

November 2014

## Conflict over water resolved in TN village

Gurucharan Ambreshvar  
09566328604



**Coimbatore, Tamilnadu:** After waiting patiently for 22 years, the villagers of Kothavadi now have enough water for their daily use. Water scarcity was a major problem for the residents because of the geographical location of the village. The excess water from Amaravathi dam was distributed to two villages (Kothavadi and Dettupaddi), but frequent clashes between them made Kothavadi wait for water for many years.

The situation changed after Art of Living adopted the village and implemented development projects. Yu-vacharya Arul Murugan organised Nav Chetna shibirs (Art of Living's free programmes) and encouraged planting of trees apart from creating awareness about toilets.

Mohanasundaram, Principal of Janson's College, helped them to contact the local MLA, and as per his instructions, they wrote a letter and got signatures of the villagers. They submitted this letter to the concerned authorities and also convinced the residents of Dettupadi village to let water into Kothavadi.

Now, final arrangements are being made to clear the path, and the farmers of Kothavadi will soon be watering their crops. The Amaravathi dam has adequate water for both the villages. After 1992, the check dams are filled with water only this year and the residents of the village consider it a blessing of the local deities.

Karupusamy, a villager from Kothavadi said, "We have no water facilities. Since last year, we have no municipal water supply. But now we are very happy that Art of Living will so bring water to our village."

Volunteer Arul Murugan can be reached at 09487592891

## On Diwali, reaching out to the poor

Kumlin Engtipi 08904051603

**Silchar, Assam:** Wheat flour (Atta) and coconuts are distributed on the occasion of chhath puja. This Diwali, on 23rd October, about 30 families received the items at Borakha tea garden, Puranlane.

Villagers in this remote area are poor and most of them work in tea gardens. Art of Living volunteers of Silchar district donated money and visited this place to distribute the items. The volunteers also collected clothes and distributed them to the residents of Shyampur village during Durga Puja. They gave gifts and conducted free Art of Living programmes for nearly 200 villagers.

Heavy rainfall and flooded roads did not deter these volunteers from reaching out to the needy. They succeeded in completing the task, said Art of Living teacher and project coordinator Kankana Nath (9435170409).

## Stree Soukhya project delivers rural hygiene

Project to make inexpensive sanitary napkins has benefited thousands

Arpit Vyas 09632973883

**Satara, Maharashtra:** More than 300 million women do not have access to safe and hygienic products in India, which is endangering their health, curtailing their education and putting their livelihoods at risk, say experts at the Geneva-based Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC).

Stree Soukhya project aims to help solve that problem in Maharashtra. Thanks to Mrs. and Mr. Pol's initiative in Mohi, Maharashtra. Their project, aimed at achieving the five Hs – Health, Hygiene, Human values, Harmony in diversity, and Homes for homeless, was launched on November 4, 2013 in Mohi, Satara.

Women in this village faced several health issues but were not ready to discuss them openly due to lack of knowledge. The couple organised awareness workshops in Mohi, and 70 women participated.



**Health empowerment: Set up as part of 5H program, unit at Mohi village in Maharashtra makes sanitary napkins**

The Art of Living workshop helped them to win the hearts and trust of these women. They trained Art of Living teacher Amol Yewle in making sanitary napkins.

Mrs. and Mr. Pol said, "We formed a self-help group 'Stree Soukhya' in November 2013. Presentations were given to girls studying in classes 8th to 12th. We distributed sanitary napkin packets to the students. Slowly,

they started understanding the importance of hygiene, and we trained women from six villages. Overall, 1,000 women have benefited from the project and several others have taken up this work as a means of employment."

Ved Vigyan Maha Vidya Peeth provided the required financial help in setting up a manufacturing unit for sanitary napkins. Now, more than half of the women in and around Mohi have switched over to hygienic living, and are making plans to increase production and spread the knowledge.

Project Coordinator: Amol Yewle 9422400879

## Women gain financial security

Sunita Rathore 9929293339

**Udaipur, Rajasthan:** The Art of Living workshops conducted in Tirol and Namndeshma villages in tehsil Gogunda, Rajasthan have given women there financial independence. The local women were enthusiastic about getting trained in some work that could make them independent financially, and Art of Living faculty Jyoti Jhala trained them in stitching and knitting.

After getting trained, these women showcased their products at some stalls in a fair organised at Udaipur, and during Sri Sri's visit. The women earned money and developed self-esteem, said Art of Living teacher and project coordinator Sunita Rathore (9929293339).

Leela, the leader of the group said, "My father is sick, my brother is disabled, and my children are study-



**Empowerment: Gogunda women trained in knitting and sewing**

ing in school. I have to take care of all of them. Until I attended the Art of Living programme, my life was stressful, and I was not able to handle so much of pressure, which led to health problems. But practising the techniques taught in the workshop has helped me a lot. My capacity has now enhanced several times and I feel more energetic. After coming to Udaipur and exhibiting

the products we made, my confidence increased to a great extent."

Women from the village formed a group and started learning knitting and other handwork. Earlier, they worked as

labourers, and stitched only when time permitted. It was not a regular source of income for them. Moreover, they could not come to the city to sell their products as it was far away. They now visit the city once in a month and buy their own raw materials. Art of Living volunteers in the city help them in completing their work and selling them.

## Maharashtra villages learn how to store rain water

Villagers organized to construct dams, canals; 50,000 benefited

Rakesh Patil & Gajanan 09404056697

**Jalgaon, Maharashtra:** Some villagers of Maharashtra constantly faced water crisis till volunteers of Art of Living found a permanent solution. The problem was solved in Dharana and seven other villages when these volunteers dug drains and canals to increase ground water level and encourage water flow.

Laxmi Tai and Dr. Ranjana organized a seminar in the village to discuss solutions to this problem and several participants came up with valid suggestions. A committee was formed to implement the ideas. Some of the villagers collected donations to execute the work.

While the residents of Mussali paid

for diesel, the local branch of Rotary Club donated JCB machines. The tahsildar provided all possible administrative help and the work progressed quickly. Dams were built and canals were dug, and soon water started flowing into the villages.

