

SEVA TIMES



P₂ A MENACE LIKE DRUG ADDICTION NEEDS TO BE TACKLED WITH AN IRON HAND - CMDE H.G. HARSHA

P₃ INDIA GEOSPATIAL EXCELLENCE AWARD FOR THE ART OF LIVING'S RIVER REJUVENATION PROJECT



Art of Living's River Rejuvenation in Limca Book of Records

The Art of Living has made its way into the 'Limca Book of Records 2019-India at Her Best' for its extensive effort to resolve the country's severe water crisis through a major river revival drive across four states. The project has benefited nearly 500,000 people in over 5000 villages. 40 rivers and their tributaries are being rejuvenated across Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. The gigantic task is carried out through community participation programs, contribution of Art of Living volunteers and over 5000 locals.

SEVA Snippets

Launch of Gandhi Global Solar Yatra

On January 22, 2019, Gurudev launched the Gandhi Global Solar Yatra at The Art of Living International Center, Bengaluru. A collaborative venture of The Art of Living and IIT Bombay, it aims to create 1 million "Student Solar Ambassadors" in 200 countries including 135 Art of Living Ashrams across the globe.

Sahaj Samadhi Meditation as Treatment for Depression and Anxiety

According to a study recently published in the British Journal of Psychiatry, 20 minutes of Sahaj Samadhi meditation per day was able to act as an effective treatment for late-life depression. Researchers had 83 seniors practise Sahaj Samadhi for 20 minutes a day for three months to see if it could ease their symptoms of anxiety or depression. Dr. Akshya Vasudev, who headed the study, says that the chances of getting into remission are 3 times higher with meditation compared to the usual treatment plan.

Crore+ Students Pledge Against Drugs

PM Narendra Modi Lauds The Art of Living's Initiatives to Fight the Menace of Drugs in India

 Ruchira Roy

Chandigarh/Hisar: The grounds of Chandigarh University reverberated with the chants of 'Na Karunga Na Karne Dunga' (Will Not (Do Drugs) And Will Not Let Anyone Do It) on a drizzly Monday morning. Over two days, 60000 students turned up to be the part of the launch of Drug Free India, one of The Art of Living's many initiatives towards de-addiction. The campaign was launched at Chandigarh University on 18th February and the second leg of the campaign launch was held at Guru Jambheshwar University, Hisar, Haryana.

"We need to strengthen the youth of this country and whatever weakens this (strength), like drugs, needs to be blocked," said Gurudev while addressing the students, "People get into drugs because they are looking for happiness, fun and love. Just come join us. We'll give you a high that will never go down. Inner high can give love and happiness." Speaking in Hisar, Gurudev pointed out that time had come for youngsters to place pride with NOT doing drugs, rather than being proud of having them.

Hon. Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the years of efforts of The Art of Living in countering the menace of drugs. "I sincerely appreciate the efforts of Sri Sri Ravi Shankarji and The Art of



HIGH WITHOUT TOXICANTS: (Left) Gurudev sharing the stage with luminaries at the launch of Drug Free India (Right) 60,000 college students participated in the launch of Drug Free India campaign on the ground; about 1 crore students from 12000 colleges joined through webcast

Living towards a drug free India. I have observed how this movement has struck a chord with people from all walks of life, including entertainment and sports, and how people have supported it on social media in large numbers," Hon. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said. He mentioned that apart from being a psycho-socio-medico problem, engaging in drugs also goes towards supporting terrorist activities since the narcotic trade is controlled by anti-national elements. He said, communication with families, friends and loved ones was key in helping drug addicts deal with the condition.

Among the dignitaries who attended the event alongside Gurudev on February 18, 2019, in Chandigarh were Bollywood icon and recovered drug addict Sanjay

Dutt, rapper-songwriter Badshah, comedian Kapil Sharma, popular Punjabi Folk singer Gurdas Maan and Hon. Governor of Punjab, V P Singh Badnore. In Hisar, Hon. Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and famous actor Varun Sharma shared the stage with Gurudev.

Talking about his own battle with drug addiction, Sanjay Dutt said, "I was bleeding from my mouth, my nose. I hadn't eaten in two days. I got scared looking at myself in the mirror. I told my father, I need help." Dutt shared that he decided never to touch drugs again in his life when a drug peddler contacted him on his return from rehab.

Taking the awareness campaign forward, Gurudev also announced Walkathons across Indian cities and villages on 10th March, raising awareness and

mobilizing communities in the fight against drugs.

