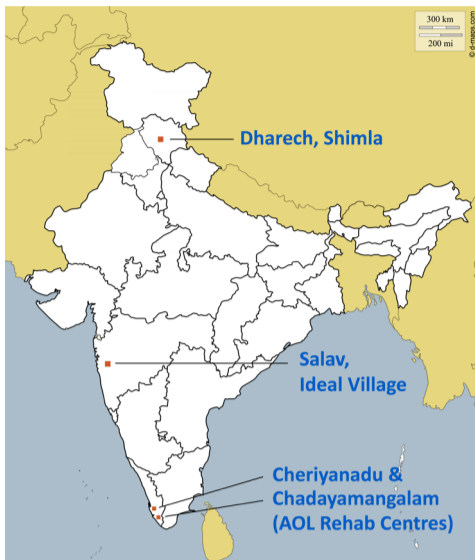


September 2014



In Maharashtra, Art of Living shows ideal villages are possible

Salav has zero crime, no alcohol, everyone has jobs, harmony reigns

Gajanan Navatre 09970260145

Satara, Maharashtra: An ideal village is one that is free of alcohol and drugs, wherein everyone is employed, where there are no disputes and women are respected, and every farmer cultivates organic products, according to Art of Living teacher Shiv Raj Kadam (09860336770).

The above model has been followed in Salav village, Satara district, Maharashtra. This village was rehabilitated after the construction of water dam near Naigaon in 2004. Villagers had only nine hectares of cultivated land and the village lacked the resources to fulfill their basic needs. Several residents migrated to the neighbouring villages in search of work. The youth soon became addicted to alcohol and smoking.

In 2008, teachers Shiv Raj Kadam, Sachin Bargh and Mahadev Abhang visited the village along with their team and conducted 10 Nav Chetna Shibir (free programmes). Free medical camps were organised to solve health issues, and more than 200 mango saplings were planted to make the environment disease-free.

Shivraj Kadam said village sarpanch Prakash Solkar took active part in the Art of Living workshop. After benefitting from the programme, he ensured that these programmes were conducted on a regular basis to reach out to different age groups. The youth were trained in different skills like the making of essence sticks and preparing medicines with cow urine. This



Panchayat meeting: Salav's success is due to collective effort



"The village is a shining example of peaceful living because the local police station has not filed a single case for the past two years. Even if any dispute arises, it gets settled at the panchayat level, without the need for registration at the police station, he said."

- Sandeep Shigate, Additional Sub-inspector of Police

helped them earn a monthly income of 18,000 to 20,000 per month. These small scale industries have helped the villagers to become self-sufficient and financially independent. Now many more youngsters from the village are engaged in such work and are earning a comfortable livelihood.

Volunteers have helped create awareness on hygiene and environmental issues in the village, and have emphasised on the use of smokeless stoves for cooking. The organisation distributed 90 stoves in the village, and Art of Living bore 70 percent of the expenses.

After the awareness of health and hygiene spread across the village, new toilets were built in almost every house. People from all the age groups have enrolled in several Art of Living programmes.

Regarding his plans for the village in future, Shivraj Kadam said gober gas plants will soon be set up across the village. To establish the plant, 100 residents have come forward to buy 1000 cows. Once it starts production, it will provide electricity to the village and its surrounding areas.

Prakash Kadam said the village would soon become self-reliant and

self-sufficient, if this ambitious plan is implemented.

The village sarpanch was of the opinion that several youth could overcome their addictions with a little effort. The village is now free of alcohol shops, he said. There is no demand for dowry in any of the marriages conducted in the village, he added.

The village is a shining example of peaceful living because the local police station has not registered a single case for the past two years, said Additional Sub-inspector of Police Sandeep Shigate. Even if any dispute arises, it gets settled at the panchayat level, without the need for getting it registered at the police station, he said.

Salav village is a proud recipient of several awards and honours – the Niramal Gram Puraskar in 2006, Mahatma Gandhi Tatamukta Award and the Aadarsh Sarpanch Award in 2007, and the Sant Gadge Baba Gram Swachhta Abhimaan Taluka Pratham Kramank. In 2010, an Art of Living office was set up here and in 2012 the village won the Paryavaran Vikaasrattan award. A recipient of the Ghankachra Vyavasthapan award in 2013, the village is now known as Guru Gram (Village of the Master).

The Art of Living teachers help in conducting regular activities and workshops. Somnath Aaba Sonvane, Sachin Bargh, Abhang Sar, Sau Sindhu Barkade, Prakash Raaskar, Rajendra Bhilare, Aanand Bhaiya, Nandkumar Taaru along with Art of Living teacher Shivraj Kadam are working towards the success of its programmes.

