

SEVA TIMES

THE ART OF LIVING INTERNATIONAL CENTER, BENGALURU



Mission Green Earth
2020: The Next Step

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FEBRUARY 2020

SEVA SNIPPETS

Athi Rudra Maha Yagya for World Peace



The first ever Athi Rudra Maha Yagya was performed at the Bengaluru Ashram from January 19 to 22. Over 350 pundits from Kashi in the north to Rameshwaram in the South gathered at the Bengaluru Ashram to perform this Vedic Maha Yagya in which 14,641 Rudra Japas were chanted and 1331 Rudra Homams were performed simultaneously. Water from teertha kshetras, from 11 different rivers, was brought to the ashram for the purpose. The impact of the yagya is believed to be of global proportions, bringing peace to the World in these turbulent times.

Compost from Offerings at Kashi Vishwanath Temple



A Memorandum of Understanding has been inked between Sri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Trust and The Art of Living to distribute enriched compost that is produced from the flowers, leaves, and other natural offerings made to Lord Vishwanath by devotees. For the last two years, The Art of Living's SSRDP has been converting 200-250 kg of flowers to compost daily at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi. The Art of Living will also spread waste management awareness in 2500+ establishments around the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor.

De-Radicalization of Youth in Iraq



The International Association for Human Values, a sister concern of The Art of Living, in association with the Ministry of Youth & Sports, Iraq, has launched de-radicalization program for youth in the conflict-ridden city of Al-Sadr in an effort to provide a healing touch and restore peace in the region. In addition, with the support of the World Bank, youth will also be given work opportunities.

Leading Women to their True Potential



Smt. Bhanumathi Narasimhan

Bhanumathi Narasimhan is the sister of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Chairperson of the International Women's Conference, she also serves as the Chairperson of The Art of Living's Women Welfare and Child Care programs. She has instituted various initiatives like the 'Gift a Smile - Care for Children' program that provides holistic and free education to over 70,200 children; the Vishalakshi Women Empowerment Program catering to underprivileged women in semi-urban areas; and HARA program that works to create HIV/AIDS awareness in rural areas. She also has taken up several environmental initiatives like 'Hara Desh Hari Prithvi' project and Mission Green E-capital 2020. Under the 'Weaver-to-Wearer' project she has helped to provide a market to skilled craftsman through Madhurya, a women entrepreneurship initiative, that was also inspired by her. Bhanumathi has a Masters Degree in Sanskrit Literature. A trained singer, she has to her credit several music albums in Sanskrit, Hindi and Kannada. She has also authored four books. She has been bestowed with several awards like, Sadguru Gnanananda Award (2007), Rotary Award for Vocational Excellence (2014), 'Women of the Decade in Community Leadership & Social Change' by the World Economic Forum (2017), Nari Shakti Award - Lifetime Achievement (2018) and others. Lovingly known by all as Bhanu Didi, she has been an affectionate mentor to the disciples of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and has taught meditation to thousands.

human values. The children are taught yoga, meditation and powerful breathing techniques to build their physical and mental strength and increase their joy and enthusiasm. 90% of the children are first generation school goers. The training provided to the teachers ensures that the children excel academically and as individuals. Interventions by the organization's volunteers also ensure that the drop-out rate of students is close to 0%. Special focus is also given on Girl Child Education with 48% of our entire student base being girls. In 2014, we opened an all-girls school in a tribal village in Rajasthan, where the community considered a girl child as a liability and did not even provide them with primary education. Currently, over 300 girls from 20 nearby villages are enrolled in classes from Nursery to 4th Std. with almost all of them being first generation school attendees.

The organization gives opportunity to children to pursue their own dreams saving them from being forced into child labour and menial work that has been the destiny for generations. Several of them have successfully pursued their dreams of becoming engineers, lawyers, architects and teachers.

You have taken the lead in passing on the tradition of Guru Puja and Sahaj Samadhi Meditation to lakhs of people. How are these helpful in today's time where there is so much conflict and disaster, both man-made and natural, in the world?