Over a crore students from 12,000 colleges signed up for the campaign against drugs through live webcast from across the country on both the days.

Part of the initiative also includes formation of SWAT (Social Wellness and Awareness Training) clubs that have been opened across college campuses that will mobilize and raise awareness against drugs and organize preventive interventions.

The Drug Free India movement against drugs has already taken social media by storm with more than 90 eminent personalities from the field of films, sports, politics and business having poured their support for the campaign.

Project Bharat Gains Impetus with Gurudev's Visit

 Seva Times Network

Maharashtra: During his recent tour of Maharashtra, Gurudev held a series of meetings between 7th and 11 February in Watur, Khamgaon, and Pune, with the newly appointed Pratinidhis. Thousands of youth bursting with enthusiasm and a determination to do something for their nation attended these meetings. Their exuberant energy had been given a new, constructive direction by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

During the course of these meetings, it became clear that Gurudev's vision was to engage the rural youth of India to unravel a happy and powerful nation whose greatest strength was and always has been her spirituality. Gurudev referred to Project Bharat as a golden opportunity to make India healthy and prosperous. With five representatives from each of the nearly 7 lakh villages in India being associated with an organization like The Art of Living, they would have the support they needed to develop their villages and make India Swacchh (Clean), Swasth, Surakshit (safe and secure), and Samriddh (prosperous).

Gurudev urged the youth to fight the problem of un-



Thousands of Pratinidhis in Maharashtra flocked to satsangs/meetings with Gurudev

employment by learning new skills. The Art of Living had set up several skill centers across India and more would be set up to provide training to youth and help them get employment. The organization could also extend help to make them successful entrepreneurs.

The youngsters were encouraged to learn and teach yoga. Gurudev emphasized "Yog aur Udyog" – Yoga for health and Udyog for economic stability. He also encouraged them to organize Satsangs in their villages to bring people together and create waves of happiness and positivity across the nation. The Pratinidhis were now vested with the responsibility of bringing out the inner joy of their people and making their villages vi-

olence free. In order to save our soil and our water, Gurudev motivated the youth to learn and promote natural farming techniques. Those Pratinidhis who had already obtained training in natural farming could provide training to others.

As Gurudev says, governments will come and governments will go, it is up to the common people to take on the responsibility of bringing growth and prosperity in their regions. Change of this scale is possible only with the participation of the common man.

During his video address to 60,000 Pratinidhis from 1500 villages on January 27, 2019, Gurudev concluded his talk by saying, "I have complete faith that you will successfully complete this project before long. Whatever needs to be done, we will do it together. The Art of Living will be completing 40 years in 2021; before that I want 35,00,000 Pratinidhis to be associated with Project Bharat."

Gurudev Gives the Clarion Call of “Drugs Na Kareng, Na Karne Denge”



Commodore H. G. Harsha
Chairman, Vyakti Vikas
Kendra India

February 2019 saw a new beginning with Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar leading the Drug Free India campaign on a national scale.

Drugs are a menace gnawing at the roots of our society. It not just destroys the body and the mind of an individual, but it snuffs out the ability to be positive and productive in life. Families have been destroyed and communities have been rendered ineffective. Drugs contribute directly and indirectly to violence and heinous crimes in society and also affect the economy of the country negatively. It is appalling to know that we lose 10 youngsters every day in this country due to substance abuse. For a

country that is grappling to leverage the strength of its significant young population, by converting them to a skilled workforce, a menace like drug addiction needs to be tackled with an iron hand and with urgency.

The Art of Living has more than three decades of experience in fighting the menace of drug and other addictions with potent tools like Yoga, Meditation, Sudarshan Kriya and Ayurveda. It is time now to scale up the efforts, to reach every nook and corner of India. In view of this, the Art of Living, under the stewardship of Gurudev has initiated the Drug Free India campaign.

On 18th February 25,000+ students from Chandigarh University pledged for a Drug Free India with Gurudev and many celebrities. Gurudev gave the clarion call of “drugs nakareng, nakarnedenge”. He urged the youth to go for a bigger high in life; the high that one gets through meditation, knowing the self and contributing to society.

More than 12,000 colleges from across India simultaneously joined hands in this fight against drugs through live webcast and over 10 million students took the pledge in India’s biggest fight against drugs.

