticism that comes his way for walking the spiritual path of social development; for not bowing to the mainstream norms of success. Even his family’s support has been hard to earn in the face of financial crunches. Few years ago, he lost his father and the struggle got even harder. But none of this managed to steal the lightness of his heart or that affable smile, that has become his identity. “This is Gurudev’s wisdom, his protection. Strength comes to me spontaneously”, Amarendra adds.

An indefatigable force in himself, Amarendra Kalita travels across the length and breadth of Assam including the districts of Nalbari, Kamrup, Baksa, Bagori, Mangaldai, Udalguri, Chirang to conduct The Art of Living workshops and create dynamic leaders like himself who can take forward the mantle of development in the state.

Differently-Abled, Yet Perfectly Delivering Solar Energy to Thousands

When asked the reason for this change, he highlights Sri Sri Rural Development Programme’s two-month Solar Skill training conducted under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Vikas Yojana. “I was introduced to the concept by a few volunteers of The Art of Living during whic...”

Nagnath S Kore, a resident of Nagurwadi village in Osmanaband district of Maharashtra, on his way to work looks stoic and determined. A hint of natural smile on his face and confidence in his strides immediately gets one interested. A motor winding electrician earlier, lately he has been absorbed in his new found passion – solar energy. Nagnath, aged 40, wanted to find a sustainable solution to the chronic power shortage affecting his area, a largely agricultural zone with a high demand for electricity. An ITI technician since 1996, he had been working as a motor winding technician. Today he proudly works with a solar technology company and has been instrumental in its growth. His earnings increased from 18-20 thousand Rupees to 30-35 thousand Rupees a month. He is installing an up grid at his own home of 12 kw, which will solve the problem for his home and also increase awareness amongst locals about the same, after which similar projects can be adopted for them as well.

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Concept: Debjyoti Mohanty
Editorial Team: Thoheja Gurukru, Rameshwar Prasad, Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti
Design layout: Suresh
Contact: Ph: 9035945982, 9838427209
Email: editor.sevatimes@yltp.vvki.org, seva-times@yltp.vvki.org