A total of 436 boulder checks, 433 recharge wells, 44 recharge bore wells, and 71 water pools were constructed.

436 Boulder Checks, 433 recharge wells, 44 recharge bore wells, and 71 water pools were constructed

**Dr. Archana Shekar ● Bengaluru**

Negligence of water conservation practices in India has led to a depletion of water levels across the nation and has affected populations across villages and cities. Groundwater, which provides for 54% of India’s total water needs, is failing rapidly in its level and could lead to a major crisis if not checked. Many rivers that were once crucial for agriculture and served as major resources for nearby villages and cities have dried up. Farmers are the worst affected. Many farmers have switched from growing food crops to medicinal plants or less water intensive crops or migrated to cities in search of employment. Farmer suicides have increased over the years.

**Providing Solutions:** Inspired by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar to revive lost rivers in various parts of India and rejuvenate water bodies such as ponds, wells, canals and water pools, The Art of Living community started the River Rejuvenation Project in 2013. 34 dying rivers have been revived so far in four states (Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala), benefitting 3,000 villages.

Rejuvenating a Dying River: The story of the Kumudavathi river rejuvenation project is that of hope, commitment and rigor. Since mid-2013, Dr. Yaler and his team of 20-odd full-time Art of Living volunteers and few hundred part-time volunteers have been working to revitalize this endangered waterway that could potentially address 60% of Bangalore’s water needs. Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (under its CSR initiative) partnered with Indian Association for Human Values, a sister concern of The Art of Living, to support this project.

The river Kumudavathi springs from ‘Kumbh Thirtha’ in Shringaragana hills. Hundreds of streams join together to form the trunk stream of Kumudavathi that runs for 45 kms before it confluences with river Arkavathi at Thippagondanahalli (TG.Halli) reservoir. The river basin is spread across 460 Sq. Kms and the entire catchment area encompasses 278 villages. Deformation, soil erosion, over exploitation of ground water, and massive eucalyptus plantation in the region led to a drastic reduction in natural replenishment of the underneath aquifers and the reservoir which once supplied almost 30% of Bengaluru’s water needs almost ran dry.

1. Boulder Check Dams: A total of 436 boulder check dams have been constructed so far to reduce the speed of water flow (thereby reducing soil erosion), promote soil moisture, and support near natural vegetation.

2. Recharge Wells and Borewells: Recharge wells are excavated pits sufficiently deep to penetrate the low permeability layers underlying the unconfined aquifers. The recharge wells are filled with rainwater and accelerate the process of groundwater percolation into deeper, dried aquifers. A total of 433 recharge wells and 44 recharge borewells have been constructed so far where the water levels are much deeper. 71 water pools, supported by the base flow from the upstream recharge wells, have been constructed.

3. Tree Plantation: A natural way for recharging groundwater is by planting native species of trees.

A team of experts and scientists outlined the strategy for augmentation of ground water recharge by adoption of erosion control measures, artificial groundwater recharge strategies, rejuvenation of existing water bodies and extensive afforestation.

Water Bodies Fill Up with Rain Water

**Initial results**

Overwhelming Initial Results

Initial results of the river rejuvenation project have been overwhelming and encouraging. The project is targeted for completion by 2019. In the meantime, Bangalore has received an all-time high rainfall of 1621.6 mm this year and the water bodies have filled up with water. There has been a boost in the groundwater levels in many areas. As the project nears completion it is a pleasure to see birds and cattle gathering at the water bodies. Streams are gushing with water bringing new hope to the farmers.

The challenges faced were many. There were no proper roads to reach the remotely situated schools. As there was no electricity in these schools, generators had to be hired to do the lighting. Solar technicians trained under Art of Living's SSRDP Skill Development Program did the solar electrification in 113 schools in just 47 days

Solar Electricity for 113 Schools in Hardoi, U.P.

**Seva Times ● Hardoi (Uttar Pradesh)**

All children irrespective of their gender and social background should have access to an education that enables them to acquire the skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes necessary to survive in today’s competitive world. In this age of digitalization where more and more children are relying on digital tools, platforms, and services to have a well-rounded education it is impossible to ignore the close connection of electricity with educational achievements. Sadly thousands of children in rural India attend schools that have no electricity.

Art of Living’s Sri Sri Rural Development Program Trust (SSRDP) has been working diligently since many years to develop rural India. They recently joined hands with the

Solar technicians trained under Art of Living’s SSRDP Skill Development Program did the solar electrification in 113 schools in just 47 days.