In fact, it is lack of spirituality, lack of human values that is the root cause of conflicts and crimes. Spirituality nurtures a caring and sharing attitude, it brings friendliness, it creates a sense of belongingness. It relieves the stresses that clog one's perception of reality. We have taught our programs to hundreds of thousands of prisoners across the world and they have all shared that if only we had this knowledge with us before, we would never have ended up here! Gurudev says that inside every culprit is a victim crying for help. Spirituality addresses the need of the victims and re-instills human values in them.

If there is one message that you would like to give to our readers, what would that be?

Gurudev says, "Have a personal goal and also a goal for humanity." Having a bigger vision and a point of view of contribution to society is the starting point for a fulfilling life.

Smt. Bhanumathi Narasimhan in conversation with Seva Times

What has been the greatest achievement of the International Women's Conference in all these years?

The conference has added the dimension of spirituality and humanitarian service into the lives of over 6000 women of impact from 110 nationalities. We are very proud of this.

According to you, how will the world benefit if it had more women in leadership roles?

Gurudev says, "Women have the ability to glue together people of diverse mindsets." She does this all the time in her family. This much needed harmony is what women leadership can bring to the world.

How will you describe an ideal woman - or is there even a thing called an ideal woman?

Gurudev says, "Every woman has within her the right blend of strength with grace, courage with compassion, abundance with values and wisdom with vision. In her

lies the seed for the most profound social transformation". I believe in exactly this!

In the present time, as our traditional gender roles are shifting, more and more women find themselves at the crossroads of choices in matters like career, motherhood and several others. What is your guidance to such women?

When you realize that you are multi-faceted, multi-dimensional, you can multi-task. When you meditate, the same work that you normally perform in four hours, you can do in two hours. So two hours more are given to you to balance between work and family. It is necessary that you give prime time to yourself, to relax yourself, to realize your potential to do better. Otherwise you limit your capabilities. And when you meditate, you realize the expansion within you, that limitlessness within you.

What are the ways in which we can inculcate the spirit of seva in our children?

Children learn very quickly by watching their parents, teachers and friends. If they see the elders in the family involved in service activities, they want to be a part of it too. What is important is to involve them and show them the way. They are naturally friendly. Teach them to be caring and sharing. These values are the basis for humanness and the spirit of seva.

What is unique about the education that the children in The Art of Living free schools receive?

The organization provides free holistic, value-based education to over 72,200 underprivileged children, through 735 schools in remote rural, tribal areas and urban slums of India. Along with education, the children are also given free uniforms, books, bags, mid-day meals and in some cases even transportation.

Besides their academic curriculum, the focus is given on imbibing values of social responsibility, hygiene, health and

Launching a New Hope for Women - Women Leadership Training Program

Seva Times Correspondent

Bangalore: With the vision that women led development is the more sustainable and potent answer towards women's development, The Art of Living has come up with the Women Leadership Training Program (WLTP). It draws parallels from the successful model of the Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP) that has been instrumental in creating community leaders in the annals of rural India

for the past two decades. To test and optimize the viability of the program, The Art of Living successfully initiated the pilot program in seven states - Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh wherein 194 women have been trained in this eight-day module in the last one month.

The program draws inspiration from Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi

Shankar's wisdom, wherein he says, "Don't ask men to empower you or anyone else to empower you. You have the power. You simply have to assume it. You simply have to walk with it and do what is needed." Along with honing the leadership qualities, it also lays emphasis on women leading a healthy lifestyle through the methods of yoga, meditation and right nutrition aided by locally sourced food. It also dedicates

hours towards training in self-defense and menstrual health and hygiene management through the Project Pavitra module. A gynecologist will also be invited to address the participants. One of the prime highlights of this training program is wherein the participants will be provided information about the various government schemes that they can leverage upon as well as the various laws of this country that every woman



Cont. on page 2

Gift a Smile

Opening the Doors of School Education for Many First Timers*

There are still over 62.1 million children who are out of school and 13,500 villages still do not have any schools. Dropout rates are high with 29% of students dropping out of school at the primary level and 43% dropping out at the secondary level. Moreover, many schools struggle to maintain the quality of education. According to a study, 78% of Class 3 and 50% of Class 5 students cannot read a text of Class 2 level.