Reformed alcoholic sets off transformation

Meenakshi Chauhan 09418483822

Shimla, Himachal Pradesh: Ramlok Sharma (09816140278) helped more than 200 people belonging to three panchayats (Dharech, Tiyali, Satog) of Theog, District Shimla to get rid of alcohol and other addictions after attending Art of Living workshops. The doctor had given him only three months to live, but it's more than eight years now. He has become a role model for others.



Ramlok (second from right in front row) & Sukant Pal Chauhan (middle at second row) with volunteers

A Government school teacher, his wife Krishna had lost all hopes to get her husband back as he was an alcoholic. Amit Sharma, the couple's eldest son is now in college and still remembers the moments of fury when his father used to come home during midnight and start asking tables. He still remembers how his mother stood helpless with tears in her eyes.

After attending the workshops, he practiced the techniques taught there and soon got back his physical and emotional strength. Now he has started working in his farm.

Under the guidance of Sukant Pal Chauhan (Art of Living teacher) volunteers cleaned the premises of the village deity's temple and helped construct a satsang and community hall. This was followed by an awareness campaign to make the area alcohol-free. More than 300 people participated in another campaign that encouraged them to switch to Ayurveda from Allopathy, which has several side effects.

Youngsters are now being encouraged to undergo Art of Living programs. Likewise, a team of more than 50 volunteers are striving to make the panchayat free of drugs and chemicals. A workshop on chemical-free farming was conducted in the village, and around 15 farmers subsequently adopted organic methods of cultivation.

Ramsaran, a school teacher, followed Ramlok's example and quit his habit of taking hashish. Ramlok has encouraged his other companions as well, and at least 200 people have already quit their bad habits.

Art of Living rehab centres bring down Kerala's alcoholism

750 alcoholics find new lives; thousands of students suggest solutions

Arpit Vyas & Vishnu Manoharan
09632973883

Kerala: Art of Living de-addiction centres have been started in Kollam and Alleppey, where more than 750 people have been rehabilitated so far. Rehabilitating one person is like saving a whole family, said Ramachandran Kezhakuttayil (9447432401), chairman of Kerala de addiction programmes.

The centres have helped not only rehabilitate addicts but also taught them meditation, pranayama, yoga, music and dance, followed by counselling. Personality development and communication skills classes were also conducted for the participants during the eight-day program.

One of the leading English dailies recently reported that 74 percent of children are using tobacco. About 40 lakh individuals of the total population are inclined towards different intoxicants such as alcohol, tobacco, Ganja, over The Counter drugs,



V M Sudheeran, Congress leader, inaugurating the function at Kollam district

aritham (cultivated in Kerala), whiteners, smoking, snake poison (which can give a high for six days).

For the first time, Ayurvedic medicines were used to treat people and help them overcome addictions. This was a unique experiment which proved to be very effective.

An essay competition was organised on 25 August, in which 30,000 children from more than 1,400 schools participated. The topic was 'Drug abuse – a social threat, and its

solution,' which was intended to raise their voice against drug abuse. Medals were awarded for the best entries.

Likewise, volunteers of Pad Yatra (foot march) created awareness around colleges and educational institutions, as a result of which students pledged to quit different types of addiction.

A signature campaign was held on June 26 (International Day against Drug Abuse) in colleges. This was the second drive to request the Government of Kerala to implement a complete ban of alcohol in the state.

Thousands of pamphlets highlighting health problems caused by drug abuse were also distributed, especially to those who queued up at alcohol shops. Some of the addicts, after reading the pamphlets, underwent a change of mind and left the queue.

On Independence Day, August 15, 2014, protest marches and Pad Yatra were conducted throughout Kerala. Eminent personalities from the fields of politics, education and culture par-

ticipated. (Shri. V.M. Sudheeran KPCC president, Mr. O. Rajagopal, Ex-Central Minister, Mr. Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan, Minister for Transport & Forest, Kumari Jayalakshmi, Minister for Youth Affairs, Mr. P.R. Nathan, well-known writer, Justice Sreedevi, Puthussery Ramachandran, Devan, filmstar, took part in the march.)

This is a great encouragement for our project, said Oomen Chandi, Chief Minister, who announced the new policy on alcohol. The policy is aimed at creating a 'Madya Rahitha Keralam' (Alcohol-free Kerala) and Lari Vimuktha Keralam (Drug-free Kerala). The 418 bars which were closed remain closed even today. Permission has been granted to only five star hotels to keep their bars open from April 2015. The government aims to close down 10 percent of the state's outlets in a phased manner.