Thousands of conscientious citizens of the country, along with several icons of the entertainment industry, sport personalities, politicians have rallied support behind this campaign. Prime Minister Narendra Modi commended the Art of Living for the much needed national initiative.

Now the onus lies upon us to render this vision into dynamic action. We are all prepared for it.

YLTP – Training Rural Youth to Lead the Change

| Padma Koty

In times of rapid socio-economic change, we have witnessed rural youth getting uprooted from their communities and migrating to urban areas. Unwilling to take up their forefathers’ traditional occupations such as agriculture, they have been facing the harsh realities of migration such as falling prey to crime rings, loss of self-esteem, isolation and so on.

In 1999 Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar had a pioneering vision: of empowering youth in rural communities to take stewardship of their own lives and livelihoods while taking leadership for developing the rest of their community. This was through a radical program called the Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP) that could also help stem rural-to-urban migration.

How to implement this vision? How to ensure sustainability of programs and projects once they were initiated? Who – and where – were the dynamic, self-motivated individuals who would keep on-track the developmental activities that were undertaken? Who would ensure the flock was kept together? Enter the Yuvacharya.

Another radical idea was initiated: from among the youth graduating the YLTP program, look for a few with pre-decided, must-have traits. Select

those who show dynamism and leadership skills, and give them the title of “Yuvacharyas.” These take the lead for implementing programs and projects and interact and liaise with other agencies, including governmental ones, while ensuring that all activities remain on track.

The YLTP Program itself is an intensely experiential course designed to put the participants through a scorching, increasingly-challenging agenda designed to make them drop self-set limitations and concepts, and transform into self-motivated individuals ready to take up any challenge. Participants have experienced deep and lasting transformation in their personalities, abilities and priorities.

A large component of the transformation is a deep sense of commitment to building the community and the nation. No exaggeration here. This is one graduating group that is ready to move mountains, even land-slide affected ones!

In a nutshell YLTP is about transforming lives, empowering rural communities and helping build livelihood without altering demographics. It is one of this era’s great maintain-your-roots movements. A model worth replicating across the globe to enable communities to preserve their precious heritage and culture, while adapting to the demands of technology and modernization.



Learning from the EXPERTS

LEADING THE ROAD TO RURAL INDIA



Mr. Rakesh Chaturvedi has spent the larger part of his life serving in the Co-operative Department, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department, Civil Secretariat, State Institute of Rural Development, Finance Development Corporation, CAPART and BRGF. In 2016 he retired from his official capacity as Additional Director and State Nodal Officer rural

sanitation (Vishesh Sachiv Grade), Department of Panchayati Raj U.P. Since then he has employed his experience to render Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar’s vision of a developed rural India into reality. Mr Chaturvedi has been an Art of Living teacher since 2006.

Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti in conversation with Mr. Rakesh Chaturvedi

■ What is unique about The Art of Living’s approach in Rural Development?

The Art of Living offers a unique blend of individual growth with community development. While we work to provide health, hygiene and homes, we never forget human values and harmony in our approach to rural development.

■ What are the key factors to keep in mind while working in the field of rural development and panchayati raj?

First thing to keep in mind is the intention to work for the well being of others. Second is to invite people’s participation which will be possible only through Panchayati Raj Institutions. Panchayats have the constitutional status after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1992. They are the most important carriers of development to rural areas. Third is to have respect for local traditions, social and economic environment and sentiments of the local people.

■ What are the parameters one must keep in mind to select priority areas?

The person sitting on the lowest step of the ladder - antyodaya, should be the primary concern. Basic minimum needs of bread and butter, clothing and shelter are still the priority areas to work in villages, besides health and hygiene. When I say need of bread and butter, it means providing sufficient wages essential for the survival of a person. It can be made possible by providing skill training to rural people.

■ What are the key factors to be kept in mind to build a team for such interventions?

A team must be an amalgamation of youth and experience. Apart from professionals, such people who are retired and have settled down in the village, like ex- army man, a teacher or VDO or other government servant, village priest, maulvi or a vaidya must be included. The team should also include youth who are passionate for the development of their villages, have charismatic leadership qualities and are willing to stay in the village for some time.

Do I really want development for the rural people? One must ask this question to oneself before venturing to work in the villages.

■ How to keep the team inspired for long term projects?

