

# SEVA TIMES



**P<sub>2</sub>** Ushering Development through Community Mobilization and Sensitization



**P<sub>3</sub>** Winds of Change in Kalahandi

## SEVA Snippets

**Strengthening Governance at the Grassroots**



As part of The Art of Living's Action Research Project in collaboration with the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) and the Government of Jharkhand, to strengthen grassroots governance in 134 selected gram panchayats of Jharkhand, 14 elected women representatives from rural Jharkhand, including 13 Mukhiyas and 1 Gram Panchayat Coordinator from the panchayats in the project area, flew to Hyderabad to attend a 2-day orientation program on the theme of women empowerment held at the NIRDPR campus in Hyderabad from 8th to 9th November 2019. The participants were further felicitated by NIRDPR.

### Kisan Mahotsav in MP



Gurudev addressed a huge crowd of students and over 30,000 farmers at the Kisan Mahotsav and Chhatra Samagam on November 4, 2019, in Borawan, Madhya Pradesh. Success stories of the farmers engaged in natural farming dispelled the notion held by a majority that natural farming is not profitable. With proper training in natural farming techniques, farmers can cultivate their farms at a minimal cost and produce food that is chemical-free and healthy. The Art of Living has so far trained 2.2million farmers in natural farming practices.

### Kamlesh Barhwal Appointed as Honorary Advisor of Yoga



Kamlesh Barhwal, International Director of Art of Living Yoga has been appointed as the Honorary Advisor of Yoga in the Department of Ayurveda by the Government of Himachal Pradesh.

## People Were Willing to Cooperate in Ayodhya Matter, Says Sri Sri in his EU Address

 | Ruchira Roy

In his address at the European Parliament in Brussels on November 13, 2019, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar shared insights into his ongoing and recent peace mediations and his approach, rooted in non-violence, at an event titled 'From Meditation to Mediation.'

Speaking about his role as one of the mediators in the Ayodhya matter, one of the most sensitive and long standing disputes in India's history, Gurudev shared what went into the mediation process: This was the first time a case that is of national importance was put under mediation.

"Mediation has happened for property rights or in corporate cases but not on an issue as large scale as this, that will go into the annals of history of the largest democracy. There were 25 parties and we listened to each of them with all attention. There was no time limit. What we found is that people are so willing to cooperate. They're willing to consider others' point of view. They're willing to move ahead for the betterment of all. An atmosphere of cordiality was generated. We met hundreds of religious leaders from both sides. All that contributed to creating an atmosphere of acceptance, of giving and moving forward. That gave way to a judgment that was welcomed by one and all. A burning issue that saw 71 wars, small and big, for so many centuries, was put to rest."

The dignitaries present also included Gaitri Issar Kumar, Indian Ambassador to EU; Geoffrey van Orden, Member of European Parliament (MEP); Katarina Barley, VP EU Parliament; Jo Leinen, Former MEP; Alojz Peterle, Former



Prime Minister of Slovenia and MEP; and Dace Melbarde, MEP, former Minister of Culture, Latvia.

Whether it is his continuous engagement for peace in Kashmir; or bringing together 67 major insurgent groups from seven northeast states on one platform to begin a new chapter in reconciliation and development, or be it the Colombian civil conflict, calling for a precarious balance between peace and justice, where he is known to have convinced the FARC rebels about the strategic implications of choosing Gandhi's method of non-violence for which he received Colombia's highest civilian honor, Gurudev has been creating space for dialogue, at times even on the political hotbeds of conflict.

Key members of the European Parliament also acknowledged Gurudev's significant contribution in working for global peace.

"Very few people believed this

(resolution of Colombian conflict) was possible but it happened because someone (Gurudev) came with a different light. It happened from the heart. Only people who have peace in themselves can influence peaceful developments around the world," said Alojz Peterle, former Prime Minister of Slovenia and member of European Parliament.

"We can find roots of cultures of peace in many countries but we need new ways to rediscover it and we need new leaders to help us do that. And we have found one in your personality," said Dace Melbarde, MEP (Member of European Parliament) and former Minister of Culture, Latvia.

In what makes for effective mediation, Gurudev spoke about the need for mediators to meditate.