Dilip Marathe Snachalak of 'Shri Gurudatt Krishi Vigyan Mandal' said the dams became full after the rains, and the ground water level also went up considerably. With a lot of water available for irrigation, farmers have grown better crops. The village sarpanch expressed happiness that the increased yield has resulted in a prosperous village, and thanked Art of Living volunteers for taking such an initiative.



**Nature's wealth: (Left to right) Rain water flowing in canals; Dr Ranjana addressing the villagers in a seminar on how to collect and store rainwater**

The irrigation plan was implemented in seven other villages – Ringan Gaon, Jorkhera, Akaal, Wardi, Gadhegaon, Samrod, Wadgaon. And the resi-



dents have now found a permanent solution for the persistent water problem.

Project Coordinator: Dr Ranjana 9922661563

## Chhattisgarh culture on show

Ram Asheesh 09035945982

**Bangalore, Karnataka:** Chhattisgarh was carved out of Madhya Pradesh to become the 28th state of India on November 1, 2000. Known as the rice bowl of India, the state offers a distinct, rich cultural and tribal heritage.

Celebrating a Mahotsav outside Chhattisgarh for the first time, The Art of Living International Center became the stage for a sports tournament and cultural performances from November 1-6.

Despite Naxal influence, the state has been able to preserve some of its riveting culture. The main aim of this Mahotsav was to showcase this culture to the world, spread the feeling of brotherhood and create a wave of spirituality.

Traditionally, the state is famous for kabaddi, and almost everyone plays it. To capture the spirit and energy of the game, 16 teams of the state, including three women teams, participated in a tournament that was held here. The men's team from Dunda Raipur, with national-level players, won the first place. Among the women, the first place was



**Dance on stilts: Gedhi dance at Bangalore ashram**

shared by two teams from Sajurga and Bastar. The winning teams received prizes from Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, humanitarian and founder of The Art of Living.

On the cultural side, the state is well-known for Gedhi, Panthi and Suva dances. The Gedhi dance, a unique and skilful dance that is performed on tall stilts, has an interesting story behind its origin. It is said that the area was infested with snakes and people walked on bamboo sticks as a precautionary measure. In course of time, a dance form evolved.

The Panthi dance is performed in reverence to Nirgun Saint Ghasi Das. It is a fast-paced dance where the youth execute energetic moves to the beats of a drum, and form tall human pyramids.

The villages have a custom of performing the Sua dance during weddings, especially when daughters get married. A special basket is distributed to all the households in the village, to receive the blessings and good wishes of the villagers and relatives.

# Jammu flood victims receive timely help and relief

Bharat Bhushan Pull 9796244888

**Jammu & Kashmir:** On September 7, 2014, Jammu and Kashmir was ravaged by floods due to heavy rainfall. Around two lakh people were badly affected and many villagers in Jammu did not have food, shelter and other basic amenities. More than a month has gone by and their pain has not subsided; the people are still suffering and are in deep anguish.

These rural areas basically thrive on agricultural output that fulfils both their family needs and helps them to cater to other basic requirements. The residents have lost most of their life-long savings and valuable belongings, including their houses, crops, cattle and fodder. Such heavy losses have put the villagers under immense emotional and psychological stress.

Art of Living believes in helping the needy and spreading happiness. A group of concerned and active members of Art of Living in Jammu has come together to reach out to the flood victims. The active members of this group are Bharat Bhushan Pull, Birender Singh Pawar, Vikram Jain, Delair Singh, Jai Aggarwal (finance facilitator), Hemu Karki, Meenu Bindral, Prabha Salathia, Neerja, Lalit and Arvind. They visited the affected areas almost every alternative day



**Helping hand:** Flood affected villages of Jammu district getting relief

to get a first-hand experience of the problems.

Navchetna Shivirs were organised to provide people with the emotional strength to overcome their problems. They were held in Bhagatpur (Marh block) from 15th to 19th October 2014 and Makwal Camp (Marh Block) from 16th to 20th October 2014. Volunteers visited the flood affected areas regularly and listened to the grievances of the villagers. For the first few days, they were accompanied by the village sarpanches, who explained the condition of the locality.

Volunteer Bhushan Pull said, "When we entered the damaged

houses and saw how families were living with no roofs, we were moved. The floods and strong winds had carried away the temporary roofs and the poor were forced to find accommodation under deplorable conditions. We witnessed the elderly and some ailing people lying helplessly on their beds."

He said, "With medical help seeming far-fetched, there was no end to the list of needy people. Most of them were in need of basic amenities and all we could do was to provide some of them with clothes, blankets and ration. We spent the first couple of days in distributing tin sheets and cement bags to those who wanted to

repair their roof tops. About 200 tin sheets have been distributed.

A lot of funds are needed to fulfil basic demands of the villagers. For instance, in Chaffrey Chak, a house is totally damaged and the head of the family is a heart patient without any source of income. His child is also due for a surgery and he is unable to bear the medical costs. Another family of five daughters has lost all the belongings.

Bhushan Pull added, "In Suryachak, we helped repair houses by providing fifty bags of cement. In Harsatokrian, we came across one family that did not have a shelter and also witnessed an old man who was bed-ridden." Solar lights were distributed in Bhagatpur by SSRDP trustees RM Dhawan and Deepak Sharma.

Several flood victims have obtained relief under the Navchetna Shivr. Many more are waiting for their turn. Art of Living has always been a ray of hope for those in the dark and has helped the poor and needy. Volunteers have helped victims to develop inner strength to overcome their problems. Gurudev's blessings and guidance will help everyone steer through misery and pain steadily and easily says Birender Singh, Art of Living teacher

Project Coordinator Bharat Bhushan Pull 9796244888

## Snacks distributed to the poor



Sanjivani Warkade 09822184791

**Paanipat, Haryana:** Art of Living volunteers distributed food to the poor and handicapped at Paanipat, Haryana, on the occasion of Diwali. Volunteer Kusum Dheeman said, "Service to mankind is service to God. If you feed a hungry person and fulfil the needs of a deprived one, it amounts to real service." Art of Living volunteers Aman, Aakash, Suresh, Preeti, Vishal, Charu and Smriti also helped Kusum.