The youth members of the team must undergo Youth Leadership Training Program or rural Happiness Program of The Art of Living without fail. There must be regular follow ups for the team members and also some cultural activities like street plays relating problems of the local village. The leader of the team must visit the families of the team members, share a meal with them. Moreover, when people are directly involved in bringing a positive change to their villages, it gives them a sense of self respect and confidence and inspires them for long term projects. I would also like to mention that we cannot separate economics from development. The members must also get some financial support.

■ How to bring the community to participate in the process?

In my experience, conducting Nav Chetna Shibir in a village brings the community together and inspires them to participate in the process. We must also inspire the local Panchayat officials to organise Gram Sabha on a regular basis.

■ What are the possibilities of replicating successful rural development models throughout the country?

It is not possible to replicate a formula from one village to another. Like, about three decades ago, the Ralegan Siddhi village in Maharashtra was developed without any external assistance. But that model could not be successfully replicated. Circumstances and people differ from village to village. Some general guidelines can be there, but one model cannot be replicated in toto.

■ What are the major challenges that you have faced? How did you overcome them?

Corruption in the implementation of programs and political pressure in the formulation of policies are major challenges that any government servant faces. But if you are honest, then eventually others know about your style of functioning and do not ask for any favor from you. In spite of such challenges, I enjoyed my work and earned respect and love from all.

■ What has been your biggest learning?

Honesty and hard work always pay and a meditative mind helps in the long run to keep you on your path.

■ What advice would you like to offer to a beginner in the field of social development work?

Make the practice of meditation, yoga, and Sudarshan Kriya a regular part of your life. It will help to stay centered and handle stress better, which in turn will help in getting better clarity and focus.

■ What is your vision of the work for the next five years?

I am inspired by Gurudev’s vision of developing model villages across the country. His vision will continue to lead the way. Imparting skill training to rural youth is high on my priority. It will facilitate the transformation of their communities and aid in holistic rural development of the country. For the last so many years, we have experimented with various need assessment, project planning and implementation strategies, now is the time to make replicable models and scale them up.

First Prize for Art of Living's River Rejuvenation work in Mahud, Solapur

On February 25, 2019, out of 250,000 gram panchayats in the country, Mahud in Solapur district was given the first prize by Hon. Minister Nitin Gadkari for rejuvenation work on a rivulet, Kasal Ganga Odha. This is an Art of Living initiative in association with JNPT and the local community.

Rashtriya Jal Puraskar for River Rejuvenation

Manjara River Desilting and Widening Project, an Art of Living initiative in Maharashtra, has been awarded the first place in Rashtriya Jal Puraskar 2018 for River Rejuvenation.

SEVA Snippets

Arsenic Free Water for Kothomiya Village

The Art of Living has installed a cost-effective water filtering unit at Kothomiya village on the world's largest river island, Majuli, in Assam. This filtering unit invented by Prof. Robin Dutta from Tezpur University will provide arsenic and iron free water for household use at a very low cost of Rs. 0.05 per liter.

Check Dam Constructed on Dahisar River

The Art of Living has just completed construction of a check dam on Dahisar river in Mumbai. With a storage capacity of 44 million litres, it will recharge the groundwater table and also revive the biodiversity of the area.

Volunteers Feed the Needy in Kurukshetra

Kurukshetra, Haryana: The Art of Living family in Haryana launched project "Ek Mutthi Muskan" last month to feed the needy. All volunteers now put away a handful of grains and pulses before they cook each meal and once a month they prepare a meal with this and distribute among the needy. On February 4, 2019, for the second month in a row, volunteers distributed Khichadi in two slums near Kurukshetra.

Kukui Village: A Tale of Transformation

 | Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti

Kukui is a quaint little village with a population of 404 that falls under Tundahali Panchayat of Ormanjhi Block, Ranchi. Until a few years back, this picturesque village situated less than 50 km from the capital, was the proverbial 'last mile'. Swampy mud tracks sufficing for roads, low literacy rates, low income, and a lower than the average sex ratio were some of the problems that plagued this village.

Today, in 2018, Kukui village has a very different story to tell. In 2017, The Art of Living entered into a partnership with the Government of Jharkhand to create 60 Beacon Panchayats across 15 blocks in seven districts of Jharkhand to facilitate sustainable rural development. Tundahali

Panchayat was one of the project areas. Although The Art of Living had begun work in the region a few years earlier, this tie-up with the government gave a renewed impetus to the development

THE ART OF LIVING IMPACT

The Art of Living's community mobilization, capacity building, and income generation initiatives have empowered the villagers and helped them to shift from a deprived mindset to that of change-makers.

work in Kukui.

