THE ART OF LIVING
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THE ART OF LIVING INTERNATIONAL CENTER, BANGALORE

Inmates of Dibrugarh Central Jail Receive Vocational Training

Sustainable Seed Innovation Round Table Conference

Promoting Natural Farming in the North East

The Art of Living initiative in Odisha

The Art of Living partners with State of Odisha to develop 50 model Gram Panchayats

760 youths undergo YLTP to become catalysts of change

Adopting the Integrated Community Development Model

Problems & Challenges

The villages were in a state of neglect; some of them were in very remote hilly areas

The tribals were difficult to approach as they were very reticent and suspicious of people from the plains

Extreme poverty and socio-economic condition had led to a lack of education, early marriage, and primitive lifestyle

Malnutrition was acute as their staple food consisted of only roots of plants from the forest, rice, salt and local liquor brewed using spices

Infant mortality was high

Capacity Building Measures:

Rural teachers and Yuvacharyas and representatives of government agencies formed teams and the first phase of the pilot project began in July 2016. Going from village to village, the volunteers built a good rapport with the villagers and brought them together by conducting satsangs, bhajans, storytelling and video sessions. Other relevant topics such as sanitation, hygiene, cleanliness and their own responsibility as humans were discussed. The young and enthusiastic among the participants also selected to undergo Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP). Nav Chetana Shibir (NCS) participated in the pilot project, and Bal Chetana Shibir (BCS) participated in the next phase.

Impact

Increased attendance in Gram Sabha:

The direct impact of the capacity building efforts could be seen in the significant increase in the attendance of the Gram Sabha in each of the 50 gram panchayats. On the eve of Gandhi Jayanti, 18 Gram Sabhas were held with a total participation of 2648 persons. Giringkela GP of Sundargarh, one of the most backward regions of the state, saw the highest attendance of 350 villagers.

Training Farmers in Natural Farming:

More than 1180 farmers have been trained in zero budget farming and use of organic methods of agriculture. The target is to conduct one camp every month in each of the 50 GPs and potentially reach 10,000 farmers.

ODF Panchayats:

A major thrust was created for Open Defecation Free (ODF) panchayats, one of the criteria to be counted as model villages. Sanitation and cleanliness was discussed and emphasized in every Nav Chetna Shibir. The villagers followed the instructions of using clean drinking water, keeping the surroundings clean, and constructing toilets.

De-Addiction:

Addiction to alcohol and tobacco was a major issue among the villagers. DC of Jhajipur had officially requested The Art of Living to take up de-addiction program. Through meditation, pranayama, satsang and building awareness through rallies, the villagers were slowly weaned away from the urge for substance abuse.

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Marshy Dumping Ground Is Now a Clear Pool of Water

Kannamkulangara is a small village about 2 kms from Thrissur, Kerala. A pond in this village covering approximately 1.5 acres had turned into marshy land and was highly polluted with plastic bottles, garbage, and household waste. Efforts by the local government and organizations like Lions Club and Sahsrudam to rejuvenate this pond last year did not yield much result, with a budget allocation of 15 lakh rupees, they were barely able to clean 2% of the pond.

Lenin Unni, a Yuvacharya from Thrissur, was so inspired and motivated by a video on the incredible work done by The Art of Living in rejuvenating ponds and rivers across India that he took up the challenge of cleaning up the pond in Kannamkulangara, a village close to his hometown. He mentored five Sevacharyas (Unni, his father; Maya, his mother; and Latha, Naveen, Naren, from YLTP) to help him with the project. Another four youngesters who underwent YLTP in June 2017 also joined him.

Initially he faced a lot of resistance from the villagers who were skeptical about the rejuvenation project. However, this pessimism challenged him further to take up the task and complete it. The scenario before the rejuvenation was pathetic. The pond had turned into a dump yard and the stench emanating from the area was unbearable. To start with, AOL volunteers planted butterfly gardens around the pond and collected 40 truckloads of garbage from the pond. In the beginning, nobody from the village supported this project. Gradually, the energy and entire atmosphere transformed with local villagers coming forward to help AOL volunteers in their endeavor to clean the pond.

