

SEVA TIMES



P₂ In Unity with Life



P₃ Waste Management Plant Installed at Kateel Sri Durgaparameshwari Temple

SEVA Snippets

Order of St. George for Gurudev

Gurudev was conferred the 'Order of St. George', the highest award given by Kottayam's 462-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 an 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 Kakopathar, 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.

Volunteers Rush to Provide Relief to Victims of Cyclone Fani

 Seva Times Network

Cyclone Fani might have left the shores of Odisha, but now is the time to put together the countless broken pieces of life and existence that were left behind. The Art of living is committed to this cause. With its dynamic volunteer base and extensive outreach in Odisha, the volunteers of the organisation have initiated mass scale relief operations to offer support to the affected in this hour of distress. Even before the cyclone hit, The Art of Living volunteers in places like Dhenkanal district put their efforts together with the administration to help evacuate people to safer places.

Cyclone Fani which sped at a speed of 200 km/hr has been termed as the most destructive cyclone since 1999. Ever since the cyclone hit landfall, our volunteers have been working to actively support the relief efforts of the Odisha Government for removal of debris and other physical obstacles like trees etc. In Cuttack, our volunteers are tirelessly working in collaboration with the Cuttack district administration for distribution of food and relief materials and creating awareness about health, hygiene and sanitation. In Puri, specifically in Jasuapur and its nearby villages, our volunteers have joined hands with the administration under the mission 'We Care, We Share' to help with relief activities. Kitchens have been operational in several places across the state like Sipakuda, Arakhakuda, Satapada, Delanga and cooked food



has been distributed to people in many other places. In Satapada area, our kitchens are providing food at nine different locations with the active help and support of AMURT (Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team) as per the advice of the nodal officers.

On the occasion of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's birthday on 13th of May, lunch was organised for more than 4000 people in places including Puri, Berhampur, Jagannathpur, Gopinathpur, Sipakuda, Pirijipur, Gambhari, Garapur, Keuta sahi, Satapada and Bhoisahi. In Jasuapur, essential items like flattened rice, sugar, candles were distributed to 200 families. Keonjhar team helped by packing 1000 dry food packets.

Volunteers from Rourkela gave 1200 packets containing sattu, flattened rice, jaggery, candles and matchboxes. In Raghurajpur and Chandanpur, volunteers distributed mosquito nets, cooking oil, pulses and spices. Groceries and vegetables were provided for 1100 people at Mirzapur. 1018 dry food packets were distributed to remote places in Chilika where volunteers could only reach by travelling on boat. 1200 packets of dry food, candles and match boxes were distributed in the Nimapada block as well. LED Lights and Solar lamps were also distributed in Bargarh, Satapada, Puri, Baghamunda Nuagaon, Denai, Rendua Mahapatra, Baghalangi. In Baghalangi 600 mosquito nets were also distributed.




A team of twenty-two volunteers were actively involved with the Puri Administration to help people get their phones charged by providing generators along with the extension cord in all the prime locations like Bada Danda, Jagannath Temple Dakhina Dwar, Medical Area, Railway Station etc to facilitate connectivity for the people. The volunteers have left no stone unturned in their efforts to reach out to the remote villages that were cut off, owing to the breakdown in communication facilities

Relief material also reached Odisha from The Art of Living volunteers in neighbouring Chhattisgarh and West Bengal.

Rashtriya Karmayog Samagam 2019

Karmayogis Attend Brainstorming Sessions on Rural Development

 Seva Times Network

Bangalore, Karnataka: The Art of Living's Youth Leadership Training Program wing had organized a two-day Rashtriya Karmayog Samagam on May 15th and 16th at The Art of Living International Center in Bengaluru. Over 140 State Council Members and Seva Yoddhas attended the meet. The YLTP wing of The Art of Living, recently rechristened "Karmayog" is the organization's vehicle to bring transformation in rural India. Under the able leadership of the National Director of YLTP, Debjyoti Mohanty, over the last two years, this wing is slowly regaining its robust spirit of facing challenges head-on.