"Meditation changes our mindset from perceiving things from a stressed state of mind to bringing more clarity in

our observation, perception, and in our expression," he said. "Whether it's the mediator, or the people who are in conflict, it is important to take a few minutes to meditate on themselves, to reflect, to relax."

Gurudev also explained mediation was different from passing a judgment or decree. For this, he gave an analogy of cutting an apple with a knife. A judgment was like bringing a knife and cutting an apple into two halves and giving a half each to two people, fighting for it. But the mediator doesn't himself cut the apple. "As mediator, I would give the knife to parties involved and work with them in making the right (fair) choice. This attitude of allowing the two parties to come together and rebuild lost trust is very challenging but it's not impossible. To do this, first we have to be in a very calm, serene state," said Gurudev.

## Over 1500 Rural Youth and Children Trained under Project Gayatri

 | Padma Koty

**Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh:** Beginning in July 2019, a multiplicity of programs like Rural Medhayoga, Rural Utkarshayoga, YLTP, and PMKVY Yoga Trainers Level 4 have been conducted under The Art of Living's Project Gayatri in the villages of Srikakulam district. The main objective of the project is to help children and adolescents in the rural areas unleash their full potential and grow into healthy, stress-free adults, confidently dealing with a host of challenges like studies, peer pressure, and relationships that beset them as they step into adulthood.

In the 4 months since its inception, Project Gayatri has seen Rural Utkarsha Yoga being imparted to 68 youth, Rural Medha Yoga to 475 youth, Rural Happiness Program to 20, and



A batch of students beaming with confidence and joy after completing YLTP

YLTP to 939 under-graduate students. 36 eligible youth have been trained as Level-4 Yoga trainers under the Yoga RPL of SSRDP. In all, 1502 persons have been trained through all the above programs.

Yet another part of Project Gayatri is to train youth through Health, Hygiene and Harmony workshops to help them become part of Project Bharat and set their own goals in community service while taking responsibility for their

own villages. 500 saplings have been planted at Silagam-Singivalasa and Sreekurmam villages in which Project Bharat is shortly to be initiated.

To monitor the success in the capacity-building of each participant, follow-up sessions will be conducted for one year. Working on this Project are The Art of Living teachers Aruna Kumari Tumarada and Shankarrao Gundu with the committed support of 10 other teachers.

The result of the dedicated work of the Gayatri team is seen in the way students are more focused on their studies and taking responsibility to keep the campuses and their surroundings clean. The wastage of food has been greatly reduced. Harinath, student, says, "After doing the YLTP Program, I have become more outgoing, friendly and helpful towards others."



## Stubble Burning – Solution to the Pollution



| Padma Koty

Burning issues have come up, quite literally, with the annual year-end stubble-burning crisis. And when burning issues are left unattended or are addressed incompletely, they come back to haunt us year after year. Stubble-burning is a complex and emotive issue, covering Delhi and its environs in a choking smog and enveloping multiple stakeholders in an onus-shifting search for solutions.

In addition to causing distressing levels of air-pollution, burning harvest residues prevents their use as soil-enriching fertilizer. This gradually reduces the organic content in the soil due to lack of replenishment of nutrients. The burning process also hardens the seed bed, heats and dries the soil and seals the soil surface, reducing its permeability to water. In short, it negatively impacts the food production system too. It has been found that even the lactation-capacity of livestock is lower during the two stubble-burning months!

At center-stage of this emergency-like situation is the farmer for whom the fastest, cheapest solution is setting fire to the post-harvest stubble as there is just a small 3-week window between harvesting of paddy and sowing of wheat. Any alternative to burning has associated problems: harvester machines leave a stubble of 1-2 feet, so the stubble has to be removed by special machines which are expensive to purchase, with even the per-acre cost for renting being high; next, rice stubble, it is claimed, cannot be used as fodder; and turning it into mulch or removing and transporting the stubble away from the fields involves costs, labor and time.

The happy part, however, is that an innovative, versatile machine called “Happy Seeder” has been developed in the last few years that cuts, lifts and moisturizes rice straw even as it sows wheat into the same soil. This tractor-mounted machine then deposits the rice straw over the

wheat seeds as mulch, reducing the water needed to make the wheat grow. The “Happy Seeder” chops the waste stalks as it uproots them so that they do not jam the machine.