**HCL Foundation to electrify 113 schools with solar power in three blocks (Kachhauna, Bahender, and Kothawa) of Hardoi district of Uttar Pradesh, a place yet to be reached by the national power grid. This project that started on August 28, 2017, was successfully completed on October 14, 2017, in a short span of just 47 days wherein HCL foundation arranged for the funding and SSRDP implemented the complex project. 30 solar technicians trained under the SSRDP Skill Development Program were hired as interns to implement the project. The challenges faced were many. There were no proper roads to reach the remotely situated schools. As there was no electricity in these schools, generators had to be hired to do the basic drilling and wiring. The implementation team travelled on an average 175 kms back and forth from their base, a warehouse in Sanilila, to the schools. Their vehicles would often get stuck in the muddy, waterlogged village roads and at times tractors as well as bullocks had to be engaged to pull them out.

Electricity of these113 schools will benefit more than 5600 children studying in these schools. The objective is to eventually digitalize all these schools.

**The Team of “Sweet Sixties”:** The core team of the project, fondly referred to as the “Sweet Sixties” consists entirely of senior citizens. Headed by Dr. Lingaraju Yaler, the key members are Dr. S.K. Subramanian, K.R. Shetty, Ramakantti Mandoor, B. Panduranga Prabhu, M. Satyendra Kamath, and T. Sinivas Reddy.
Happiness Lies in Making Others Happy

Women of Surat find joy in Helping the Elderly and the Different-Abled

Women listen attentively as the principles of natural farming are explained to them.

Empowering Women

Seva Times ● Wayanad (Kerala)

Women are the backbone of society and play a vital role in social development. To empower women is to empower the Nation. It was with this goal in mind that women volunteers of The Art of Living in Kerala formed the Wayanad Art of Living Women’s Association. It was launched in Wayanad District, Kerala, on June 13, 2015, the same day that Gurudev launched the Happy Women’s Club. The association currently has about 50 members. The dynamic women of this association are involved in various activities such as conducting classes on natural farming, making of organic fertilizers, health and hygiene workshops, basic computer classes, etc. These classes are conducted free of cost. The members get together on every second Saturday of the month. An important activity at these meetings is the Agri Market in which the women market their home-grown vegetables and other homemade goodies.

Ojasvita Distributed to Hundreds of Children to Combat Malnutrition

The Art of Living Teachers and volunteers with the help of JAHV and SSIDP organized a Post Flood Relief Camp in Majoli District of Assam on 12th and 13th of October. As in every event, the team of this association are involved in various activities such as conducting classes, etc. These classes are conducted free of cost. The members get together on every second Saturday of the month. An important activity at these meetings is the Agri Market in which the women market their home-grown vegetables and other homemade goodies.

Farming Desi cows is financially rewarding

Farmers Adopting Abandoned Desi Cows

Seva Times ● Unnao (Uttar Pradesh)

Increasing costs of fodder has forced many farmers in the last few years to abandon cattle which are no longer useful to them. A large number of desi cows, which are not a breed that give milk in plenty and hence become a burden to the farmers after a while, can be seen wandering around in the villages of Uttar Pradesh. Many of these cows get hit by vehicles and die uncared for on the streets and still many of them succumb to infections. The notion that cows are only good for giving milk is not true. Experts in natural farming have established that the dung and urine of just one desi cow is enough to cultivate 10-33 acres of land and hence even cows that do not give milk can prove to be an asset in organic farming. Amit Kumar Singh, YLF trainer motivated the Yuvacharyas in Unnao to spread awareness of the utility of desi cows in organic farming among the villagers. The impact of this campaign is that nearly 50 cows have been adopted by farmers who are now growing crops on a zero budget using enzymes like pensemutha, ghanagaram, beejamrutha made from cow dung and urine instead of chemicals. The once abandoned cows have found shelter and the farmers are getting good yield from their farming thanks to the efforts of the Yuvacharyas of Unnao.

Making a Difference – One Life at a Time

Kolkata - the City of Joy, vibrant and captivating. Since the time of Mother Teresa, Kolkata has been the cultural capital of India and has been a front-runner in the space of social impact. The Art of Living Social Internship team of Kolkata, has tried to follow in the legacy and the team has worked hard to create a space of social impact. The Art of Living Social Internship team, consisting of at least 25 interns, fellows and volunteers. The winning team was awarded a trophy and the players received medals. The Winter Carnival, the flagship event of the internship in the slums of Kolkata, was a tremendous success. Parents and kids alike took part in the games and food stalls, talent hunts and music and dance competitions. The delight of little kids was a sight to behold! The smile on each child’s face and their heart-touching gestures such as extending an overwhelming welcome to the team on Teacher’s Day keeps the internship upbeat and an overwhelming welcome to the team on Teacher’s Day keeps the internship upbeat and an upbeat.Teachers Day keeps the internship upbeat and an upbeat.
A Spiritual Rail Yatra with Sri Sri in Uttar Pradesh

On February 26, 2018, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar accompanied by over 1200 devotees, will be setting out on his second Anugraha yatra through towns and villages of Uttar Pradesh. The purpose of the trip is to touch people’s lives along the way with his divine presence and spread his heavenly wisdom and knowledge along with his powerful message of Love, Peace and Harmony in the largest and most populated state of India. This Anugraha yatra will be starting from Allahabad, the second oldest city of India. Gurudev’s first yatra went through the heart of Andhra Pradesh in February 2014 and the impact was such that thousands of people joined the “Volunteer for a Better India” movement.