## Light a Home project spreads happiness in J&K

Ashok Gedia: 09622097343

**Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir:** As part of the 'Light a home' project, Art of Living's Rural Development Programme Trust distributed solar lights in two districts of Jammu and Kashmir. More than 500 lights were distributed in villages where electricity failed because of the recent floods, and Bhagatpur, Jammu district, was one of the beneficiaries.

Earlier this month, 32 families of the village were given steel sheets, blankets, warm clothes and food items, as part of flood relief. Bharat, an Art of Living teacher from Jammu and Kashmir said volunteers have been visiting the village frequently for past few months. Apart from providing materials, they taught the villagers yoga and conducted free Art of Living workshops



**Helping hand:** Villagers from various parts of Reasi district after receiving solar lights

called Navchetna Shibir.

Villagers in the remote district of Reasi used only kerosene lamps to light their homes till Ashok Swami visited the village. He distributed solar lamps to the villagers and they were extremely

happy to receive them. Janak Singh, a resident of Reasi district said he was looking forward to the lighting as their village was dark until now.

Project Coordinator Ashok Gedia 09622097343

## Former HP chief minister finds Kriya a stress buster

Meenakshi Chauhan 09418483822

**Hamirpur, HP:** A village called Sameerpur in Hamirpur district of Himachal Pradesh was the venue for a Rural Happiness Programme recently. As a native of this place, former Chief Minister Prof. Prem Kumar Dhumal graced the occasion with his presence, along with his family members.

The former Chief Minister said his life was stressful before practising Sudarshan Kriya but he is relieved these days. He expressed regret that he had not

taken it up earlier because of his busy schedule. Its regular practice refreshes the mind and body, he said, adding that it has now become a part of his daily routine. He said active participation in the programme and regular practice of Sudarshan kriya will aid physical and mental healing.

Harbanslal, a retired government employee who was taking medicines for high blood pressure, is now completely cured from the ailment. Vishri Ram, a daily wage said, "I had to buy medicines from Shimla and Chandigarh but after the



**Breathing politics:** Prem Kumar Dhumal doing pranayam

programme, I have stopped taking medicines. I can now focus on meditation, and I'm getting sound sleep".

## Seminar educates adolescents on AIDS

Rajesh Kundu 07762827109

**Malda, West Bengal:** To cater to the health needs of residents at Parulia village, Habibpur block, Malda district, the Art of Living team of West Bengal organized a free medical camp recently. Around 165 people benefited from the one-day camp and the seminar on AIDS awareness conducted on 3rd of November.

Art of Living teacher Vivekananda Tikadarand Dr. Bidyut Sarkar took the initiative and organized the event. The camp started with a health check-up and preventive measures were provided to the participants. This was followed by an aware-



**Prevention is cure for HIV**

ness session called HARA (HIV/AIDS Awareness for Rural Adolescents).

HARA is an Art of Living project that aims at spreading awareness about HIV/AIDS in

areas where people are conservative and refrain from even talking about the disease. It was started in December 2008 by Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

The programme concluded with a video session on HIV/AIDS and gave the participants ample opportunity to explore their health status. Most of them complained of respiratory ailments, urinary infection, anemia, stomach problems, dental cavities, injuries, allergy and gastric problems. Art of living volunteers Ramani Biswas and Pradeep Hansda and several others took part.

Project coordinator: Vivekananda Tikadar 09733222028

## Free from clasp of addiction

Arpit Vyas 09632973883

**Changlang, Arunachal Pradesh:** Addiction does not come alone but brings with it many other evils like stealing, lying and violence. Compared to de-addiction centers, Art of Living programmes have a better cure for addicts. The programmes not only help addicts to give up the habit but also show a way ahead for better social life.

Mingtu Ngemu (36), a farmer from Arunachal Pradesh, had lost his self esteem and confidence, and the members of his family gave up on him and had lost all hope of his future. This continued for 13 years, and he remained an addict of brown sugar, opium, heroin, smack and alcohol.

Like many youngsters, Mingtu also wanted to be stylish and different. He wanted to experi-



**Mingtu Ngemu**

ment with new and adventurous things, to earn a good name among friends and to show off his smartness and strength. He soon got into addictions and realised much later that his experiments had become a cage for him and he was a slave to these addictions. He started lying to his family and also took money from his friends and relatives to buy drugs.

Mingtu said, "My family was ashamed of me. My parents tried to hide my weaknesses from our

relatives. I got married in 2008, and I'm a father now. Things worsened when the entire money I earned was spent on my addictions. This led to regular quarrels and there was total disharmony in my family."

After spending four months at a rehabilitation center, Mingtu was inducted into YLTP (Youth leadership training programme). "My wife and sister-in-law brought a new ray of hope into my life and I was completely cured. I found a new direction in life, and my focus shifted from drugs to social problems. After my own experience with drugs and alcohol, I have become an active member and volunteer of Art of Living workshops. I'm helping many others to get over their addictions."

Mingtu Ngemu can be reached at 9436041009

## Yuvacharyas to take up Paalar revival



Dilip Kumar Kohli 09535497006

**Kolar, Karnataka:** After the successful rejuvenation of Kumudvati and Vedavati rivers in Karnataka, Art of Living volunteers have taken up another river Paalar, which originates from Nandi Hills in Kollar district. It flows through the state covering 183 miles and touching 39 villages before entering Tamil Nadu.

In the first phase of the project the construction of 20 recharge wells has been completed, and they have already shown good results after this year's monsoon, says project coordinator T Srinivas Reddy, who was part of the Kumudvati rejuvenation project. Renewal of this river is important because a huge population depends on it for irrigation and drinking water. Construction of these wells will improve water supply throughout the year as it helps increase the ground water level. Nineteen more wells are being planned for the remaining villages of the state, and the project is expected to be completed by the end of 2015.