As the straw decomposes it turns into soft, healthy, rich soil that is friendly for earthworms. Less water and fertilizer is necessitated, while the yield can increase by as much as 1.5 to 2 quintals per acre.

The Happy Seeder is being promoted by The Art of Living in its Natural Farming training programs to help farmers get acquainted with this technology and acquaint them of its benefits.

The Chhattisgarh Government is one of several that have been taking steps like subsidizing the purchase of Happy Seeder machines by farmers, besides making them available for rent. Farmers have begun to see that use of some of these types of machines, of which there are different models, can also increase yield.

Win-win solutions or rather, a phalanx of them, are a must if the problem is not to be repeated in the coming year. A conference or workshop would be a powerful driver in bringing together all the stakeholders, including policy-makers, technology-experts and the public to solve this avoidable problem using expertise, cooperative spirit and momentum. Monetizing crop residue by transforming it into value-added products can galvanize the village economy, the local entrepreneurs and the job-markets, while preventing environmental damage. Hapless citizens must no longer be forced to undergo its life-threatening effects, given that there are many region-specific eco-sustainable solutions to this pollution.

Hopefully, NASA’s fire-maps of stubble-burning will show no red in 2020!

## Learning from the EXPERTS

### Ushering Development through Community Mobilization and Sensitization



Nagraj Gangolli

*A former wristwatch assembler for HMT Watches, Nagraj Gangolli became a full-time instructor with The Art of Living and has taught meditation and life tools for a happier and stress-free living to various people and communities, including Dalit communities, slum dwellers, cops, prison inmates, bureaucrats and others. Over the last many years he has been leading the organization’s River Rejuvenation initiatives across Karnataka, bringing a transformation not just to the landscape and water scarcity scenario but also to the communities thriving along these rivers.*

#### ■ Why is community mobilization and sensitization so important for execution of social development projects?

For any project, either government or non-government, participation of the community is important for its success and continuity, because without ownership of the projects it will never sustain. If a person contributes for any work, he will take responsibility of his work and will feel attached to it. He would be proud and would take the credit of it, and share his experience with other fellow villagers. This would further boost his self-worth and he will continue to work for it.

#### ■ What are the steps for effective community mobilization?

- The vision of our projects must be very clear, before we approach the community
- We then can communicate our projects to the community and highlight the benefits of the project for them.
- We need to first have a clear understanding of the issues and problems faced by the community
- We should guide them towards the solutions to their issues and try if we can resolve their problems
- The person who approaches these villagers must be dedicated and must have love for the villagers

#### ■ How is The Art of Living leveraging upon MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005)?

According to this Act, if a person belongs to an economically poor background (BPL card holders), they would be eligible to get a job card. This gives the family 100 days work in a year, with daily wage of Rs. 200+ depending on the concerned State Government plan. Most of the people are not aware of this program and their eligibility, which would provide them a min of Rs.20000+ /per annum. Hence we first do the basic requirement of making people aware about it. Further, this Act mentions that people can work in any project. The Art of Living facilitates people to work in its various social development projects and take the benefits of this Act. The Vedavati River Rejuvenation had 90% job card holders who were first time working under the MGNREGA.

#### ■ How can our field teachers and volunteers put government schemes to better use for social development projects?

The most important first step is that our teachers and volunteers must develop a good rapport with the villagers and bureaucrats and build a relationship of mutual trust. In a village called Dhoni in Gadag district, I saw issues relating to govt. schemes such as old age pensions, and other schemes pending from years. As I had developed good rapport with the bureaucrats, I solved the problems of the 169 villagers (100%) within a week. They are now enjoying the benefits of the schemes.

#### ■ What advice would you give to a beginner in community mobilization?

Each teacher/ volunteer can select their own specific village or area and visit each person there. This would enhance their awareness about the ground reality of the place and its various issues. They must keenly observe the problems faced by the community. Once this is done, they must always try to resolve those problems and not discuss about their problems. Most importantly, they should have a clarity regarding Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar’s vision.