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 Pratinidhis in every village of India and how they were going to reach the target of making 35 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 35 lakh robust Pratinidhis. 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 their 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

 | Samir Jolly

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



The great Rishis of this land dreamt of a one-world family, 'VasudhaivaKutumbakam'; a dream that Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has set out to realise. 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 this 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-parmeshwarchaupal 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 pyre! To knit our country together, it is of paramount importance to bridge the rural urban divide. Being a spiritual organisation, our responsibility of bridging 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 menaces have cropped up in people's lives. The sense of belongingness, the essence of aatmiyata, 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. He will browse 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 cynicism 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 climatic decline with urgency. Places in north of India are among the ones with most speedy decline in water table across the globe. What was 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 development of them all is our farmers committing suicide in such huge numbers. They have lost the self-confidence to sustain through tough times. Such things had not happened even in the face of foreign invasions by tyrannical forces! There is a need to hand hold our farmers and offer them spiritual solace and also empower them with spiritual wisdom so that they can redeem their self-confidence. Land holdings too have gone down. Here skilling can be of help. For rural people who do not own sufficient land to make a living, we can skill and connect them to micro entrepreneurship through Sri Sri Tattva and the various projects offered by Sri Sri Rural Development Program like Recognition of Prior Learning.

Thus, Project Bharat is posed to be that one umbrella under which rural India will find genuine solutions and a path to development. This is the most ambitious project ever undertaken by The Art of Living, backed by the smart technology of today like the 'VyaktiVikasPratinidhi' mobile application that allows for real time documentation from the very heart of India. The time is ripe to scale up and scale deep.

Menstrual Health and Hygiene for Girls in Sonagachi

 | Sneha Kalro

Sonagachi, Kolkata: As part of The Art of Living's ongoing project Udaan, 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 the women aware of the importance of hygiene and sanitation. However, convincing these women 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 them. Some of them could even be 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 plans are afoot to conduct more such workshops in the near future, providing an opportunity to interact with new participants and understand the problems faced by them and find ways to help them.

Learning from the EXPERTS

In Unity with Life



Ganesh Radhakrishnan, originally from Kerala, is a senior faculty with The Art of Living. He has conducted The Art of Living workshops throughout India and several other countries. One of the most dynamic personalities one may come across, he conducts workshops across the spectrum, like Utkarsha Yoga for kids, Medha Yoga for teens, Sri Sri Yoga Level 1 and Happiness Program for adults, Government Executive Programs for government officials, APEX program for corporates and enterprises, more advanced transformational programs like Dynamism for Self & Nation and Sri Sri Yoga Level 2, trauma relief Prison Smart programs for the prisoners, Karmayoga (Youth

Leadership Training Program) for the young adults and train-the-trainer programs like Volunteer Training Program and Teachers Training Program. He has been instrumental in bringing transformation to the lives of over three lakh people.

Dr Hampi Chakrabarti in conversation with Shri Ganesh Radhakrishnan

• What is the importance of Karmayoga across all treatise of yoga?

Karmayoga is the implementation of yoga in daily life. It's about performing actions in life without waiting for the returns. As we often see, people are somehow not able to enjoy or celebrate life; this is where the importance of Karmayoga lies. The Bhagavad Gita says, "yogaha karmasu kaushalam". Yoga brings out the skills in action. Wherever we go, whatever we do, yoga helps our life skills to shine through and makes life a celebration.

• How is a person who follows the seva-sadhana-satsang way of life a better asset to society?

Sadhana keeps the body, mind and soul healthy, happy and peaceful. Satsang helps to rejuvenate and sustain the energy and commitment while keeping the focus intact. Seva channelizes the energy and enthusiasm. All this together keeps one in a positive state of mind and brings integrity to the personality. This adds value to the community and society as the person will no longer live like a liability but contributes constructively.

Like I always say, in life the two 'D's are very important; one is Dynamism and the other is Discipline.

• What kind of initiatives have been taken up by The Art of Living to develop rural India through the intervention of Yoga?

Gurudev has specifically designed programs for the rural community. Thousands of rural people are being benefited, specifically by the Karmayoga program. The Art of Living, through this program and with certification through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Yoga, is creating yoga teachers and community leaders across rural India. They are living not just healthier lives but also seeing a huge transformation in their state of mind. With this change in attitude, comes upon a sense of responsibility and ownership of their own life. This is what Gurudev and The Art of Living has been trying to do - to empower people from within. This in turn leads them to take on the responsibility of their community and society.