The completion of this project will ensure that river flow is regulated. It will also help in dealing with the problem of sand mining in river basins, which is a huge crisis that Tamil Nadu is facing for the past 10 years, said Dr. Lingraju. After Kumudvati project became a huge success and benefited more than 273 villages, Lingraju is trying to implement the same model in several other rivers.

## Diwali with slum kids, at old age home



Sanjivani Warkade 09822184791

**Amravati, Maharashtra:** The Art of Living volunteers of Amravati celebrated Diwali this year with a new motto: This Diwali, let's honour the divine in each child. They visited children in the slums and people living in old age homes. Manish Raut art of living teacher said, "Amravati's Art of Living-YLTP team celebrated Diwali with a difference. The experience was divine and an eye-opener, which cannot be expressed in words. We have given our best to bring smiles on these innocent faces."

The volunteers distributed sweets among the children, and the inhabitants of the old age home. The slums they visited include the ones near the Government Pharmacy College, the neighbouring areas of Navsari, the flyover at Walgaon Road, and the slums near Gopal Nagar, Sai Nagar, and MIDC area. They also spent time with the residents of Madhuban and Sukshanti, and the members of Tapowan, an orphanage and old age home for leprosy patients.

Organiser, Manish Raut: 09960656431

# Solar lithium lamps light up 350 homes in Assam

Mukesh Chapagain  
09436711986

**Dibrugarh, Assam:** The villages of Garaki and Mukulgaon in Assam saw light at night when Art of Living volunteers distributed solar lithium lamps to the villagers. About 350 homes in these tribal villages have been lit up. On this occasion, Swami Poornachaitanya, an Art of Living faculty, shared his experiences of social work in the area. He encouraged the locals to participate in the free Art of Living programmes and benefit from them.

Assam's SSRDP [Sri Sri Rural Development Programme] coordinator Mausami Sharma said most villages in the state faced the same problem of electricity and the 'Light a Home' project is trying to bring light into



**Sunshine:** (Left to right) Distribution of lights; Deepak Sharma SSRDP trustee

the lives of the needy. Students of the village are able to study using solar lithium lamps instead of kerosene lamps, said Kailash Yadav of Bindakata. The project has benefited the entire village, he added.

A teacher of Venture School who lives in Ward no. 9 where solar lithium lights were distributed said



that this year's floods had affected the village badly. There was total disruption of the village infrastructure, and the roads were in a bad condition, he said. AoL's electrification programme has helped school children to a great extent, and even his children were using these lamps, he added.

SSRDP Trustee Deepak Sharma



said this project was being implemented across India, and Karnataka, Gujarat, Assam, and Jammu and Kashmir have already benefited from it. About 500 people took part in the event, including AoL teachers, volunteers, Yuvacharyas and satsang participants.

Project coordinator: Mausami Sharma 09954577788

## Zero budget organic farming – sustainable and profitable

Ramasheesh & Arpit Vyas  
09035945982

**Shekhpur, Bihar:** Indian farmers feed the whole country, but don't have enough to meet their own needs. The country is losing more than 2,000 farmers a day as villagers are constantly migrating to cities in search of jobs. Nearly a quarter of a million debt-ridden farmers have resorted to committing suicide since 1995. Poor yield due to inadequate irrigation and lack of fertile soil have had an adverse effect on their income, leaving them incapable of repaying their loans.

The Art of Living has been doing remarkable work in encouraging organic farming since 2008. It has trained more than two million farmers and unemployed youth in this sustainable and profitable method of farming. Sri Sri Institute of Agricultural Sciences and Technology Trust (SSIAT) has brought about a commendable change in the lives of these farmers.

Rajiv Kumar, a 44-year-old farm-



**New life:** Rajiv demonstrating organic farming

er from Shekhpur district of Bihar, had four acres of land that was lying barren. With only a dry riverbed nearby, there was acute water shortage in the region and he could not earn any income from it.

In 2009, Rajiv was unemployed with seven family members to feed. To salvage his land and start culti-

vation, he attended a Zero Budget workshop conducted by Mr. Balakrishnan from the Art of Living. He learnt about water conservation, and became aware of the methods used to replace nutrients in the soil.

He realised that different crops could be grown at the same time and cow dung and cow urine could be used as fertilizers, bringing the total investment to a bare minimum. The farmer needed to invest only in water and seeds. Rajiv implemented the techniques discussed during the workshop and decided to grow flowering plants and fruit trees on his land.

### From fallow to fertile

Rajiv dug pits at every 30 feet, filled them with water, and sowed different types of seeds that yielded flowers and fruits. This helped increase the ground water flow. As plants need moisture, and not water, cultivating near a pit of water provided better irrigation and prevented water wastage.

With water supply now available 24x7, Rajiv has created a thriving nursery of flowers, of excellent quality. He also grows saplings of Rosewood, mango, teak, lemon, pomegranate, papaya, and lakshmi taru. Instead of using pesticides, he grows a neem sapling every 30 feet and sprinkles ash collected from the agnihotra puja he performs. This keeps his nursery healthy.

Rajiv is now ready to train others in this method of farming. On an average, around 500 people from across the land visit his nursery and marvel at the flowers. Today, he sells flowers and fruits to numerous customers, including the Forest Department of Bihar.

While the average per capita income of Bihar is Rs. 28,000 per annum, Rajiv is earning more than Rs. 400,000 per annum. His nursery shows much can be done with little. Now, his family members have also pitched in to help him at the nursery.

Project coordinator: Rajiv Kumar 09955406062

## Art of Living team provides food for thousands of potential Indian Army recruits

Volunteers in Beed decided to pitch in to show their support and patriotism

Anil Tupe 08275278023

**Beed, Maharashtra:** Hundreds of youth who aspired to serve the Indian Army had come together for the selection process, and Art of Living appreciated their patriotism. Medical and fitness tests were conducted at the police headquarters grounds from Nov 1 to Nov 7. The participants had to stay in the campus for 30 hours, and did not have time to go out for food.

Art of Living volunteers supplied packed meals free of cost to all the applicants after discussing the matter with Abhay Sharma, Superintendent of Police, who in turn approached Colonel Vikram Dube (conducting the whole selection process, in charge of the selection on the behalf of army) for permission.