The project was launched on June 18, 2017, and completed on June 27, 2017. Around 220 people were involved in this project. It was great team work as Sevacharyas, YLTP friends, Art of Living Family and local teachers Sheena, Simi and Eswar Sir worked tirelessly to complete the project. It was inaugurated by Brahmassi Deepak Ji. The completion was marked by the presence of Yuvacharya coordinator Syam Premkumar and international teacher Sri Shal Mohan.

Once the rejuvenation work was completed, the volunteers also put eco enzyme in the pond which made the water crystal clear within just four days. This has created a lot of interest in the use of eco enzyme. The pond and fish ecosystem have become very vibrant. The villagers are extremely happy. The Art of Living courses have gained immense popularity. Thanks to the efforts of The Art of Living teachers and volunteers, the once marshy dumping ground is now a beautiful pond that can hold more than 3 lakh liters of water.
This year, on Guru Purnima, The Art of Living volunteers in West Bengal floated a project ‘Feed the Need’ under Volunteer for Better India. India has the highest number of people living below the poverty line. While millions living in rural areas cannot afford basic amenities of life, affluent city dwellers have a surplus and many among them who wish to donate but do not do so because they do not have a reliable channel to connect them with the needy rural people. “Feed the Need” was conceptualized to bridge the gap between the two, says Rajesh Somani who initiated and is leading the project.

How they function: The project is designed to run like any other corporate organization. A team of about 30-35 dedicated volunteers and a few paid staff enable work 365 days a year. Right now there are 20 collection centers across the city that allow people to walk in and donate daily needs like food grains, clothes, stationery etc. The collection is sorted into categories at a sorting hub and the items are packed and dispatched to different parts of West Bengal. Immediately the project team prays all its resources and resources of other organizations.

From collecting and dispatching relief material to raising funds, the volunteers did everything. Around 50 volunteers provided relief material to the villages of Maida, Minapnore, Hoogly, Dinajapur and Howrah; organised medical Camps, distributed relief material, distributed water and more than 60 tons of relief material were dispatched in 11 trucks.

Unique funds: We are going to launch a massive newspaper collection drive in the city in phases. We will sell old newspapers to meet the shortfall of 6-7 lakhs in the relief material ‘collection volume,’ says Chandan Mishra, an enthusiastic volunteer.

Transforming Lives in Prison

Inmates report life-transforming experiences after Sudarshan Kriya

Ashish Mamgain • Dehradun

The eight-day long Prison SMART Program was conducted in Dehradun District jail from August 3rd to August 10th of this year for the inmates. Organized by Ashish Mamgain, the course was conducted under Ganesh Temzara under the assistance of Ashok Aggarwal, Saral Aggarwal, Pooja and Mansmeet. There were 80 men and 40 women participants including some hardcore criminals. Impressed with the positive outcome of the program, the jail authorities presented an award of appreciation to the teachers and volunteers. They have also requested that a program be conducted for the remaining prisoners.

Changes became visible in the inmates from the third day of the program. For the first time the inmates exhibited self-discipline which came as a pleasant surprise to the prison authorities. Seeing this the jail authorities have requested that the course be conducted for all outcome of Dehradun District Jail. The inmates who did the program were restless about their past and they were doing the program were restless about their past and

Teachers and volunteers received an award of appreciation from the Dehradun District Jail authorities for bringing about a positive transformation in the inmates. They resolved to do something good in society as an atonement for the wrong deeds done by them in the past and they would follow the path shown by Guruji Mahendra Singh Owal, Superintendent of the Dehradun District Jail, and Rakesh Verma, Jaipur, also did the Happiness Program of The Art of Living and are so happy with the results that they now want the Prison SMART program to be conducted in the Dehradun District Jail on a regular basis.

Inmates of Dibrugarh Central Jail Receive Vocational Training

Dibrugarh (Assam) • In 2015 The Art of Living conducted a Prison SMART program for the inmates at Dibrugarh prison. Ever since efforts were being made to provide some vocational training to the inmates so that they would be able to earn a decent income once they got out of prison. After two years of relentless effort, a plate making plant using Areca and betel nut leaves has been installed in the prison and the inmates can now undergo training while they are serving their term to make environment friendly disposable plates. The plant was inaugurated on September 15, 2017. These plate making machines are not expensive and once the inmates are free to go home they can set up a plant at a minimal cost and have a good source of income.