Not just within India, I conducted the Karmayoga program in Batticaloa in Sri Lanka a few days ago where seven young boys had come from the war-torn Jaffna region. They were having a really tough time with their life. This program gave them such strength that these very reticent boys started opening up to me by the third day of the program. By the end of the last day, they found a direction to their life; something that they had been seeking for so long. These boys went back with a vision to work for the positive development of their people. And when the blasts took place in Sri Lanka recently, these boys themselves took the responsibility to volunteer and assist The Art of Living trauma relief programs. This path and Gurudev's wisdom so beautifully inspired rural youth like these to take up social responsibility.

• Have we reached a time where spiritual intellectuals need to rise and why?

If you look at the world today, people are facing challenges in dealing with their mind and heart, leading to challenges in their reactions, responses and decision making. In this sense, the solution must begin with nurturing of the inner values- the values of peace, harmony, stability and equanimity. And this is exactly what spirituality is. This is the right time for intellectuals with spiritual values to not just rise but also shine. Once a person shines with these values, there will be so much more positive action in the world.

• What are the five guidelines that you would like a beginner in karmayoga to keep in mind?

This is like conducting the whole Karmayoga session! (laughs)

First, yoga is much more than just physical exercise. It is also the harmony of the body, breath and mind. Second, it takes regular practice to perfect spiritual practices. Third, beginners should have a goal, a plan to reach the goal and then have the commitment to execute the plan and see it through. In all these years I have seen so many young people have great goals but they fail to plan properly. Planning is the bigger challenge; you have to figure out what to do and how to do. Sometimes even after proper planning, they lack the commitment to stick to the plan. Fourth, we all are growing together. So we need to understand the people for whom we want to work and educate ourselves about them. Offering solutions without an understanding of their problems has no point; it doesn't work. Fifth, I have often observed that initially people have a lot of enthusiasm and courage but with time, it dwindles. Beginners need to safeguard themselves against this. Maintaining the enthusiasm is necessary. Like I always say, in life, the two 'D's are very important; one is Dynamism and the other is Discipline. This gives the much needed sustainability and maturity and life becomes much easier. But above all this, a Karmayogi should be happy and his goal should be to spread that happiness to everyone around.

SEVA Snippets

Project Pavitra's Birthday Gift to Gurudev

One month prior to Gurudev's birthday, the Project Pavitra team decided to carry out an intense campaign to reach out to the maximum number of people with their Menstruation Health and Hygiene workshop. This campaign was carried out across the nation and covered areas of Meghalaya, Shelter Homes in Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Una, Uttarakhand, and also Kenya and Nepal to name a few. They managed to reach out to 7087 participants in 18 states and 3 countries, conducting yoga, meditation, and menstrual health and hygiene workshops for girls and women from various walks of life - rape survivors, inmates of children's shelters, prisons, and juvenile homes, cleaners, factory workers, construction workers, cleaners, and underprivileged girls.

First Phase of Kumudvathi River Rejuvenation Completed Successfully

The Art of Living River Rejuvenation team had organized an interactive session with Gram Panchayat Representatives at Pawada Sri Basavanna Mutt in Nelamangala on May 25, 2018, upon completion of the first phase of Kumudvathi River Rejuvenation Project. 3000+ recharge structures were constructed and trees planted all along the streams.

50K Meditate for Peace in Africa

On May 25, 2019, Africa Day, over 50,000 people from 106 countries joined Gurudev via webcast to meditate for peace in Africa. People from all walks of life - from prison inmates to patients in hospitals, housewives, working professionals, and students - joined the Voice of Africa event that was webcast live from the Bengaluru Ashram.

Gurudev's Kannada Youtube Channel Launched

On the occasion of Gurudev's 63rd Birthday on May 13, 2019, The Art of Living launched Gurudev's Kannada channel on Youtube. People from Karnataka can now enjoy Gurudev's wisdom and meditations in their own mother tongue.