Throughout the week, about



**Feeding patriotism:** Volunteers preparing and supplying food to Army aspirants



600-800 applicants visited the campus every day from different parts of the state, especially from Pune, Beed, Nagar, Usmanabaad and Latur. The breakfast included biscuits, bananas and poha, and lunch comprised roti, rice, dal and vegetables. Mineral water was also provided, said AoL teacher Sharad Dolkar. The food was prepared in Ramnagar un-

der the supervision of cook Shyam Gajbhar.

Karnal Vikram Dube said this was a rare and noble gesture by Art of Living volunteers. "I admire the initiative and appreciate the volunteers who are serving food here."

The team of volunteers that contributed their services came from Beed and included Sachin Pingle,



Bhausaheb Badarle, Shekh, Pasha, Santosh Savant, Dilip Kulkarni, Popat Pingle and Dhananjay Vaidya. They said they loved to take part in this service for aspirants who were ready to serve the country at the cost of their lives.

Project Coordinator, Sharad Dolkar, 09766338619

## Clean Pampa drive continues in season

Unnikrishnan V. 9745925116

**Pathanamthitta, Kerala:** Art of Living faculties and volunteers started an awareness drive at Sabarimala on 17 November, to implement the Clean Pampa project effectively. A batch of volunteers is now staying at Sabarimala and three of them took active part in the drive on the first day. The next batch of volunteers will stay for the next 10 days, and the drive will continue till 20 January, 2015.

Volunteers distributed pamphlets to pilgrims and prevented them from dumping garbage into the river and the surroundings. They carried information placards that highlighted the consequences of dumping used clothes into the river.

Rajesh, a pilgrim from Kollam, said, "This is my fifth visit to Sabarimala. So far, I've seen Pampa being used as a dump yard but this time I was surprised to see the change. To maintain this, creating awareness among pilgrims is a must."

This season, "Mandala kalam" will attract pilgrims in large numbers to the temple and the banks of the Pampa. This is



**Sacred duty:** Art of Living teacher Sajee Nissan holding a signboard

the perfect time to conduct an awareness drive, and Art of Living teachers Vava Suresh and Vinod Nair, chairman and project coordinator respectively, have planned one.

Volunteers from different parts of Kerala arrived at Pampa to take part in this initiative. The Devaswom Board is providing accommodation and food for the volunteers. The next batch of volunteers is expected to arrive on November 9th.

Project Chairperson: Vava Suresh, 08547067510



**Maharashtra:** 255 students from various schools at Partur (Jalna) and Hadgaon (Nanded) are taught breathing exercises. Project Coordinator, Purushottam Woyal: 9423458983

## Animals who bore the brunt of Hudhud saved by Art of Living

Sudhakar Veeravalli 09533780640

**Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh:** The Hudhud cyclone had devastated Andhra Pradesh to such an extent that many rushed forward to help people. They provided relief to the flood affected. Governments and NGOs also pitched in to help rebuild people's lives.

Art of Living rural teacher A Gangadhara Rao organised the distribution of fodder for 650 cattle in four villages – Kothapalem and Ramnagar villages in Yelamancili Mandal, and Nagulapalli and Ummalada of Munagapaka Mandal in Vishakhapatnam dis-



**Feeding people:** Cattle feed being supplied to residents of four villages

trict, said Sudhakar Veeravalli, coordinator for state art of living activities.

Gangadhara Rao said several people came forward to help

people but animals were getting neglected. This service has won appreciation, he said.

Mandal Parishad President Ramakumari, an AoL vol-

unteer, donated Rs.15 lakh to Kothapalem village, said Sudhakar Veeravalli.

Project Coordinator Sudhakar Veeravalli, 09533780640

## Sports and toys bring smiles on children's faces in Maharashtra

Anil Tupe 8275278023

**Partur, Maharashtra:** Art of Living's unique initiative, 'Gift a smile to every child' helps bridge the gap between the affluent and the needy. Some parents are not able to buy toys for their children as survival is their top priority. On the other hand, some wealthy people don't have enough space to keep toys in their homes. AoL volunteers collected about 3000 toys from families living in cities and distributed them among the children of nearby villages.

Children belonging to the villages of Shridhar Jawala and Khadki celebrated a very special Diwali this year because they not only got toys but also learnt pranayama and meditation dur-



**Bright and young:** Village kid receiving a toy after YLTP course

ing the three-day programme, Navchetna Shibir. Volunteers also organised a competition of

painting, langdi (hopping) and other games for children.

About 125 participants from Partur and the surrounding areas took part in Art of Living's YLTP (Youth leadership training programme) held from October 27, 2014 November 4, 2014.

During the programme, the volunteers invited village children to take part in competitions and learn yoga and meditation. The response was good among children aged 4-5, said Purushottam. Prizes were given away to the winners. Other children in the audience were given toys.

All the 125 volunteers enthusiastically collected toys and distributed them among children. It was heartwarming that people willingly gave away toys to the

needy without any hesitation. Everyone appreciated the initiative and the toys were distributed among the children of the nearby villages. The children were also extremely happy to receive the prizes and the toys.

For Purushottam Bayal, this was a new experience. He said the initiative came as a boon for the parents of these children, mainly labourers and farmers, who could hardly earn their livelihood. The competition also brought out the hidden talents of the children of the village, who were equally enthralled. Participants enthusiastically performed the Sudarshan Kriya and pranayama.

Project coordinator: Purushottam Woyal, 09423458983

## YLTP course inspires free school for children of Assam tea workers

Kumlin Engtipi 08904051603

**Laduguri Kamrup, Assam:** Most of the residents in Bordur Bagan, Laduguri Kamrup, Assam work in tea gardens. Geographically, the village is located on a hilly area and the roads are not safe. There is only one government school nearby two kilometers away from the village, and most of the children are not able to join the school or continue studies.

After Art of Living's Madan Das conducted the YLTP, about 50 youth became volunteers and decided to start a school in the village. The organisation is providing books, mid-day-meals and dresses to the students, along with imparting holistic education. The school now has 250 students, and some of them come from 10-12 nearby villages.