Against this backdrop, The Art of Living Free Schools under the aegis of Ved Vignan Maha Vidya Peeth (VVMVP), an educational and charitable Trust, founded by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, stepped in to mitigate the situation in India by setting up free schools in remote areas all over the country.

Currently, there are Rural Schools, Tribal Schools and Slum Schools across 22 states of India, providing holistic education to over 70,200 students.

OUR STUDENTS

Priyanka N (Bangalore Rural School, Batch of 2006)

It was on 21 October 2011, that the maiden voyage of the Namma Metro in Bengaluru saw 21-year-old Priyanka N piloting the train. As the first technical diploma holder from her village, Priyanka has inspired 14 children from her village to join school. Being one of the first women in her community to get a formal education, she completed her engineering and became the first female metro operator in Bangalore. She is now working as Senior Station Controller, Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd.



Ridalin Lyngdoh Lyngkho (Bangalore Rural School, Batch of 2016)

Ridalin Lyngdoh Lyngkho was born in Meghalaya in the north-east region of India. Her mother died when she was two months old and father died when she was six. With the help of Art of Living volunteers, she came to Bangalore in 2009 and joined the Ved Vignan Maha Vidya Peeth School. Under the guidance of her teachers she excelled in academics and sports, even representing Karnataka at National Taekwondo competitions. She secured 91.5% in her 12th Board examinations and is currently pursuing Bachelors in Architecture from Sri Sri University, Odisha.



Rajkumar (Aurwanta, Uttar Pradesh)

The Aurwanta school in Uttar Pradesh is located in a Naxal affected village where extremism was the only way of life. Rajkumar joined the school in 2004 and his life was transformed from a cattle grazer to one of endless possibilities. Even after passing out of the school, he kept coming back during his high school years to seek the support and guidance of his teachers who had been his pillars during his primary and secondary schooling. In a video recorded of him in our school, little Rajkumar expressed the desire to become a lawyer. With the support of The Art of Living family there, Rajkumar graduated as a lawyer and has now applied for his Masters in Law.

Nilkamal Kumari and Rina Kumari (Ekwari, Bihar School, Batch of 2011)

Nilkamal and Rina were the first women in their families to get education. Art of Living volunteers had a tough time persuading their parents to send them to school. Finally, through relentless efforts, the girls started coming to school regularly. The girls were eager to learn, they both took advantage of the opportunity offered to them and excelled in school. This year, they have both made their community proud by getting selected in Bihar Police for training and placement.



OUR SCHOOLS

All-girls school in Rajasthan

In 2014, an all-girls school was started in the tribal village of Parola in Udaipur, Rajasthan. Currently it is educating over 300 girls from nearby 20 village, in the classes from Nursery to 4th standard. Almost all of these girls are first generation school attendees.

Over 33,000 underprivileged girls from across the country study in our schools. Focus on girl child education has ensured that 48% of our entire student base are girls.

School in Naxal affected village of Chhattisgarh

The village of Pampapur which is situated in a very remote, naxal affected region of Chhattisgarh, was rocked by a Malaria epidemic in 2008. The Art of Living volunteers working for relief and rehabilitation there realized the need for education in that village. Complying with that need a school was opened there. The school has now grown to run classes till the 10th standard. It has even seen a student being selected by the government for further studies in medical science.

*information provided by Office of Smt. Bhanumathi Narasimhan, Chairperson, The Art of Living Free Schools

Mission Green

Earth 2020: The Next Step



MISSION GREEN EARTH
2020
PLANT MORE TREES.
PROTECT OUR PLANET.

Dr Hampi Chakrabarti

The earth was once home to 6 trillion trees. Today only half of them stand tall on our planet and we are losing them further at an alarming rate of 15 billion trees per year. The heart wrenching visuals of forests burning — be it in South America, Africa or Australia, and along with it the burning of several species of animals for whom these forests were their home — give a loud clarion call to our conscience. Human impact has led to the loss of 40% of the world's forests and every year 8.8 million hectare of forest is destroyed. At this perturbing rate it is projected that by 2110 all our forests will be lost. Can we just stand by and watch?