“Once this is done, they must always try to resolve those problems and not discuss about their problems.”

## Learning Financial Skills Readies Women for Entrepreneurship



| Padma Koty

Developing and skilling rural and semi-urban women – and youth - to earn their livelihood is a social responsibility The Art of Living has undertaken since decades. Its products-based projects have transformed the lives of individuals, families and communities, giving them sustainable income and financial agency.

However, going well beyond just making products, can we build women’s capacity and train them as entrepreneurs and business owners who can engage confidently with the financial and all related aspects of their businesses? Further, for women so trained, could catering, and, equally, the preparation and marketing of processed and semi-processed packaged food be easier, lower-risk business opportunities?

The answer is a resounding Yes.

A successful food-based business established by Art of The Living Rural Happiness Teacher and

YLTP graduate Ajay Kumar from Trissur, Kerala, is a model worth emulating. Ajay has established a chain of Women’s Food Courts (WFC) that are owned, managed and run by women. A Hotel Management graduate, his mission was to train and empower women from disadvantaged communities to own and operate food hospitality enterprises that provided healthy, traditional food to the public.

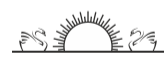
The women in the WFCs receive ongoing, end-to-end training in finance, bank procedures, book-keeping, food costing, inventory, managing commercial kitchens and related equipment, hygiene, menu planning and so on. Support and consultancy are ensured.

Today, the WFCs have 18 entrepreneurs and 38 staff, and a team handling the operations side. The women take full responsibility for the daily operations. Investments are below Rs. 50,000, and several of these women are now earning over one lakh a

month. Former wage-earners now employ other women! They are the mainstay of their families and give better education to their children. Says Ajay of his challenge-filled mission’s learning curve, “My learning has been that more women’s business models can happen through good financing, proper knowledge and the right kind of support to women. By making women aware of their strengths and capacity, we can create a new India.”

Ease of doing business, quicker breakeven, steady public demand and a sustained income seem inbuilt in the above model, making it a women-friendly business option. The WFCs, in particular, amply demonstrate that training women in basic financial and business knowledge can transform them into successful, risk-bearing entrepreneurs confident of their strengths and their capacity. India needs, and indeed has, many Ajays.

## Happiness Program Empowers Entrepreneurs in Rural Maharashtra



| Jayashree Patnaik

**Jalna, Maharashtra:** The Art of Living, under the dynamic leadership and guidance of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, has been working tirelessly to create a stress-free and disease-free world. The numerous projects and courses of the organization are based on a tried and tested combination of yoga, breathing exercises, meditation, and practical wisdom. One of its pioneer courses, the Happiness Program, is helping people across the globe discover themselves and live life to their true potential. Of late, the program is playing a vital role in boosting entrepreneurship in the country.

Bappasaheb Surase, Ashok Kade, Parmeshwar Rajbinde, and Shripad Deshpande are the proud owners of a successful milk processing

unit, Agro Products, in Partur, Jalna district. The Happiness Program conducted by The Art of Living helped these young men discover their full potential and played a vital role in boosting their entrepreneurial skills.

The four young men set out on their entrepreneurial journey by joining hands to set up a milk processing unit which they named “Agro Products.” The unit was set up after conducting a detailed study of market rates and supply analysis of milk. This was their first step as entrepreneurs. Very soon they were able to procure 10 acres of land on lease on which they built a cow shelter for 30 cows. The milk processing unit gave the farmers in this drought prone region a new ray of hope. Depending on the quality of the milk, they could get 40-50 rupees per liter. Agro Products has made steady progress and

today it is wonderful to note that they process 700 liters of milk daily and supply milk to more than 14 villages. They have also been able to provide employment to several youth in the region.

Additionally, milk products including curd, ghee, lassi, shrikhand, and other items are also being prepared from the available milk.

Ashok Kade says, “The Happiness Program conducted by The Art of Living helped us immensely in our entrepreneurship life. After attending the program, we developed greater clarity, focus, and better intuitive capabilities which proved to be valuable tools for informed decision making, planning and execution.”