Madan Das, Art of Living teacher and project coordinator said about 150 habitants had participated in various Art of Living programmes. They got together and acquired a plot at a central located place with the consent of the inhabitants of the village. After the land was finalised, the residents extended support to construct the school. The villagers



**Knowledge service:** Over 250 children study at the school in Bordur Bagan village

brought bamboo sticks and offered free labour to construct the classrooms. Several other volunteers from Guwahati came forward to support the project by donating construction material. The school was inaugurated in November 2010.

Narmeshwar Rabha, Village Pradhan, who is also president of the school board, says things have changed since the school started. Most of the children are going to school and their parents are more aware of the importance of educa-

tion. They are interested in sending their children to school, and the school is providing better education than the other government schools of the panchayat.

Akash Ragha, a nine-year-old 4th standard student said, "We are enjoying going to school. Our wish is to invite Sri Sri Ravi Shankar to our village and school."

Mrs. Rabha, Akash's mother, said her child has changed a lot. Earlier, he was naughty and shy but now he shares whatever he learns everyday,

and has become more responsible. Madan Das said Roomi Purwa, AoL state coordinator, extended all the support and guidance to make the school a big success. She helped in coordinating with Art of Living's Bangalore center and in completing the procedures and formalities required to start the school. The volunteers who helped in constructing the school are Manalisa Bhattacharya, Sabita Butani and Sanmoi Borua. Project coordinator: Modan Das, 9577527519

## Clean-up drive in Kerala



Unni Krishnan 09745925116

**Alappuzha, Kerala:** During his spare time, YLTP teacher Arun helps in cleaning up Mutathi Paramb, with the help of volunteers and local residents. Last weekend, more than 30 people took part in the drive.

After cleaning, they educated the villagers about the importance of hygiene and maintaining clean surroundings. Autorickshaw drivers also took active part in the drive.

The debris and waste materials collected were segregated and categorised before disposal. Biodegradable wastes were used for pipeline compost, and plastic materials were sent to the nearest recycling plant.

## Forest guards get handy solar lights



**A smile to the forest:** Niranjan, SSRDP (Sri Sri Rural Development program) trustee (middle) with forest guards

Dilip Kumar Koli 09535497006

**Chamrajanagar, Karnataka:** Forest guards have to walk through the dangerous woods adjoining BR Hills during night. There is always the prospect of encountering wild animals in the dense forest. Keeping this in mind, Art of Living's Light a Home project team distributed portable solar lights to 10 forest guards. The guards were extremely happy to receive the lights and were at a loss for words because it was happening for the first time in their life, said Art of Living teacher Priya Vijaygopal.

Following the response, lights were distributed for a second time on November 7. Priya Vijaygopal said these remote villages were not easily accessible and it was difficult to distribute portable lights. The reason is that there are no street lights and not many of the houses have electricity.

Now, the second phase of electrification is underway in the two villages of BR Hills. In the first phase, about 160 lights were distributed in Chamrajanagar. Project coordinator: Priya Vijaygopal, 08971944597



**Surendranagar, Gujarat:** 1600 students of RPP School are taught breathing exercises. Project coordinator Mehta Kashmira: 09426223003

## Intense youth training at Purulia



**Course in West Bengal**

Rajesh Kundu 07762827109

**Purulia, West Bengal:** Youth form the backbone of a nation, and its strength can be determined with their eminence. Youth leadership training programme brings out the hidden qualities of an individual. One such programme, conducted on the occasion of Navaratri, concluded on 14th October 2014, at ManasSarovar hotel in Purulia district, West Bengal.

Instructors Sri Subhas Mahato and Tamanya Maity said 26 participants underwent intense training at the programme. Apart from physical exercise, leadership qualities and communication skills were taught. This will not only help them to lead better lives but also initiate them to work for the welfare of their communities.

Course participants were thankful to the teachers and the organisation for transforming their lives through the programme. The various techniques taught were effective in bringing relief to the participants from stress, anxiety and confusion. Now they feel more confident and have developed better public speaking and communication skills.

# Dry temple pond gets 15 ft of water as part of Kumudvathi rejuvenation

Dilip Kumar Koli 09535497006

**Bangaluru, Karnataka:** Nine staff members and 42 students of Soundarya PU College, Bangalore have transformed a 500-year-old defunct kalyani (temple pond) attached to the Kashi Vishwanatha temple of Thyamagondlu village, in the Kumudavati basin, into a water body. The pond, which was a dumping ground for plastic and garbage, and a breeding ground for weeds for the past five years, now has water up to 15 feet.

As part of a camp organised under the National Service Scheme (NSS), the students travelled about 15 km from Bangalore to the nearby Dasanapura on October 8, to work tirelessly on the project. Within eight hours, they cleared the garbage and silt, and removed the weeds to transform the kalyani.

The initiative came from the students as part of the college's Youth Leadership Training Programme (YLTP). Kumar H, principal of the college said Art of Living Foundation's Gopala Krishna had informed them about the poor condition of

the kalyani. "The staff and students of our college decided to give it a facelift."

However, the task turned out to be daunting, he said. The kalyani was 80-feet deep and had steep walls, and it was dangerous for the students to work on it as they are hardly in their 16s and 17s.

At about nine in the morning, the group of students got down to work using sickles, ropes, buckets and other equipment. "Only one local villager, Shivanna, joined us. Taluk panchayat president Jagadish helped us by organising tractors to ferry silt and garbage," Kumar said. While the students cleared the garbage by sweeping the steps of the kalyani, Shivanna and the college staff scaled down the 80-foot well and cleared the branches and other waste materials.

Though the locals objected to the dumping of silt near the temple, Peerya Naik, NSS co-ordinator of the college inspired the students to continue the work. A few students cleared and removed the silt and garbage from the bottom of the kalyani, and a few others helped remove it us-



**Pitching in:** YLTP course participants at NSS camp of Soundarya PU College clearing the rubble and desilting

ing ropes. Subsequently, the silt and debris was loaded onto tractors to be removed for dumping. "Since it had rained the previous day it was easy to remove the weed completely," said Peerya Naik.