The Art of Living under the visionary guidance of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

has invested in initiatives like tree plantation, agroforestry and natural farming to mitigate the crisis. Saying that trees are important is an understatement; they are inevitable and non-negotiable for our existence. A typical community forest with 10,000 trees helps retain approximately 10 million gallons of rainwater per year. In the time span of a year, a mature tree reduces emission by 22kgs of CO². Medicinal and fruit bearing trees help provide food, nutrients, medicines as well an income generation to the community. A mature tree canopy produces cooling effect of 10 room size air conditioners operating 20 hours a day, reducing urban heat. Trees reduce runoff and soil erosion. And above all, forests help conserve the most important biodiversity.

Over the years The Art of Living has undertaken several projects in this direction:

- Mission Green Earth - 10.6 million trees were planted across 36 countries and 26 states of India in 2016
- Haiti Reforestation Project - project undertaken to plant 1.5 million trees in Haiti through youth leaders in 2007
- Mumbai Urban Afforestation - 18,000 trees being planted in 33 acres of urban area with the help of 11 corporate entities in 2019
- Volunteer driven tree plantation drives since 2010, leading to around 6 lakh trees being planted around India

- Over 70,000 trees planted in the catchment of rivers that are under rejuvenation by The Art of Living efforts.

Now is the time to step up these efforts. The Art of Living under the aegis of International Women's Conference has undertaken the initiative to bring in Mission Green Earth 2020 which would be jointly implemented by the Vyakti Vikas Kendra India and International Association for Human Values. This initiative stands out as it seeks not only to plant the trees but nurture them as well until they self-sustain, leading to a measurable impact. Modern technology too would be extensively employed to augment the outcome and impact of the project. This will include use of geospatial data and

satellite images for mapping suitable sites and preparing action plans, geotagging of plantation sites, user friendly mobile based decision support system for implementers, volunteers, project managers, community leaders and other stakeholders, data visualization platforms and dashboards along with several other measures.

Indigenous species of plants will be selected on the basis of region, creating positive ecological footprints. The endeavor here is to focus on the benefits of enhancing the carbon sink, increasing pollinators, aerosols for cloud seeding and generating herbal and medicinal output.

We are committed to striving towards sustainable measures for a greener earth.

SEVA SNIPPETS



Mumbai Students Run Marathon for Unity in Diversity

Inspired by SORT Club, an Art of Living initiative for college youth in Mumbai, over 100 students from 10 colleges participated in the Mumbai Marathon 2020 on January 19, 2020, running for the core ideology that best represents India — 'Unity in Diversity.' The Mumbai Marathon is a fun, energetic, relevant platform for youth to direct their energies and do something for their country. The students are not stopping here. They have adopted local community development projects like adopting BMC Schools in their ward and raising funds for their development.

Teachers Trained as Mediators

Justice Mehta and 12 other legal luminaries trained the first batch of The Art of Living teachers to become mediators. These trained teachers will be working with mediation cells in various courts across India to solve conflicts and reduce the burden of an overloaded judiciary.

Happiness Program as a General Elective in NIFT

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the National Institute of Fashion Technology and The Art of Living on January 19, 2020, to introduce the Happiness Program as part of the General Elective subject in all the 17 branches of NIFT across India.



Women Leadership Training Program

Cont. from page 1

ought to be informed about. Particularly in rural India, women will be made aware of how to have greater and more effective participation in their Gram Sabha and Panchayat.

What finds prominence in this program is a re-assertion of womanhood in its multiple attributes. Women are known to be natural multitaskers; this program helps them to build on it. It enables women to seek the fine balance between dominance, passion and their softer attributes like compassion and nurturing. Women will also be provided more information to benefit from the opportunities available within the organization like Sri Sri Sanskar Kendra, which is operated by committed and trained volunteers to nurture children and help them blossom and PRAN program that works towards helping victims of addiction by enabling them to unearth the reservoir of inner strength in them through the techniques like Sudarshan Kriya and other processes. The participants are also assisted with opportunities to gain financial independence like forming self-help groups in villages and venturing into



micro entrepreneurship.