An attempt by Art of Living volunteers to bridge the gap between the ‘want’ of people living in remote villages and ‘desire’ of city dwellers willing to help,

“Feed the Need!” is a project that has been designed in such a way that it would not only bring the city and village together but also make it possible for the villagers to earn a livelihood. In a village like Odagatta in Roddam Mandal of Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh, is a small village with a population of about 1500 people. In the center of the village is the place where the villagers have still maintained the age-old tradition of worshipping the Gram Devata or the Village Deity. This village center is also the venue of choice for meetings of the villagers, cultural programs, or performing marriages.

K.T. Ranganath, an Art of Living teacher in this village found that a sense of unity and belongingness was lacking among the villagers who were divided on the basis of caste, religion, or political leanings. Something needed to be done to make the villagers rise above their differences and come together for some common cause. A very old community hall in the village center lay in a state of dilapidation. Ranganath proposed that the village people come together to reconstruct this building. Instead of gathering out in the open under the trees, the villagers could gather here for their meetings and celebrations. This proposal was accepted by the villagers with a lot of enthusiasm. Villagers themselves contributed the funds and even the construction work was done by the villagers.

The hall is now nearing completion. This activity of community action itself has had a very positive impact among the villagers and will continue to grow as they gather here to have their village committee meetings, satsans, and celebrations.

Annapurna to Cheer Up Encephalitis Patients

Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh) • Encephalitis patients came from far flung places seeking treatment at the Encephalitis ward of Baba Raghav Das Medical College in Gorakhpur. Most of them come from families living below the poverty line. A project has been launched in the hospital under the leadership of Dr. D.K. Srivastava to distribute food free of cost to these patients and their attendants. The maximum admissions to this ward occur during the rainy season. The Art of Living chapter in Gorakhpur has donated more than 2,500 kilograms of provisions including rice, dal, and cooking oil. Present on the occasion were MLA, Dinendra Singh, Upendra, Alok Gupta, Shikha Vij, Jyotsna Pal, Kanchan Singh, Gyansi Tadad and other volunteers.

Creating Catalysts for Change: To sustain the progress and development The Art of Living has proposed and created Bharat Nirmam Volunteers (BNV). Selected youth under the Youth Leadership Training Program (YLT) which brings out the latent leadership qualities in them. During the training period a visitor is brought in from district and Block Level Administration come to give lectures on their respective department’s schemes and policies. Armed with complete knowledge the BNVs become the catalysts for change. Few of the yuvacharasis are now contesting in body elections.

The work is not over yet, it is still work in progress but the last two years have been significant for the volunteers, yuvacharasis and teachers of The Art of Living from the State of Odisha and to the villages who would never have imagined the change that has brought in hope and added new meaning to their future.

A plate making machine was installed in Dibrugarh jail to extend vocational training to inmates
- Inmates can get trained while serving their term to make eco friendly disposable plates
- Can set up a plant at minimal cost and have a good source of income when free

Villagers Come Together to Reconstruct Community Hall

The eight-day long Prison SMART Program was conducted in Dehradun District jail from August 3rd to August 10th of this year for the inmates. Organized by Ashish Mamgain, the course was conducted under Ganesh Temzara under the assistance of Ashok Aggarwal, Saral Aggarwal, Pooja and Mansmeet. There were 80 men and 40 women participants including some hardcore criminals. Impressed with the positive outcome of the program, the jail authorities presented an award of appreciation to the teachers and volunteers. They have also requested that a program be conducted for the remaining prisoners.

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Sustainable Seed Innovation Round Table Conference

Farmers, civil society, researchers and government officials draft directive principles for sustainable seed innovation at the conference

Seva Times • Bengaluru

India is a country in which 90% of the farmers own less than two hectares of land. As such application of techniques derived from agricultural research which is primarily conducted on large landholdings in water rich regions are of little use to them as they do not produce the same results and they end up spending high amounts on seeds and fertilizers. Keeping the welfare of the marginal farmers in mind, The Art of Living collaborated with Max Planck Institute of Innovation and Competition and Leeds University for a research project on ways to preserve sustainable innovation on indigenous seeds among Indian farmers.

The 11-month research project has endorsed that adoption of natural farming techniques that use less water, enrich the soil, cost less than chemical farming and are based on preservation of the indigenous seed, would greatly benefit marginal farmers. Delivering the keynote address at The Sustainable Seed Innovation Round Table at The Art of Living International Center on September 15, 2017, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar said, “Preservation of diversity in seeds is essential. The extinction of even one variety can have great repercussions in this inter-connected world.”