The entire team of volunteers panicked for a few minutes when a beehive was disturbed and they got swarmed by bees. But a few stings did not deter them from completing the cleaning operation successfully.

Almost 12 tractor-loads of garbage and silt were removed, which comprised plastic, empty tetra packs and other waste materials. "After a



small lunch break we resumed work and were able to complete the work by 5 p.m. When we touched the bottom, we hit groundwater," Naik said. The students and staff of the college urged the temple trust and local panchayat officials to keep the lake clean.

Project coordinator: Chandrakanth 09448030847

# Spiritual leader inspired to take up path of service in Himachal

## After doing Art of Living, Swami Ramkrishna becomes pradhan

Meenakshi Chauhan 09418483822

**Una, Himachal Pradesh:** If you love God, you will love your fellow beings too, and this results in service to society, wise people say. Swami Ramkrishna and his followers are doing selfless service at an ashram in Kuthar Khurd, Una district, Himachal Pradesh. After undergoing YLTP (Youth Leadership Training Programme) in 2008, he was inspired to serve society and worked to improve quality of life of villagers. Soon, he won over several hearts and the villagers chose him as their representative. Now, he is serving the village with more enthusiasm.

Swami Ramkrishna said, "I wanted to establish branches of the ashram to make it more popular. But after undergoing the YLTP, and with the inspiration of Sri Sri, I have understood that spiritualism comes from serving the society and transforming the lives of people." Earlier, he had thought that spirituality is nothing but abandoning the society and keeping away from social problems. But with inspiration from Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, he realised that the real essence of spirituality is in serving the society, said Ramkrishna, panchayat pradhan of KutharKhurd.

Under the guidance of YLTP teachers Uday Sharma and Savina Sharma, he joined the Art of Living programme, which gave him new direction. It freed him from stress, and he wanted others also to experience the same physical and mental strength. Till now, 80 per cent of the villagers have benefitted from AoL programs. Almost 100 per cent of the children and youth, and 80 per cent of the adults take part in group singing and meditation regularly.

This brought inner peace to the villagers and they developed a feeling



**Exemplary: (left to right) Nirmal gram puraskaar for Kuthar Khurd from president of India in 2011; Art of Living computer training centre; Swami Ramkrishna (left)**



of responsibility towards the society as well. The women came forward to clean up the village, and also started two Mahila Mandals (women's groups), which took the responsibility of cleaning the village on a regular basis. Now, women and children take part enthusiastically to clean the streets every week. The panchayat received the Nirmal Gram Puraskar from the President of India in 2011.

Ravinder Ravi, Irrigation Minister of Himachal Pradesh, honored Swami Ramkrishna on 15th August 2010 with a certificate from Swasthya Aur Pariwar Kalyan Vibhag for making families collect the highest number of smart cards in the panchayat. Smart card holders living below the poverty line get free health check-ups and medical facilities at government hospitals in the state. In his panchayat, almost all BPL (Below poverty line) families earned smart cards.

Forty students have enrolled for skill development courses at Art of Living's computer centre. Earlier, they had to go 4-5 kilometers away from the village to learn, and most of them were not able to afford it. Even some of the schools here are not equipped to impart such education. But now everyone has easy access to computer education, and anyone

who has an inclination to learn can join the courses.

### Expanding horizons

Many of the houses in the village did not have toilets, and Ramkrishna inspired the villagers to build them on their own. Now, all the families in the panchayat have toilets.

In the local elections held in 2011, villagers proposed Ramkrishna's name for the Pradhan's post. He became the first unopposed Pradhan of the village. Though the government had sanctioned money for street lights sometime ago, no one took the initiative for implementing it. After Ramkrishna became the Pradhan, he promptly completed the work and also installed more lights.

The roads of the village have also been re-laid, thanks to the Pradhan's initiative. Many people were reluctant to giving a 'no objection certificate' to build roads. Ramkrishna convinced every one and made them understand the importance of roads for the village's progress.

Surjeet, who is working in the Army, agreed to break the wall of his house to make way for roads. Construction of a proper drainage system was also essential to maintain hy-

giene in the village.

Senior citizens of the village are not literate and are not aware of old age pension. Swami Ramkrishna took the initiative and started the pension scheme for 18 senior citizens, who are now getting it regularly. For the youngsters, different competitions and activities are organized on different occasions, which help in their all-round development.

The future plans include withdrawal of all the cases that are pending in various courts. The quarrels and fights have considerably gone down in the village. Regular satsangs (group singing) are conducted in which the young and the old take part enthusiastically. A training centre for stitching and sewing trains women.

Unemployment was another challenge in the panchayat, and a youth club was formed to solve the problem. Yuvacharya Rakesh Kumar became its president and encouraged the youth to get enrolled in YLTP. This led to a marked reduction in the number of alcoholics and substance addicts. Now, they are trying to generate work for themselves by monitoring the activities of the village to make the programme a big success.

Project Coordinator: Rakesh Kumar, 09817080056

## Use of desi cows in organic farming

Unnikrishnan V. 9422400879

Kollam, Kerala: Art of Living organised a seminar on cow protection and organic farming in Kollam on 9th of November. Yuvacharya Binosh addressed the gathering of around 150 participants who came from various parts of the district. He said the British knew that they could not rule India without breaking its rich culture and tradition. No one was poor, and the villages were self-reliant and prosperous at that time. So the only way to overpower the residents of villages was to make them dependent on pesticides and fertilizers, which would ultimately make them dependent for everything else.

The Yuvacharya said about 100 years ago the first modern, non-desi cow was introduced in India, and desi cows were ignored under the name of milk revolution. He highlighted the benefits of the milk from desi cows and compared it with that of high-breed cows which could cause various diseases.

Art of Living teacher Shalmoan also shared his experiences of 'Punarjani'. Under this project, he trained 20 youth in organic farming during 2010-2011 and taught them how desi cows were useful in Ayurveda and farming. The trained youth spread the awareness to other villages, which made the project a huge success.