Women undertaking this program are deemed to come out as much more confident and capable of fulfilling their responsibilities and aspirations towards themselves, their families and the society at large.

Underprivileged Kids Learn Coding to Become Digital Creators

Padma Koty

Can learning coding help kids transform from digital consumers to digital creators? And underprivileged ones at that? Precisely that has been happening at Art of Living's innovative, Kolkata-based project, Light a Lamp, which has recently been holding introductory two-hour workshops to introduce such kids to the marvels of coding. Partnering with two organizations, Code.org and Learn Without Barriers, and using fun-filled activities, this ambitious program has been teaching the kids the fundamentals of computational techniques through both plugged (using computers and internet) and unplugged (pen and paper-based) activities.

Generous funding helped them purchase tablets and portable Wi-Fi routers while a projector and iPads came as donations, even though, like other schools with modest finances, the project faced the challenge of not having a well-equipped computer lab with internet connections and a projector.

The children thoroughly enjoyed learning coding, the basics of computers, games apps, and creation of software and mobile apps. Says

Rohit Prasad, a student of Class 7, "I enjoyed the coding class very much. I had never used a tablet before, which I did in the class. I now know how to create games."

Started in August 2010, the Light a Lamp Project has created a platform in which successful professionals and other well-qualified, well-placed volunteers have been laudably bridging the knowledge gap by sharing their knowledge and skills with over 600 children and youth in four centers across Kolkata. Mathematics, Communicative English and Science are taught, supplemented by The Art of Living workshops and general mentoring guidance from the volunteers. Yoga, meditation, eye-camps and Health and Hygiene sessions take care of the spiritual well-being and health aspects. This project's far-reaching initiatives and its unique mentor-mentee model have also been effective in keeping the youth safe from the lure of anti-social elements and activities.

Around 500 children have been covered so far in the recent introductory coding workshops. Seeing the kids' enthusiastic response, it is planned to launch regular coding classes for them in the current year, depending on funds and availability of volunteers. It is interesting to note that the mentors and teachers in this project too have been experiencing positive change within themselves.

To contribute or know more, contact:
lightalamp.online@gmail.com



A Cruise Chef Rises from the Slums of Dharavi

Vinayak Hosamani, an alumni of Sri Sri Vidya Mandir, Dharavi, was recently appointed as a Cruise Chef on an international liner. Growing up in a notorious chawl in Dharavi, his future was a matter of concern for his parents. After securing a second division in his XII boards, Vinayak found himself at a loose end and started working at a repair center. Frustrated with his dreary job he approached a former teacher of his from SSRVM. That was the turning point in his life. His teacher, Priya Naik, guided him to apply for a scholarship at a culinary school. After a series of tests and interviews, Vinayak was selected for the 10-month Hotel Management Scholarship at Culinary Academy of India in Hyderabad. Vinayak's studies and internship was sponsored by Carnival Support Services India and coordinated by International Association for Human Values. "Getting an opportunity is one thing and taking it till the end is another. Vinayak's upbringing and hard work has played a role in him reaching this stage," says his Priya Naik. Today, Vinayak is placed at Fleet Maritime Services (UK) as a 'Commis Chef' in their luxury cruise liner, Arcadia.



Happiness Prevails Where Women Take the Lead

A family which is dominated by a woman is much happier than a family which is dominated by a man. You know the reason? When a man dominates, women become unhappy. When they become unhappy, there is nothing that can make them happy and they make everybody unhappy around them. So, it is better women dominate. In her dominance, the family - the basic unit of the world - becomes stronger and we can find the happiness factor on the rise.

In politics, we see wherever the women are dominating the country is prospering. When women dominate, corruption comes down - supposedly. When women dominate in politics there may be less war in the world. There may be different types of wars but not this big war that is happening all over the male-dominated world and created so many conflicts.

Women should dominate also in the economic field. There are very few women who are taking the lead in economics.

Also religious field - perhaps if women come into religious and spiritual field there may be less conflict, violence, and terrorism in the world.

There are areas where women should take their due position - in the family, in the emotional sphere, in the economic sphere, political sphere, and the intellectual sphere. Don't ask men to empower you or anyone else to empower you. You have the power. You simply have to assume it, you simply have to walk with it and do what is needed.