On this Anugraha yatra, Gurudev accompanied by a team of over 1200 volunteers, will be stopping at many sacred spots in Uttar Pradesh. On February 26, 2018, the entourage will assemble in Allahabad for a Holy Dip at Sangam – the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati rivers. After a Maha-Puja on the 27th morning, they will arrive in Sarnath, the birth place of Buddhism. On the 28th special train will reach Gorakhpur – a city in the Buddhist midland. On 1st March, the last leg of the journey, the travellers will visit Varanasi – the city where Buddha spent 24 ‘Chaturmas’ (monsoon months) before arriving. The journey will culminate with a grand Satsang in Lucknow.

Besides Maha-satsangs at each of the above stops, there will be Darshans at railway stations along the way at Madhosingh near Mirzapur, Mau, Deoria, Ballarpur, and Gonda. Elaborate arrangements for this event are already underway. Reservations for this yatra are likely to open in the 1st week of November, 2018. For more information please contact: <omanugrahayatra@gmail.com>
A visit to and devotion to the main meditation hall, Viharalakshi Mantap, at The Art of Living International Center through the back door, they are held mesmerized by the beautiful, smiling portrait of Viharalakshi Maa. The gentle smile and loving eyes seem to have come alive under the master strokes of the artist – Daya. The world of creativity seems to have a special link with the powers above. Like poets and authors who write “in flow” artists also create master pieces with the inspired creativity “flowing” through the soft strokes of their brushes. Daya Ji finished this beautiful painting in just 12 hours! His painting of Goddess Amrapoorna adorns the wall of main dining hall of the Ashram Kitchen, Amrapoorna.

Affected by polio in childhood, Daya has proved that handicap is only in the mind and it need not be a deterrent to pursuing and accomplishing anything you want to. Interested in painting since he was a young child, Daya met his passion for art. His brother who is a banker advised him to complete B.Com to secure job prospects. Not wishing to displease them, Daya enrolled in the evening college; this gave him ample time to engage in what he loved most – painting. Ultimately he made his career in art. His medium is mostly charcoal and water colors.

He was introduced to The Art of Living through a close friend in 1997. Daya Ji asserts that after he started doing the Sudarshan Kriya the overall quality of his life improved, there was an improvement in his relationships and his professional life also began to improve. Before he started doing kriya he had severe sinus problems and travel sickness. These issues cleaned up after the very first Sudarshan Kriya. Daya has not taken any medication since he became a part of The Art of Living 20 years ago. Another miraculous healing he had was at the time of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of The Art of Living in Bangalore in February 2006. He had developed a severe case of hydrocele. All the doctors he consulted advised him to undergo surgery. He did not have the time right then as he was to put up a stall of his paintings at the Jubilee celebrations. So engrossed was he in his seva that he spared little thought to his ailment. When he went back to the doctors after the event, his doctors gave him a clean chit – the hydrocele had cleared up on its own without any formal treatment!

If there is any other passion that Daya demonstrates other than for painting, it is teaching painting to the underprivileged. He started out by teaching art free of charge to children studying in government schools. After he became an Art of Living teacher 3 years back, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar asked him to go and teach in the rural areas. Daya now travels through villages in Karnataka conducting Rural Happiness Programs in the morning and organizing art camps for children in the evenings. Daya finds the rural children very attentive and talented. He is really touched by their show of affection and respect and loves being with them. The paintings made by the rural children are mounted and put for sale at exhibitions organized by Daya – this brings them some much needed revenue.

A simple and unassuming man, Daya is not only a gifted artist but also a philanthropist and has donated over a thousand paintings for charitable causes. Apart from conducting Rural Happiness Programs and art camps, Daya also organizes medical camps in the villages. He is a truly content man using his God given gift for the benefit of humanity.

Children trained by Daya displaying their works of art.

Children trained by Daya displaying their works of art.

Daya: A Gifted Artist and Philanthropist

As visitors and devotees enter the main meditation hall, Viharalakshi Mantap, at The Art of Living International Center through the back door, they are held mesmerized by the beautiful, smiling portrait of Viharalakshi Maa. The gentle smile and loving eyes seem to have come alive under the master strokes of the artist – Daya. The world of creativity seems to have a special link with the powers above. Like poets and authors who write “in flow” artists also create master pieces with the inspired creativity “flowing” through the soft strokes of their brushes. Daya Ji finished this beautiful painting in just 12 hours! His painting of Goddess Amrapoorna adorns the wall of main dining hall of the Ashram Kitchen, Amrapoorna.

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