## SEVA Snippets

### Bridging the Gap between the Government and the Villagers

Due to lack of information, villagers remain in the dark about the welfare schemes floated by the Government for their benefit and fail to take advantage of them. To overcome this shortcoming, 42 teachers from The Art of Living have trained 7600 village secretariat volunteers from 1081 villages in Prakasham district, who will represent the Andhra Pradesh Government to bridge this gap for integrated village development.

## Seva Highlights

### Rally in Himachal to Save the Environment



On November 16, 2019, The Art of Living Women's Club in Sundernagar with the help of students from several colleges and other self-help groups conducted a rally for 'Plastic Free and Drug Free Sundernagar.' Rahul Chauhan, SDM, Sundernagar, who was the chief guest on the occasion, congratulated The Art of Living for making the rally a great success.

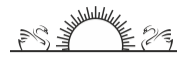
### Funfair in Sundernagar

The Art of Living Women's Club, Sundernagar, had organized a fun-filled fair on November 17, 2019. Rajiv Kumar, Registrar, Central University, inaugurated the fair. Some of the highlights of the fair were a Baby Show, Mother-Daughter Show, and a colorful cultural program. Ritu Kharbanda, The Art of Living faculty and Director of the Women's Club says that in the four years since its founding, the club members have been involved in several projects geared towards uplifting the downtrodden including serving free breakfast daily to patients and their caretakers at the Civil Hospital.

### Children's Day Celebrations in Etah, UP

The Bal Chetana group of The Art of Living family in Etah, Uttar Pradesh, had organized an entertaining and educating interactive program for the primary school children of Gnan Bharati, a residential school for underprivileged children. Children enthusiastically participated in several competitions, singing, hobby-related activities, and had discussions on what they would like to be when they grew up. Chocolates, biscuits, and color pencils were distributed among the children. Sports goods and equipments were donated to the school.

## Rain Water Harvesting to Prevent Waterlogged Roads



| Vaibhavi Nautiyal

**Meerut, Uttar Pradesh:** A unique, cost-effective water harvesting project, Sri Sri Jal Sanrakshan Yojna, has been launched by The Art of Living volunteers in Meerut. This project provides a solution to two problems in one go – water scarcity and clogging of

roads during the rainy season.

When it rains, water is first absorbed by the upper layer of the soil and then it infiltrates deeper down into the ground and increases the groundwater level. Concrete surfaces like roads and cemented pathways prevent the water from being absorbed by the soil and replenishing groundwater levels and

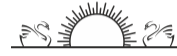
results in waterlogged roads.

A team of volunteers identified water clogging sites and installed a 200 litre capacity rain water tank by drilling into the ground. As rain water flows into the tank it filters through a layer of pebbles and cloth. At the first site where the tank was installed, zero water clogging was observed within

15-20 minutes after a heavy shower.

Encouraged by the positive results, the system was installed at two more sites. Plans are afoot to install the system in 13-20 locations in the city with the double benefit of providing a solution to clogging of water and water scarcity.

## Winds of Change in Kalahandi



| Ram Asheesh

**Kalahandi, Orissa:** Kalahandi district is Odisha which is known for its glorious past and great civilization in ancient times is a place of natural scenic beauty and is famous for its folk dance form 'Ghumuru.' Sadly, in the 1980s, this place which was once known as Karunda Mandal, a treasure of precious stones, became associated with poverty, backwardness, and starvation deaths or "Kalahandi Syndrome."

People of Kalahandi are largely dependent on agriculture and animal husbandry for their livelihood. Many migrate to the cities in search of a better life but due to lack of skills get trapped in ill-paying jobs. Those who remain back in the villages have hardly any sources of income. It was under such circumstances that The Art of Living stepped in to ring-in changes in the fields of health, nutrition, education, skill development, and basic infrastructure to bring new hope to the people of Kalahandi.