Intellectual dominance is in the field of science and arts - architecture, literature - women have to come forward. They are not yet in the level of competition. Though there are pockets of excellence here and there, generally, women are



more emotional. They are more into arts but not so much into the literary field. I would say that it should be promoted in a big manner - right from school. The old concept that men are from Mars and women are from Venus no longer stands today. It has become a unisex world. Men have the qualities of women and women also have the qualities of men.

Now, another aspect of leadership is the ability to listen. I think women have the natural gift of listening more and is able to see from the other person's point of view as well. Mind you, I'm not saying that everybody has these tendencies or qualities. These are the potential qualities that are in a lady.

So the emotional nurturing and the intellectual exaltation - both are possible when right training, right guidance at the right age is made available. If opportunities are available, women can be very good entrepreneurs. Again here I would say, don't sit and wait for someone to give you an opportunity. You take the first step and look for entrepreneurship.

So, be prepared to dominate at home, dominate in your workplace, dominate in politics, and take dominant positions in the religious and spiritual fields. These are the pillars - these are the four different aspects of society. If even any one pillar is not strong enough, society cannot be a happy society, good society.

Seva Highlights



2020 Welcomed with Charitable Deeds in Bathinda

For several nights before January 1, 2020, volunteers of The Art of Living could be spotted going around the streets and slums of Bathinda, Punjab, distributing blankets to the poor and homeless who were shivering in the biting cold of winter. Sandeep Aggarwal, spokesman of the organization, said that team was inspired to welcome the New Year in this unique fashion by Gurudev who says that service to humanity is the best way to serve the Divine.

Kites and Blankets for School Children in Panchmahal

The entrance of Sun in Capricorn is celebrated with the flying of colorful kites in Gujarat. To make the occasion memorable for children from underprivileged families, on January 13, 2020, a team of yuvacharyas led by Parth Joshi, YLTP trainer, distributed kites and manjha to about 40 children studying in a primary school in Panchmahal District, Gujarat. The children also received blankets to keep them warm.



Surprise New Year Treat for Safai Karamcharis in Chhindwara

The Art of Living volunteers in Chhindwara, MP, celebrated the dawn on January 1, 2020, by bringing cheer to the employees of the municipal corporation who work hard to keep the city clean. The safai karamcharis were treated to piping hot cups of tea and biscuits as they set about to do their day's work on the cold New Year morning.

Khichadi Prasad for Over 20,000 on Makar Sankranti

On the occasion of Makar Sankranti on January 15, 2020, The Art of Living family in Gorakhpur distributed Khichdi as prasad to over 20,000 people near the Guru Gorakhnath temple complex. About 2300 kgs of raw material contributed by devotees was used to make the prasad. Blankets were also distributed on the occasion to about 100 people.



Gurudev in January 2020



1 Jan 2020

Welcoming the New Year 2020 with meditation at the German Ashram, Bad Antagost



2 Jan 2020

Year begins with Inner Transformation through Meditation for people in Berlin, Germany



16 Jan 2020

Delivering the keynote address at the International Conclave on Globalizing Indian Thought at IIM, Kozhikode



17 Jan 2020

Addressing participants of a Mega Happiness Program organized by 44 Art of Living teachers and volunteers for the first time in Malappuram, Kerala



17-18 Jan 2020

Delivering a talk on the Shiva Sutras at the Vadakkunnathan Temple in Thrissur, Kerala. Thousands sang, danced, and meditated with Gurudev.