Sonaram Mahto, Village Pradhan (head) since 2007, says, "Earlier it was so difficult to even make all villagers sit in one place. Now with The Art of Living's community mobilization and sensitization programs, everybody has come together to work for

development." He also feels that with the training that has been imparted to panchayat members and functionaries, day-to-day governance has become much smoother, with fewer bottle-

necks. The elected representatives and mukhiyas (village heads) have started regular public meetings at the Panchayat Bhavan. The Gram Sabhas (village meetings) have become vibrant with increased participation from the community, particularly women.

The village now hosts a skill devel-

opment center supported by The Art of Living. The prime beneficiaries of this center have been the women in the Self Help Group (SHG). They have been imparted training in sanitation, paper bag making, stitching, and leadership skills. Sewing machines installed at the center enable these women to run a micro-entrepreneurship initiative.

In the most recent development, The Art of Living has embarked on a participatory natural resources management project which will benefit Kukui along with 50 more villages in Ormanjhi and Burmu block of Ranchi. As Sonaram foresees, this will be a vital step for food and nutrition security and sustainable livelihoods for the villagers.

India Geospatial Excellence Award for The Art of Living



Dr. Lingaraju Yale, National Director, Art of Living River Rejuvenation Project, receiving the award from General VK Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs and Overseas Indian Affairs

 | Seva Times Network

New Delhi: The Art of Living Foundation was conferred the India Geospatial Excellence Award by Geospatial Media and Communication at the GeoSmart India 2019 conference held at Hotel Pullman in New Delhi from February 11-13, 2019. The award was given in

recognition of the Foundation's excellent use of geospatial technologies towards reviving rivers and freshwater sources across India.

The Art of Living has been working to rejuvenate rivers since 2013 and is currently engaged in reviving 33 rivers in four states (Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala.)

Blind Children Learn to "See"

 | Seva Times Network

Kolkata, West Bengal: Teachers and volunteers of The Art of Living in Calcutta conducted a Prajñā Yoga workshop for 100+ children with impaired vision at the Calcutta Blind School, Behala, on January 24-25, 2019. The 2-day program which helps bring out intuitive abilities brought

about an amazing change in the participants. Dipankar Chakraborty and Ritika Periwal, facilitators of the program, said that after completing the workshop many of the children responded brilliantly and the results were really astonishing. The vision impaired children could recognize colors and read without using Braille for the first time in their lives.

Seva Highlights

Volunteers Serve "Kadha" to Prevent Swine Flu

Molela, Rajasthan: As the Swine Flu epidemic spread in Rajasthan claiming more lives (100+ as on February 9), Art of Living volunteers distributed "kadha," an Ayurvedic concoction that is effective in curtailing swine flu, to over 6000 residents of Molela and surrounding areas.

24 Hours Ambulance Service Launched in Molela

Rajasmad, Rajasthan: Villagers in Molela now have an ambulance that will be at their service 24 x 7, thanks to the volunteers of The Art of Living who have made this possible. Earlier they had to rely on private vehicles or public transport to rush patients to a hospital on time in times of emergency. The ambulance, fitted with all modern amenities, was launched into service on January 6, 2019.

The 6 Secrets of Effective Communication



Words of Wisdom
Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

We start communicating from the instant we take our first breath. Our first cry is a communication to our mother, and to the world, that we have arrived. And till our last breath, we are in constant communication. Yet, good communication is much more than mere words. It is an art and effective communication has dimensions that are larger than what is spoken. The ability to communicate affectionately

with one and all is a skill worth possessing.

Be Sensitive and Sensible

Communication is the art of being sensitive and sensible at the same time. Some people are too sensitive, thereby losing their sensibleness. Their speech lacks clarity and is inarticulate. And there are people who make perfect sense, but they are insensitive. They say the correct things, but they are not aware of the emotional response of the audience. We need that beautiful combination of sensitivity and sensibleness.

Your state of mind matters!

You cannot improve someone by getting angry at them. You only ruin your peace of mind. Your communication does not have the impact it ought to have had. Your mental state is heard by your listeners before the words. A calm state of mind, and a smile, will conquer the most difficult of people.