"AoL has helped the government implement its policy throughout Kerala" Said Adv Sriprakash (09447433672), project coordinator.

Wells improve wellness of villagers in Valsad

Dilip Kumar Kohli 09535497006

Gujarat: The life of village women in Valsad district of Gujarat has become much easier now, thanks to the enterprising work of Art of Living Yuvacharyas and project Coordinator Prakash Golwala (09909474892). The construction of 17 water wells has been completed and hundreds of villagers now need not walk 3-7 kilometers to fetch water for daily use.

Yuvacharya Sanjay Chaudry has helped the village to have its own bore wells, and women have more time on hands to take care of their children. Some children could not go to school as they had to take care of their younger siblings while the mother was out to fetch water. But now children have plenty of time for study.

People can also grow more crops by watering their fields, said Bhavesh Patel, Art of Living Yuvacharya.

Art of Living volunteers have found some donors to buy raw materials to build a water tank, on the edge of a natural water source. Earlier, the water used to get dirty and muddy.



One of the wells constructed at Valsad by volunteers

Villagers have come forward to construct wells with good material, to facilitate storage of more water and make it cleaner. They contributed free labour towards construction, and now hundreds of families have enough water.

Very Kuwa or surface water well is not deep enough to extract ground water. But it stores rain water and can be 10-15 feet deep. Due to this, its construction cost is less. It can store

water for drinking as well as for daily use.

The success rate of these wells is 100 percent because even if it fails to find ground water, it can store rain water.

With the easy availability of clean drinking water, families have now started cultivating vegetables. "The life of the villagers has improved overall," says Changan Bhai Baraf, a resident of the village.

Chikamagalur goes organic



To the future Project Director Nagaraj (09611808086) Gangoli addressing Volunteers at Chickmangalur

Chickmangalur: The purchase of 20 Gir cows has paved the way for a prosperous and healthy society. The Sri Sri Krushi Vigyan Sahakar sangha was formed in Lakya Hoballi at Chickmangalur district with 1550 members. The next plan of action was discussed for 10 panchayats of Lakhya Hoballi in the local sangha, which comprises 1550 members.

Every member will contribute

some money to the group, and that money will go into the development of different industries in some of the chosen villages. Projects like gobar gas plant, ghee industry, vegetable packing and coconut industry are being planned. Farmers growing organic products will also get a better market to sell their products.

Malappa D. Belamge 09900941479

Towards safe disposal of garbage In Kumbhari

Binaya Kumar Sahoo

Kalahandi, Odissa: The spirit of volunteerism came alive in Kumbhari of Kalahandi district when Art of Living volunteers cleaned the village and worked towards safe disposal of garbage on 17 September.

This kind of work is done every week in almost every area. After seva, they plan to work continuously not only in their area but also abroad.

Batis Sunani, 32, a volunteer, said, "I am very happy to be a part of this." Another volunteer Pabitrara, 23, said the village school and its surroundings were full of garbage. "After this cleaning drive, it has become much better."

Social media helps save lives

Rajesh Kundu 07762827109

Ranchi Jharkhand: It takes just 20 minutes to donate blood and this young man does not even wait to receive a thanks. Akhilesh (09534185335), a 24-year-old student and a volunteer of the Art of Living, has given life to more than 50 people since 2009. He has donated blood more than 13 times, to give a fresh lease of life to many, and is working hard to raise awareness among people to be a volunteer donor.

As soon as the need for blood arises, this group spreads the message to find the donor. Social media has been



Fresh lease of life in 20 minutes: Yuvacharya Akhilesh

used extensively to spread the word. His main concern is to have donors of unique blood groups and always keeps in touch to provide it immediately.

Akhilesh knows the importance of his initiative. It only takes twenty minutes, and it could save a life. It is not money that we are dealing with, it is blood. He knows it is going to save someone's life. He has become a source of inspiration to many.

Besides this, he collects donation from devotees to help victims of natural calamities, and helps them with their requirements. His intention in future is to have a group at the national level so that blood can be provided to each and every one throughout the country. This could be a wonderful solution to combat the misuse of blood banks created by donation camps.

Outreach to flood victims



Rishikesh, Uttarakhand: Art of Living, Rishikesh, distributed food items and other daily items to meet the basic necessities of the flood victims of Biragadh. Around 21 affected families benefited from this and they were dropped off by a helicopter. The sudden calamity was traumatizing for many victims. Manjit Kaur (08054510525) and team of volunteers taught them meditation and pranayama which helped the affected to stay calm.