17 Jan 2020

Gurudev inaugurated a performance by 6000 Mohiniyattam dancers, organised by SNDP Yogam Thrissur, Kerala



18 Jan 2020

Gurudev inaugurated a Temple of Knowledge in Kozhikode, Kerala



19-22 Jan 2020

At the first ever Athi Rudra Maha Yagya performed at the Bengaluru Ashram



24-26 Jan 2020

Thousands listened in rapt attention as Gurudev delivered a commentary on Chapter 18 of Bhagavad Gita – the final chapter on liberation at the Bengaluru Ashram



28-29 Jan 2020

Unveiling Infinity in Sofia, the capital city of Bulgaria



Falguni Nanavati

The young Falguni Nanavati would shy away from the small responsibilities that her father gave her at home. And then came a point when she was simultaneously coordinating and driving more than 25 service projects across Gujarat! Staring at her own transformation Falguni gasps as she exclaims, "Had I not surrendered to Gurudev, I would have never known my potential. He made it possible for me to realise who I am." Falguni hadn't welcomed this path with open arms. It was the year 1991 and she had just finished her 12th board exams when her family insisted that she undertake The Art of Living basic course. She denied. Her father discovered another way. Rajshree Patel, an Art of Living teacher from USA was visiting and Falguni was given the task of accompanying her since she was new to the place. This was an option Falguni liked and joyfully spent her time watching television at the guest house as Rajshree conducted the course. But some days later another teacher tricked her by saying that she need not do the entire course, she can

One Word and Then Another Word

"main seekhti chali gayi, karwan banta gaya"

do only one process - the Sudarshan Kriya. Falguni agreed and sat for the process. When she woke up after the process, she was sitting alone in the hall that had around 90 people when the process had started. She wondered, does this process make people disappear! And then the teacher came and informed her that she had gone into a deep meditation. That was the phenomenal moment of shift in Falguni's life. She began finding answers to the many questions that silently lurked in her. The seed of service that lay dormant until now, began sprouting.

In 1995, Falguni qualified as an Art of Living teacher. Today, 25 years later she conducts the Happiness Program, Sahaj Samadhi Meditation, Advanced Meditation Program, Volunteer Training Program, Teachers' Training program and has conducted more than 900 courses across Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The initial days were more challenging - Art of Living then did not have the expansive outreach that it now has, and thus hospitable conditions for travel and

accommodation were not always available. She recalls it was in 2002 when Gurudev sent her to a remote place in Roberstganj of Uttar Pradesh to conduct the course for 150 naxalites. They had to travel for 10 kms on foot to reach the venue and then again come back walking after the session. The sessions were held from 8pm to 11pm in the darkness of the night with only one candle lit up, so that the identity of the naxalites was not revealed. Falguni lived and worked there among them, in very challenging conditions for two months. One such night after she had returned from the session, past midnight her exhausted self suddenly craved for kheer! It took her by surprise as she wasn't a sweet lover. But the greater surprise knocked on her door when one of the course participants - a naxalite - out of the blue came over with a hot bowl of kheer! That day she realized that there was nothing to fear, nothing to worry about; Gurudev was taking care. It affirmed her faith even more.

Since then Falguni has been instrumental in driving many service projects. Be it trauma relief and aid distribution during

the flood, tsunami or earthquake that hit Gujarat in the past decade or facilitating skill training for youth. In 2001, on the day when the earthquake hit Gujarat, Falguni was conducting a program exclusively for doctors. As the news came in, upon her request almost 20 doctors went along with her to tender their services in some of the worst hit areas. She has been a source of inspiration behind many seekers finding the spiritual path. She has been the force behind initiating more than 100 Art of Living centers. She has driven projects for river rejuvenation, tree plantation in liaison with Government and corporate bodies. Through her courses, she has raised funds to support more than 700 students in The Art of Living free schools. She has conducted workshops for about 400 prison inmates, in the jails of Surat, Amreli, Indore and other places. She was also awarded the Vishalakshi award for her outstanding contribution. Looking back at this phenomenal journey she says that as and when, whichever word Gurudev thrust at her - organizing, administration, teaching - she just went ahead learning what it meant; *"main seekhti chali gayee, karwan banta gaya."*

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Concept:
Debjyoti Mohanty

Editorial Team:
Thoheja Gurukar
Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti
Ram Asheesh

Design layout:
Sri Sri Publications Trust

Contact:
+91 9035945982,
+91 7004144397

Email:
editor.sevatimes@yntp.vvki.org,
sevatimes@yntp.vvki.org

Website:
<https://www.artofliving.org/en/projects/seva-times>



All of the knowledge series by Gurudev, guided meditations, books, music by your favorite artists available on

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