Padmasri Dr. Suman Sahai, Chairperson of The Gene Campaign, said that innovation does not just happen in a laboratory but also in the farm as the farmer has an understanding of the crop that goes beyond its physical properties.

Yash Mishra, a farmer from Chattisgarh, speaking about the importance of seed conservation said that native seeds have more nutrition, taste and variety and can withstand erratic climate and this will help poor and marginal farmers. Other farmers echoed his sentiment.

The Art of Living has been working to create an ecosystem of healthy and sustainable farming for the last 37 years and has trained 220,000 farmers across the country in natural farming techniques. Seed banks have been set up to preserve indigenous varieties of seeds and the organization is now taking the next step of promoting sustainable innovation on these seeds.

Dr. Natasha Keppido and Dr. Gregory Radick from Leeds University, Dr. Prabhakar Rao, Trustee of Sri Sri Institute of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, Sanjay MaruPatil, from BAIF Institute for Sustainable Livelihood and Development and Kishore Kumar Sharma, Professor at Assam Agricultural University amongst others participated in the Round Table.

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar inaugurating the conference at The Art of Living International Center on September 15, 2017

“if the marginal farmer can be promoted to the status of an innovator, then India can export seeds as a technology to the world.”

- M. Kochchpp aisle, Senior Fellow, Max Planck Institute of Innovation and Competition

“The Government will explore possibilities to support the promotion of indigenous seed innovation.”

- Sanjay Khatkal, Director of National Seeds Corporation.

Strength in Diversity: North East Indigenous People’s Conference

Seva Times • Guwahati

The Art of Living has been working in the North East region for many years now and through numerous mediators and faculty members have transformed more than 1200 hardcore militants over the years, the latest being the surrender of 68 insurgents in Manipur on August 14, 2017. Gurudev has played a colonial role in dialogue and mediation in the LTTE, Kashmir, Bosnia and the Middle East conflicts and is considered unparalleled in his ability to make people see reason and love, where hatred and violence is the order of the day.

In a further attempt to bring an end to the long era of violence in the region, a daylong conference titled ‘Strength in Diversity: North East Indigenous People’s Conference’ was held in Guwahati on September 7, 2017. The main objective of the conference was to build a platform for dialogue, reconciliation and ultimately peace between all the stakeholders in the Northeast region. Leaders from 67 insurgent organizations were present at the conference. Anup Chetia, general secretary of ULFA, was the coordinator in this forum. Delivering the keynote address at the Conference, Gurudev said, “This is a new beginning for the North East. For the very first time, there is a reconnect of people of this region, which is so diverse.”

Saying that his heart goes out to the people of the region who had to undergo much suffering for decades, Gurudev observed that while the aspiration of every group that has gone into militancy has to achieve prosperity and welfare, it cannot be achieved with conflict and has to come with cooperation. It is only this understanding that can mark the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the region, he remarked.

The Conference concluded with the historic signing of the Guwahati Declaration where all the groups present pledged to work together to achieve peace and prosperity in the region.

Prevention is better than cure - volunteers distributed Kadha, a herbal drink, to about 17,000 people in Surat to protect them from swine flu

Volunteers Distribute Kadha in Surat to Prevent Swine Flu

Seva Times • Surat (Gujarat)

Art of Living volunteers in Surat, Gujarat, prepared 500 liters of a herbal concoction (kadha) and distributed it to around 17,000 people as a measure to prevent swine flu. This herbal drink made with turmeric powder, dry ginger, black pepper, carom seed, basil powder, Malabar nut, and jaggery, protects people from the swine flu virus and boosts immunity.

Swine flu is an infection caused by a strain of influenza that started in pigs and affects the respiratory system. It has so far claimed more than 400 lives in Gujarat and over 7000 cases of infection have been reported so far, India has been in the clutches of this deadly pandemic since 2009 and efforts are being made by government and various independent organizations to completely eradicate swine flu in India.

Jaga Bharat Hua Prakash.
Vyakti Vikash Se Gram Vikas.

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National Rural Youth Festival

4th - 5th December 2017
Bangalore Ashram

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

YLTP
More than 75 farmers from villages in the vicinity of the model farm have changed over to chemical-free farming.