Humor coupled with care and concern

A good sense of humor relieves you from fear and anxiety. It is the lightness of your being that brings out the authentic humor. And this lightness comes up with taking life itself not too seriously, having a sense of belongingness with everybody (including those who are not friendly), practicing yoga and meditation, having unshakable faith in the Divine, being in the company of those who live in knowledge and are humorous.

Heart to Heart Communication

Almost all relationships break down due to too much talking and explaining about oneself. "I am this way. Don't mistake me. Don't misunderstand me." If you keep silent when required, everything will work out much better. Don't explain things of the past, brood over them, or ask for explanations. When the heart speaks and the heart listens, harmony is produced.

Real Communication is beyond Words

All of us have experienced at one time or the other, an amazing phenomenon. Whether in one-to-one communication, or in addressing a huge audience, something intangible moves people more than the words. We try to rationalize by attributing this to charm, charisma, presence, body language, etc. If you are firmly established in the zone of silence, if your mind is calm, you will find yourself suddenly being able to influence individuals, groups, and masses.

Be a good listener

Listening not just to words, but also to feelings and expressions. Observe infants. They listen to expressions and gestures. Even without understanding words, they communicate with you. Somewhere in the journey of life, we have lost this ability. Let's make an attempt to regain it.

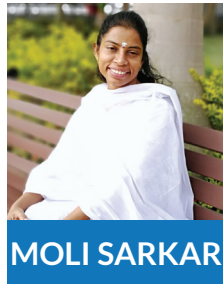
This world is varied, beyond our imagination. We need to establish communication on three levels – communication with oneself, communication with society, and communication with nature. There is always something to share, learn, and teach.

A Girl Less Ordinary

 | Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti

Although a tomboy since childhood, Moli Sarkar grew up with the innocence and naivete of a girl born in a small village in West Bengal. An ardent music lover, she had confused the name of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar with the maestro Pt. Ravi Shankar, and that is how she entered her first Art of Living workshop! All she had enquired from the volunteer inviting her to the workshop was, "Will there be music?" The volunteer had answered in the affirmative thinking of the usual satsang and Moli was sure this was a music workshop. Least had Moli expected that this unsuspecting misstep would change her life forever. She had been a yoga enthusiast all through, but it was only at the workshop that she realised what a game changer in life yoga and meditation could be. Clarity dawned upon her and she knew that she had found her purpose in life. She resolved to walk that path and today, Moli is looked upon by several young people as a fearless and dynamic leader, dedicated to serve the cause of development in rural West Bengal.

Since 2009, when she first met Gurudev, Moli has dedicated her life to teaching people the art of



MOLI SARKAR

“
If I get scared,
how will my
people walk
this path!”

stress-free living. Through workshops including the Happiness program, YLTP, Nav Chetna Shibir and Bal Chetna Shibir, she has so far reached out to more than 60,000 people across Howrah, Medinipur, Hooghly, Murshidabad and Jhargram districts of West Bengal. Between 2011 and 2014, for four years, she tirelessly conducted workshops in three consecutive sessions throughout the day. Several of her students have further qualified to become The Art of Living teachers. In 2012, she, along with other volunteers organised a padyatra, in the ancient Indian way, within Bagnan. This padyatra addressed over 40,000 people on issues like

health, leading a happy life and spiritual wisdom.

All this was no cakewalk. Moli has had to battle extreme prejudice and political pressure against her work. She recalls with a laugh, "Once, I was conducting a workshop and suddenly goons barge in and threaten me to stop The Art of Living activities immediately! Before I could understand anything, they disrupted the workshop and bade the participants to escape. Apparently, a girl who had once participated in a workshop I had conducted, had eloped. Some miscreants took the opportunity and convinced her hapless parents that it was because of The Art of Living activities that she had eloped! Her community unable to find her, decided to vent their wrath on The Art of Living. Now, what am I supposed to do if a girl decides to elope! By the next morning the rumour mills had succeeded to spew venom against The Art of Living and I found myself at its receiving end!" It was only quick thinking with a calm mind and

faith in her Guru that helped Moli tackle the situation. She immediately reached out for help to the other influential members of the society who had been benefited by the workshops. They finally managed to bring the situation under control. Seeing her dedication to the work and devo-

tion to the Guru, she had often been branded as a 'mad woman'. More than often, her capability and motives have been doubted.