Over the last 10 years, The Art of Living has been working on a number of projects in Kalahandi. Prominent among them are the development of 5 Model Gram Panchayats under GDPD, opening of 3 branches of Sri Sri Gyan Mandir (free schools run by The Art of Living), 18 Sri Sri Bal Vikas Kendra, setting up of a PMKVY Skill Center, RPL certification in Yoga and Agriculture, setting up of a Temple of Knowledge, and organization of numerous padyatras. Under the leadership of Bholanath Jena,

Director of Social Projects in Odisha, and Lokhimoni Jena, The Art of Living faculty, assisted by hundreds of devoted volunteers, several programs and workshops have been conducted in Kalahandi and within a very short time a tremendous change has come about in the lives of the people in this region.

In 2017, with the commendable contribution of Yuvacharyas, Bharat Nirman Volunteers and trainees, Bandigaon of Jaipatna block and Tarapur gram panchayat of Dharamgarh block were made drug-free for which they received awards from The Government of India. In January 2019, they once again received an award from the Government for their excellent work done in Chhilipa Gram Panchayat of Dharamgarh block.

Nearly 500 youth in this district have completed The Art of Living's Youth Leadership Training Program under the Bharat Nirman Volunteer Scheme. Today, these youth are shouldering the responsibility of the development of their respective regions. Children in this district now have access to quality education through the free schools run by The Art of Living. Padyatras by Swamijis in the remote tribal areas have given the inhabitants a deeper understanding and respect for their culture.

A PMKVY Skill Development Center set up under the Sri Sri Rural Development Program has been operating in this area since January 25, 2019. Himanshu Kumar Singh, Principal of the Center, says that so

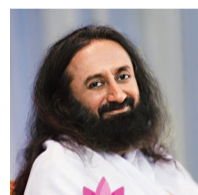


Receiving the award in recognition of the high degree of transparency of Chhilipa Gram Panchayat of Dharamarh Block, Kalahandi District, towards distribution of benefits and creating awareness during the PEETHA Camp of January 2019

far about 200 youth have undergone training as home health aides, sewing machine operators, organic farmers, electricians, and plumbers. After undergoing the training, 70% of them took up placement offers and the remaining set up their own business. Majority of the women who underwent training here are now self-employed. During the course of the 3-month skill development program, in addition to receiving training for a trade of their choice, the youth also receive training in Spoken English, Basic Computer Skills, and Marketing. Training hours are fixed to suit those who are already working in some jobs. Balkrishna Yadav, Natural Farming Trainer, says farmers have started adopting natural farming techniques in their fields and have gathered a rich harvest in their very first attempt.

On his visit to Kalahandi in 2010,

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar laid the foundation stone for an agricultural university. After a wait of nine years, work is finally set to begin on the construction of this university in another six months. In the first phase, permission has been received for a Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra. In the second phase, after completion of the construction in about a year's time, the University of Agriculture will become a reality. The organization has requested the Government of Odisha to grant them 50 acres of land for a research and development institute. Today, The Art of Living has reached every single block of Kalahandi and, to a large extent, has succeeded in erasing the scars of poverty and hunger by empowering the people with new skills and giving them new hope.



Words of Wisdom

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

### Seva Dharma-The Path to Happiness?

The word 'Seva' is derived from 'Sa' 'Eva' - doing it just like how God does it. We do everything, without expecting anything in return. God does everything for you, but doesn't keep any expectations from you. He does it only for your happiness. Just like that finding happiness in others' joy is the characteristic of Seva dharma.

Our body doesn't age with our years, it depends on the state and calmness of our minds, the sharpness of our intellect, that is what increases our dignity. Do you know at what age Lord Krishna delivered the Gita? 75? Some

say 75, others say 90 years of age is when Lord Krishna delivered the Gita. In the entire country only the people of Gujarat say Jai Shri Krishna. After 75, in fact, I've seen the work increases.

I just saw there are so many people doing seva, there is no sense of tiredness in them. No one feels that "Oh, I'm old now." Nowadays, people around the world get depressed at 40-50 years of age. Why? Because they only think about themselves. "What will happen to me? What will happen to me?"

What is going to happen to you? Everyone is going to die, this is decided. Continuously thinking "What will happen to me?" is the mantra for depression. Instead of that, one should think, "What will happen through me?" This is the real transformation. This is the wisdom. This is what we call Seva. See, a strong mind can take a weak body, but a weak mind cannot take along even a strong body. That's why keep the mind strong. For this, it is important that you meditate.