Waste Management Plant Installed at Kateel Sri Durgaparameshwari Temple



The Art of Living's Vyakti Vikas Kendra India in association with Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemical Limited has installed an Organic Waste Management Unit that will convert flowers

into compost at Kateel Sri Durgaparameshwari Temple, Kateel, under Swatchh Bharath Project. The temple generates about 140-180 kgs of waste on average days which increases to 280 - 320 kgs during peak season, which was earlier dumped in the temple premises itself. This is the thirteenth Temple Waste Management unit facilitated by The Art of Living. Swami Suryapada inaugurated the plant on May 13, 2019. Harish Baliga and Ramasubramaniam from MRPL; Sanath Kumar Shetty, Chairman of Kateel Temple Trust; Vasudev Asranna from Kateel Temple Trust; and Pankaj Yadav from The Art of Living Social Projects were present on the occasion.

Project Bharat: Felicitation of Best Performing Seva Yoddhas



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 best performing 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 Haveli, and Haryana, were presented with mementos, gifts and certificates for their valuable contribution in creating Pratinidhis. They were felicitated by Cmde HG Harsha ji, Chairman, VVKI; Krishna Shastri and Karthik Krishna from Gurudev's Secretariat; Air Cmde Rabintra Merani, Chairman, SSRDP; Subhash, HOD, VDS Trust; and Jigish Barot, from the Karmayog National Executive Board, at the prize 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, SSLAST, VDS, SST, Karmayog, and Social Projects talked about how

they would engage Pratinidhis through various projects and activities to encourage community development. The activities would range from providing skilling opportunities and career counselling to upholding traditions and culture through homas and yagnas. It will also provide training in natural farming techniques and other agricultural aspects on working towards water conservation and resolving water scarcity issues, as well as promoting Swadeshi 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 emphasised 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

Seva Highlights

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 cold Sherbet to passersby.

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

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

In Sri Ganganagar, volunteers distributed durries, fans, water campers, and stools to the Sanskar Kendra Skill Center for Women run by Seva Bharati Samiti, Hanuman Dham 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 Smart School. 245 students underwent free eye checkup and 27 students received free eyeglasses.

Words of Wisdom

Sri sri



Tips to Handle Anger

You may remind yourself a hundred times that you shouldn't get angry, but when the emotion comes, you are unable to control it. It comes like a thunderstorm.

What can you do when anger rises in you?

Anger is a distortion of your true nature and it doesn't allow the self to shine forth fully. Showing anger itself is not wrong, but being unaware of your anger only hurts you. Sometimes you can show anger purposefully. For example, a mother gets angry at her children and can act tough or shout at them if they put themselves in danger. There are situations that warrant showing anger, but when you get angry, have you observed what happens to you? You are shaken completely. Look at the consequences of getting angry. Are you happy with the decisions you have made or the words you have spoken in a state of anger? No, because you lose your total awareness. But if you are completely aware and are acting angry, that is fine.

This is where a little knowledge about yourself, your mind, your consciousness and the root of distortion in our nature helps. It is when you are exhausted and stressed that you lose your nature and get angry. Every individual is bestowed with all the virtues in the world. They simply get covered-up by lack of understanding and stress. What is needed is just to uncover the virtues that are already there.

Being in the Present Moment

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, anxiousness 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 past. Meditation is accepting this moment and living every moment totally 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



 | Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti

“Guruji did it when I couldn't do anymore”

“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, Mangaldoi, 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.

Barely touching thirty years of age, Amarendra has erected phenomenal milestones already. His beginnings were however humble. His brother-in-law introduced him to The Art of Living's Youth Leadership Training Program, back in 2002. That was right after his school board exams; college had not yet started and young Amarendra had plenty of time on his hands. Little did he know that those fifteen days will bring such a light into his life that has refused to dim out even years later. He had been a proactive kid, taking the lead in social gatherings or school activities. Leadership defined him. What touched his core more was the light-hearted



Amarendra Kalita

spirit of the workshop and the music and dancing in the satsang. From the very next day of the training he managed to build a team of volunteers in his district and began conducting the Navchetna and Balchetna Shivirs. College started soon enough and Amarendra had a tough time balancing the act. Family required that he rise as their financial pillar. But he had found his purpose and knew the society needed him as much as his family did. He was determined to not give up on any.