The heavy rains were a result of clouds clashing with each other. Though most people are safe, several from Biragadh and 15 other villages have become a victim of this flood.

Sanjivani Warkade 09822184791

Educating slum kids in Chennai

Gurucharan Ambreshvar 09566328604

Chennai: Yuvacharyas are becoming a beacon of light for the children of Semmancheri and Pattinampakkam. They are now helping children belonging to the low income group in Tamil Nadu to excel in studies.

Students from three slums are benefiting from the tuitions provided by Yuvacharyas coordinated by Rajesh (07402408405). These areas are comparatively low in education standards, and the Yuvacharyas provide them guidance and support. The aim is to mould a power-packed new generation from these slums.

Yuvacharyas are planning to widen their service area to more slums in Chennai gradually. Their next aim is to make the students computer literate. Plans are on the anvil to provide them counselling on quality computer courses for more effective learning. They are conducting 3-4 Navachetana Sibirs in a week with more than 70 participants to educate these children.

Green drive on barren land



Sangli, Maharashtra: Mayni villagers celebrated Guru Purnima on 19 July this year with a difference. A happiness programme was organized by Art of Living Yuvacharya Sandip Garware, which included planting of saplings. Villagers who participated in this programme decided to grow trees near Prathamik Arogya Kendra, Mayni, on a barren land.

Saplings of trees and flowering plants were planted with great enthusiasm. Fruit trees like mango, chiku, Ramfal and Sitafal, and flowering plants like mogra and sadafuli were planted during the programme.

Sandeep Garware (09420627519) who initiated this drive included Shubham Waydande, Aparna Zhagade, Amit Thombare, Janardan Kawade and Bhagyashri Patil. Totally 35 saplings were planted, and Yuvacharyas took the responsibility to take care of all the plants.

Gauri Shitole 07030759157

Andhra Pradesh opens the door to proper sanitation

Arunakumari 09985628659

Andhrapradesh: A software engineer constructing toilets in the villages of Andhra Pradesh is a rare sight; yet that is exactly what you will find Sudhakar Veeravalli doing. Armed with a Master's Degree in Computer Engineering from the University of Texas, Sudhakar (09533780640) quit his job in the U.S. at the age of 38 to work with the Art of Living.

For the last four years, Sudhakar's aim has been to provide proper sanitation as the Director of the 'Back to the Roots' (BTTR) Project. Under this project, toilets are being constructed across Andhra Pradesh, the last one being in Totlavallur.

Kala Alagappan from Karnataka has been training youth leaders in

rural India under the Art of Living programs. Flushing out the unsanitary practice of defecating in the open, Kala has played an instrumental role in making the villagers take a step towards better health practices. All the houses in Totlavallur are huts with no provision for toilets. Kala started a nagara sankeertana (the practices of walking and singing bhajans) to connect with the locals. Kala visited each home and emphasised the necessity of health and hygiene. She found that most women were facing health issues because they avoided stepping out of their homes till sunset.

The Government's scheme covers the cost of building toilets, but the money is released only after construction. To breathe life into the

program, Kala conducted Nav Chetana Sibirs' (free Art of Living rural programs) for the villagers.

Many Government officials expressed their interest to learn these techniques. This led to a series of Art of Living Happiness programs where numerous officers from the agricultural, engineering, and rural development departments learnt meditation and Sudarshan Kriya (Art of Living breathing technique). Along with good health and a renewed sense of community welfare, the dream of 20 toilets came true.

Kala selected the beneficiaries, drew up a plan in accordance with Government standards - toilets with GI sheet roofs. Hurdles like land and labour issues, finance, conventional thinking, and loss of time did not

deter the team from completing the project. On 23 July 2014, 20 toilets were inaugurated for the residents of Totlavallur amid a festive atmosphere.

The families that owned the brand new toilets were taught how to keep them clean and also provided with the materials for proper maintenance. This initiative has forced the field officers to get funds sanctioned from the Government for more toilets. Kala is surveying the area to assess the number of toilets required, which are estimated to be around 500.

The cost is to be shared between the Government and the villagers. KCP has offered initial investment for construction which shall be reimbursed by the Government on project completion.



Healthcare: Around 200 villagers of Khattarmal, Uttarakhand, got medicines from free healthcamp. AOL teacher Sumit Bohra (09412910094) organised this camp and created awareness among the villagers on June, 20
Sanjiwani Warkade

160 toilets built in Karnataka

Malappa D. Belmage 09900941479

Chickmagalur, Karnataka: Under the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, 160 toilets were built in Lakhyahobali, Chickmagalur. Yuvacharyas conducted workshops on health and hygiene, and motivated the villagers to construct toilets in their homes.