Everyday sit calmly for some time, be in your meditative state. Realize that

you are part of the same consciousness that is the source of everything. This is the first principle. For this you don't need to give up your household and go to the Himalayas, you can sit at your home and just realize that this divine consciousness is inside of you and all around you, Just like the air. Lord Krishna says in the 9th chapter of the Gita, just as there is air in space, everything is present in me. "Yathakasa-sthito nityam vayuh sarvatra-go mahan." This is the point of knowledge.

Generally what happens is that people with a positive mindset are not very active, and those with a negative mindset are extra active. We need to change this, shouldn't we? So you send this message to at least 10-15 of your phone contacts, "Today I saw so many people doing Seva and this has motivated me a lot and filled me up with enthusiasm."

This is how life must be spent, if we spend our entire life thinking only about ourselves or just our families, then that happiness won't be there in our lives. We should do something for everyone, including our family, as

this is also our responsibility. Take it one step further and do something for everyone as well. Take this motivation along with you. Why? Because no one is any different. The same divine dwells in everyone.

There are 3 types of Seva:

One is when you feel sorry for someone. For example when you see a beggar, you give him something to eat. Second is when you see someone is sad and you feel like doing something for them.

Third is, "My own Self, the Divine has come to me in this form and is doing this work through me. That is why I'm doing this. I'm not doing any favors to anyone, I do it because it is my duty and that God has come in this form to have it done through me." Whoever goes with this thought, can do the best service. Just like this do the best Seva with the best of intentions.

(Excerpts from a talk given by Gurudev at the Jyotirmay event in Ahmedabad on October 26, 2019)



## The Mentor Worth a Mention

 | Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti

Dantiamuhan village, tucked away in the quaint Mayurbhanj district of Odisha hadn't yet seen much development, hadn't yet garnered an idea of the big world that functioned outside it. Little Jyotish Mishra grew up here as the son of a devoted homemaker mother and a father who worked with the agriculture department. There was nothing to set him apart in the big world other than a sharp entrepreneurial streak that began manifesting itself from a very tender age. Inspired by the agrarian environment, Jyotish would curate his own kitchen garden and maintain it with the utmost care. A large part of the family's daily kitchen needs were met by his modest garden. Jyotish exclaims with pride, "Even when I went to college in the much bigger city, Bhubaneswar, I did not take money from my father." He would toil away at odd jobs in the nearby market place to earn his own money. This money took care of his hostel fees and food for all his years in college.

The strongest influence on Jyotish, however,



**Jyotish Mishra**

*But he held strong in spite of the failures and the hardships because he could fathom the magnitude and scope of Gurudev's vision.*

was his elder brother, Pritish Mishra, an Ayurveda doctor and a dedicated volunteer for The Art of Living. Pritish inspired his siblings to participate in the Happiness Program which was being conducted around 20kms away from their place. With all due respect for his brother, Jyotish was unwilling to participate. "Yeh sab mujhse nahi hoga!" Jyotish recalls his reply to Pritish. But as fate would have it, their younger sister wanted to participate but the venue was far and required them to cross a forest on the way. Pritish being away, the responsibility of chaperoning her fell on Jyotish. He decided to wait outside the venue for his sister, but by the second day of the program he

got called in to participate. That was 2005, Jyotish experienced his first Sudarshan Kriya and before long found himself opening up to the larger possibilities of life. He next travelled 100kms to participate in the Youth Leadership Training Program and has never looked back since then.

A few years ago, following Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's vision to revive the ancient wisdom and practice of Ayurveda among the masses, Pritish encouraged him to become a micro entrepreneur for Ayurveda medicines and other products. His jumped into the game with his keen entrepreneurial streak. But this was uncharted terrain; there was no precedence of this work available to him. Jyotish would set up stalls at the venues of The Art of Living programs and interact with the participants and organisers to build relationships. If need be he would take charge of delivering the orders himself; he was determined to leave no leaf unturned. Profits were still hard to come by. For several years he either ran into losses or barely made even. But he held strong in spite of the failures and the hardships because he could fathom the magnitude and scope of Gurudev's vision. And then Gurudev opened up the project

for creating more micro-entrepreneurs across rural India to empower the youth and provide an income generation option for them.