Very soon this young lad, with his team had laid the foundation for a Sri Sri Gyan Mandir, a school for 250 underprivileged children in Akna village of Nalbari district. Most of these children were first generation learners and would have had a very glum shot at life otherwise. Today, two more Sri Sri Bal Vidya Kendra stand tall as a testament to Amarendra's determination and a fourth school is proposed on a one-acre land. Three villages, namely, Kendukuchi, Thanpatkuchi and Bamun gaon are on their way to become Model villages in Assam. Over the years he has learnt to not just think of the development of the society, but also of the individuals who want to take it forward. His own financial struggles had taught him a thing or two. No one can wage a war with an empty stomach. Thus, he took it upon himself to leverage upon entrepreneurial opportunities for his team members. He facilitated the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) trainings in several districts and mentored his team of Yuvacharyas to become micro entrepreneurs as resellers of Sri Sri Tattva products.

Amarendra has been a thundering force in mobilising The Art

of Living volunteers and their activities in the state of Assam. And Assam was anything but an easy land to work on. It has been breathing through insurgent movements, conversions, development apathy and hordes of other issues that pose daily challenges for Amarendra. His inspiration on this arduous path – Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the wisdom Gurudev has imparted and the path he has shown. There have been several occasions where his faith in his Guru saved the day. He recalls one particular incident from about three years ago. Seeing the deplorable conditions of health around him he had resolved to organise a medical camp in his area. He invited huge number of people from the neighbouring villages, erected temporary enclosures for the camp and arranged light refreshment for people visiting from afar. But a day prior to the event the medical superintendent informed that medical staff could not be available due to some reason. By then all arrangements were done, hundreds of people were expected early next morning and Amarendra and his team had done all they could. When all alternatives were exhausted, he had no other option but to surrender. What would they answer to the hundreds of hopefuls who would be arriving tomorrow? Seeing no way out, the team decided to have a satsang that evening and pray to the Guru. Next morning, like the harbingers of faith, three doctors and two nurses stood at their door with medical equipment and free medicines! Their prayers were answered! Amarendra later found out that after learning of the situation, the former medical superintendent had asked his successor to make immediate arrangements.

“Guruji did it when I couldn't do any more”, is all Amarendra has to say as he rushes to take another bus to another destination, to bring a smile on another face.

Differently-Abled, Yet Perfectly Delivering Solar Energy to Thousands

 | Santoshkumar Pandey



Nagnath S Kore, a resident of Nagzarwadi village in Osmanabad 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 1kw. 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.

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 Kaushal Vikas Yojana. “I was introduced to the concept by a few volunteers of the Art of Living. Once I made the enquiries, I was glad to be invited and enrolled. Since, it was in Bangalore I was worried of how I will I make it and accommodation, but they managed it all smoothly for me,” he shares. “My previous work was seasonal. Few months it would be huge, rest of the period the scope was limited. Solar is a new and interesting field, it is renewable, and so it caught my interest. I decided to dive into this new field even at this age. And the benefits have been tremendous.”

“I joined the Suryamitra batch in

April 2018. It was a practical based approach to learning. I was able to grasp and learn quickly. Now I have almost doubled my income, this is a big boost for my family of 16 and their financial needs. And in this field, it is only going to improve from here on out, this is just a beginning.” Nagnath and team have undertaken projects with power output of 90kW within the past year after his training, and were in the process of initiating an 80kW project at the time of writing.

Nagnath, is 40 percent differently abled, but manages his work with ease, proving that human willpower is stronger than any physical handicap. “Being handicapped, I can't have much physical exertion. Thus, I always had problems with my weight. I did the YLTP program during the training itself. It helped me get my weight under

control. The yoga techniques and meditation were a tonic for both my mind and body. It got me disciplined and increased my efficiency.”

“Two things which were hugely transforming is learning the Art of Living –how to live, and developing lots of skills from the trainings. At this age despite being handicapped, I can manage everything with enthusiasm” he proudly shares. This simple looking, differently-abled solar technician, is just one of the many who are transforming the country one step at a time. His goal for the future is to help realize Prime Minister Modiji's dream of electricity for every household and village, earning a better livelihood for himself while also boosting the penetration of this renewable green energy source, indirectly helping the planet in his simple ways.





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