In spite of all odds, even today she goes door to door to meet people and conduct the workshops. When asked how does she continue unfazed, she says, "If I get scared, how will my people walk this path!" She has been successful in bringing together communities of businessmen as well as the underprivileged sections of society in Bagnan, West Bengal, to work for their development, both personal and of the region. She says what helps her win over people are love and the authenticity of her work. Looking forward, Moli wants to help people go beyond their small mind which gets bogged down by ego and little desires. Only then will human values blossom.

Inspired and guided by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Moli has risen to become a force of indefatigable service to humanity, a leader and a team builder working for her people and her motherland. She meets life head on with her gaiety laughter and childlike humour. When asked how she spells her name (for correct representation in this article), Moli nullifies chances of any further adventures from a homographic confusion. She says, "There is Modi sarkar, I am Moli Sarkar".

HERO STORIES

Scaling It Up With Gratitude

 | Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti

When three months before his 12th board exams, Rohan took greater pleasure in whiling away time, soaking himself in pleasure activities and intoxication, his petrified family found themselves at their wit's end. As a desperate measure, his mother put him in an Art of Living workshop for teenagers. Lo and behold, it worked! Sudarshan Kriya and the teachings at the workshop had miraculous effect on this notorious boy. He put his heart and soul to studying, passing his exams with flying colors.

Since then, the fact that life had a purpose to be fulfilled was brought home to Rohan and his search began. But old ways die hard and life in an engineering college hostel further added fuel to fire. Rohan, however, had tasted the beauty of Sudarshan kriya. So, every time when he needed to focus on studies, he would get into practicing Sudarshan Kriya and then promptly forget it once exams were over. Looking back Rohan laughs at the memories of his past self. As a natural progress in the process, he partici-



ROHAN JAIN

“
Leveraging on The
Art of Living's vast
outreach we can
usher in a huge
transformation in
the country.”

ipated in the Advanced Meditation Program. That proved to be the turning point in his life. The magic of the experience grounded him completely; all negative habits were cast aside without much ado

Rohan started volunteering with The Art of Living, simultaneously working for his family business. He even ventured into a job but soon realized that he couldn't find enough opportunities to channelize the strong urge within him to serve society. Thus, one day he finally decided to work full time for The Art of Living. His family, who had looked forward to him shouldering the mantle of the family business, were not very convinced of his vision which was yet blurry. He pleaded with them to give him one year to explore life and securing their permission he moved to the Bangalore ashram.

Although he had taken the step, Rohan himself was not very sure about his role. In 2015 he undertook The Art of Living's Teacher Training Program and also joined the ashram events team for sometime. Soon enough people saw the potential in this young man and he was recommended for strategic works like the team's collaboration with other organizations. This is where Rohan began to find a manifestation of his vision. This work exposed him to the CSR possibilities that the organization could explore to scale up its social development activities.

Young Rohan had neither education nor experience of this work. Nevertheless, he headed out to achieve big, armed with a dynamic perspective, his creative instinct, and Google. His strategy of engaging a YLTP trained yuvacharya from the field in a high-profile meeting with The Hans Foundation paid off well. It helped The Art of Living to secure one of its long standing and most rewarding partnerships. Rohan has never looked back since then.

He joined hands with a few like-minded colleagues with a vision to create a structured social development model for the organization. With these efforts a centralized team dedicated to social development projects came into being. Today, he shoulders the onus of Institutional Relations for The Art of Living Social Projects department. Rohan was quick to learn the ropes and within a span of two and a half

years, he has successfully spearheaded several CSR partnerships and other collaborations for The Art of Living.

But leviathan challenges lay in this path. The biggest was solving funding constraints; finding a proper way to leverage both government and corporate resources. Rohan persisted with his team; every failure became a learning experience. Within just a couple of years of the team's efforts, today The Art of Living has become a preferred implementation partner for many government and corporate bodies.

Rohan however cautions that social developmental work is sometimes like a bottomless pit. No matter how much you do, it is not sufficient to solve the formidable challenges of the world. Here one ought to have a realistic target and approach; whatever small impact it creates is good enough. Not having this perspective sometimes tends to bog one down. This is where Rohan falls back on Gurudev's teaching that passion, compassion and dispassion should walk hand in hand in life. "Therefore see, everybody in The Art of Living is always smiling," he chuckles.

Quite overwhelmed with the blessing and growth that have come his way, Rohan is now working towards establishing more partnerships with bilateral and international agencies, generate low cost scalable models, and strengthen the central team to be able to deliver Gurudev's vision of bringing a smile on every face. His family could not have been more proud of him.





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