Jyotish was now an experienced senior in the area and was thus required to take up the role of a mentor. This role too came with its own set of challenges. Most of these young boys and girls had neither education nor the skill sets for sales. Few even lost interest mid-way and would want to drop out. But Jyotish knew what a transformation it would bring to their lives once the gates of an earning opportunity opened up to them. He made it a point to meet up, listen to and address each one of their concerns once every week or two. He went to the extent of handing out products to them even if they did not have the money or were running in losses. He held them close to his heart and worked hard to show them the ropes. After years of barely making through, the tides started turning. The last financial year, Jyotish and his proteges brought in an enormous sale, bringing in surplus income for all of them.

Today, Jyotish along with a couple of his friends mentors around 40-60 youths across Odisha, ushering in a new wave of empowerment.

## Storming with Surrender

 | Dr. Hampi Chakrabarti

The 7-year-old Soniya, like many other 7-year olds was told by her parents that an angel gave her to them. And then unlike most others, an unlikely thought came to her, "Why did the angel give her away! Didn't it love her?" Questions beyond her own comprehension would mould Soniya's growing up years and never really leave her in the years that followed. A sensitive child, growing up with the stories of her freedom-fighter grandfather, she saw the world around her and realized that too many children around her were not as privileged as her; too many of them grappled with poverty and the lack of basic opportunities. Nevertheless, she grew up, bagged a degree in engineering, then MBA and then a smooth climb on the corporate ladder that took her to several places across the country and abroad. All was fine, but something did not feel fine. A quest kept nagging her - what was the purpose of her being here on this planet? And thus began her search.

Soniya left her job in Dubai and moved



**Soniya Khadake**

*"I never looked at Project Bharat as a job. It was my seva to this nation and my Guru. That made the surrender to strive much easier."*

back to India in pursuit of the purpose of her life. Some time before that she had read the book, Wisdom for the New Millennium by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. The book seemed to have some answers and that lent her the hope that maybe this calmly smiling person on the book cover could tell her more. And as fate would have it, one day she was just walking by a road and saw his photo outside a building. She walked in to find some people there who were about to leave for some volunteering work. She looked interested, they invited her to come along and that was it. Before she knew, she began volunteering with them for several social initiatives. Her lifelong nagging questions became secondary as service took the prime

place in her life. Eventually she decided to move to The Art of Living International Centre and made service to humanity the sole purpose of her life.

A couple of years later, in 2018, Gurudev launched 'Project Bharat', an ambitious project to touch every single village in India and work together with the local community to bring solutions to their everyday concerns. Gurudev had envisioned the project with the objective to create a renewed wave of *sattva* and establish the core principles of dharma. And at its very initiation Soniya found herself as the National Coordinator of this colossal project. Beyond her wildest imaginations, she had been thrust into an unknown ocean. "Where to begin with the challenges!", Soniya says with a broad smile. It was so new, there were no systems, structures or parameters in place; and the operation had to be on a pan India scale. Everything had to be figured out from scratch; she had to find the clarity in every finer nuances of the project and convey the same clarity to people working on it across the country. Design the project, design the office, frame roles and

responsibilities, find the right people to do the jobs, coordinate with people from across the country, bring all of them on the same page for everything, mind the finances, document every detail - you name it and that was part of Soniya's job. What her biggest challenge was, Soniya says with an embarrassed grin, "I was such a newcomer, hardly knew anyone, was too unsure of my footing and I was required to work hand in hand and offer solutions to the seniors in the organization who had been working on several projects for like 20 years!" That is when she realized the spirit of belongingness that guides us on this spiritual path. She knew this would require her to give her all. Her first decision was to make herself available to the needs of the project 24x7. She even informed her family that for the next two years she would keep very busy. "Fortunately", Soniya adds, "I never looked at Project Bharat as a job. It was my seva to this nation and my Guru. That made it easier to surrender and strive harder." Today, you can find Soniya sprint through meetings on her scooter, still seeking solutions but with a much firmer footing and an enormous faith.






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A portion of your earnings given in service,  
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 - Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar



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