Arun and Marthandan, Art



**Bovine protection: 150 people participated in the programme at Kollam**

of Living yuvacharyas, want to educate the farmers of Kollam on organic and zero budget farming. They are planning to organise a programme wherein farmers will be trained to make pesticides and fertilizers with the excretory wastes of desi cows.

Arun said, "Most of the farmers are following methods that promote the use of chemicals as pesticides. They are not aware of the side effects of these chemicals on the soil, the crops and the consumers. Our intention is to create awareness about the ill-effects of pesticides, and to encourage them to shift to zero budget farming. This will not only save their land, but also give them more produce and money." The seminar ended with the distribution of organic seeds to farmers.

Project Coordinator, Arun: 9495825965

## Four villages come under Aadarsh Gram Yojana

Meenakshi 9418483822

Una, HP: Under 'Aadarsh Gram Yojana', MPs have come forward to adopt four villages in the Himachal, where Art of Living's 5H programme will be implemented. Three villages have already been selected - MP Suresh Bhardwaj has chosen Aadarshnagar in district Solan, MP Ramswaroop has chosen Hidimba in district Kullu, and MP Anurag Thakur has chosen Dehla village in district Una. MP Shanta Kumar will choose a village from Kangra district.

Himachal Pradesh's State



**Working with govt**

YLTP coordinator Puneet Kapoor, and Art of Living teachers Sukant Pal Chauhan and Yogendra met the MPs and discussed the plan of action to make every adopted village an Aadarsh village. The MPs have assured to extend the required help and fulfil the needs of the volunteers.

## Salesman becomes film director after Art of Living

Meenakshi Chauhan 09418483822

Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh: Yoga Venkatesh worked as a salesman in Hyderabad but nurtured a strong desire to become a film director. After working as a salesman for 10 years until 2008, he finally took the plunge into show business. But to fulfil his dream, he had to work hard. He said, "I didn't have any of the four necessary things to excel in the field - qualification, confidence, social circles or money. These are the criteria for a person to succeed in the film field, but I had only the desire."

Still, he took up a film career and soon became an assistant director, and then a director. "All this happened after 2008 when I joined Art of Living programme in Hyderabad and practised the Sudarshan Kriya taught there regularly. After three months, I quit the job and started my career in a new direction. I directed Telugu movies with great clarity of mind, which I lacked earlier."

With the inspiration of Sri Sri, Venkatesh released a DVD



**Service through art: Cd cover of one of the project, 'Annadata Sukhibhava' released by Yoga Venkatesh**

comprising six songs that inspired people to vote for a better future of India. Out of these, two songs were approved by the State government of Andhra Pradesh to create awareness among the masses to exercise their right to vote.

In 2014, he released another new CD titled, 'Anna Datta Sukhi Bhawa' which highlighted the importance of chemical-free farming. "This is Sri Sri's main concern and I too wanted to contribute to his vision of prosperous and hap-

py farmer and a healthy society."

The video shows a modern village that is well equipped with a pharmacy and a wine shop, which we could hardly find in the early days. He also showed that the importance of Ayurveda is declining and that desi cows are disappearing from village courtyards. This gives an important message that desi cows and organic farming will help solve health issues.

Having grown up as a native of Dammannavaripalem in Guntur district of Telangana,

Venkatesh has observed village life closely and understands the local problems very well. He has a special love for villages, farmers and the next generation of villagers who are unable to get quality education like their urban counterparts. He started a library in Maapalla village of Nizamabad exclusively for students, which now has more than 1,000 books. Though he has studied only up to matriculation, he says, "Now I have the confidence to write a script or an article within minutes. Earlier, I could hardly think of writing or even reading a newspaper."

As a successful salesman for 10 years, he wanted to put it down in writing. Based on his experiences, he wrote a book in Telugu, 'Sales super star', which was published and distributed by RS Brothers among the company's employees. The book deals with the relationship of a salesman with a customer, which reflects his own personality, and chronicles his personal experiences.

Venkatesh Yoga: 09291531148

## Chikmagalur farmers rejoice as water level goes up due to Vedavati project

Mallapa D. Belange 9900941479

Chikmagalore, Karnataka: The first phase of the Vedavati River rejuvenation project is underway, and within a month bore wells have enough water to irrigate the surrounding farms again. The water level, which was about 1000ft below ground level, has gone up after the construction of recharge wells. Water is now available at just 250-300ft below ground level.

Some of the recently dug bore wells hit the water table at 110 ft. The first phase of rejuvenation is complete, and 810 works have been completed, including the construction of injection wells and bore wells, as well as recharging of wells, ponds and lakes. Dried up water sources



**(I) Water filled in Boulders check (II) Water filled in injection well (III) Water pond**



and wells were also cleaned up. The second phase of the project is scheduled to start soon, and there are about 1620 more works to be completed. Residents of the 52 villages of Lakya Hobli have joined hands with the organization to make this project a success, said Nagaraj, the project coordinator.

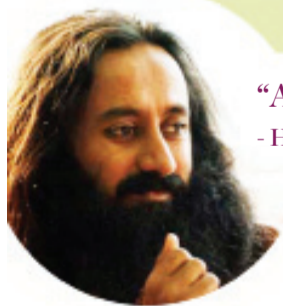
Small streams feeding the Vedavati, a tributary of the Tungabhadra, flow from a height of 1471

meters above sea level, at the initial stage. Expanding its base, the Vedavati crosses Chitradurga and joins the Tungabhadra in Andhra Pradesh. Lakya Hobli spreads over an area of 377.52 sq. Km., and is good for storing water.

Water recharge wells contain 40 mm of jelly and charcoal layers that help in filtration of water. The boulders help easy percolation of water into the ground. An injection well is fitted with

concrete holes which help water to percolate easily. Art of Living volunteers and the local government have joined hands for the Vedavati river rejuvenation project, which comes under the MNREGA scheme. About 1,555 people are active participants, and the project is providing not only water to the inhabitants but also employment.

Project coordinator: Nagaraj, 9611808086



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