"After the construction of toilets, our lives have become easier. We were not aware of this earlier. It has improved

our living standards and we feel proud when our relatives visit us. It used to be an awkward situation earlier, when we did not have a toilet," said K.M Kantaraj Aras.

"Initially, villagers were not ready to construct toilets as they were comfortable in using the open fields. It was difficult to convince them," said Sidling Shetty (09743317998), Project Coordinator. Plans are on the anvil to construct more than 4000 toilets.



Health & Hygiene New toilets in Lakhya hobali

Trained rural managers for village transformation

Dilip Kumar Kohli 09535497006

Bangalore: To carry on social development work with effectiveness, accountability and sustainability, and create a strong force of Rural Managers, the Rural Managers Training Program (RMTP) was started on 22 September, 2014. This will provide a strong foundation for social work in the villages of India, and work towards better education, agriculture and water conservation apart from livelihood generation, women empowerment and child protection,

said Deepak Sharma, one of the project coordinator.

This 12-day programme is now on in Bangalore, at the international Art of Living centre, and 16 leaders are part of it. Somanth Sonawana from Maharashtra said, "The programme will help us in working in collaboration with the government as well as non-government organisations. We are already working towards the development of the villages, and we will be able to do this with a professional approach."



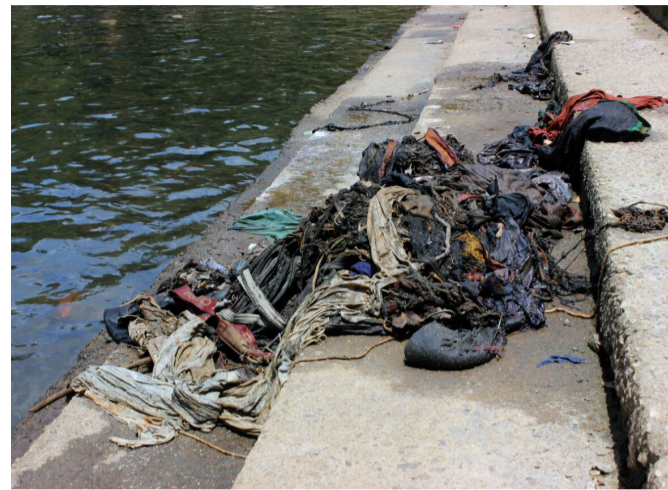
Getting equipped: Rural managers on completion of training

Pamba cleaning 6th phase: 6 tonnes of muck removed

Unnikrishnan Vijayan pillai
09745925116

Sabarimala, Kerala: The sixth phase of Pamba River cleaning got to a great start on 21 September, 2014 with 65 volunteers and pilgrims taking part. About two truckloads of muck was removed this time.

In April, cleaning was taken up in full swing and it has been repeated every month ever since. Pradeesh, a volunteer, said the waters looked black initially but now the colour has changed. He says "This shows that the water is cleaner now. It gives us immense joy, and I feel lucky to be part of this cleaning process. I'm proud that I'm one of the hundreds of volunteers who have worked to-



Misplaced faith : Clothes taken out from the Pamba

wards this."

To create awareness among the residents of the four sur-

rounding villages, Navchetna shivirs were conducted, which emphasised on keeping the river

clean. Vava Suresh, Art of Living teacher, is an active member of the cleaning committee. Till now, more than 1300 people have been a part of these programmes.

About 1000 volunteers have been educating the pilgrims against dumping clothes in the river, which is regarded as a ritual here. Pilgrims believe that this will bring them some spiritual merit. People now have some awareness, said Vinod R Nair, (09447688010) Project Coordinator.

The next big step is to create awareness through the Guru Swamis (pilgrims who have visited Sabarimala 18 times) of neighbouring states as most of the pilgrims visit these Gurus. If the information is passed on, it will be more effective, added Vinod.

Breath of fresh air for inmates

More than 12000 prisoners in Jharkhand benefitted

Rajesh Kundu 07762827109

Jharkhand: In past five years, teachers from the Art of Living have conducted 275 Prison Smart Courses, and more than 12,000 prisoners from 36 prisons of Jharkhand have benefitted from it under the cordination of Brijesh Bahadur Singh (09431362406).

Under the programme, physical exercises, yoga, pranayama and meditation are taught to the prisoners, which help them to deal with mental and emotional stress. It initiates the prisoners to think positively and lead a normal and happy life after stepping out of jail, said an official of Late-



Renewing lives: Prisoners undergoing art of living programmes at Chatra Jail

har jail.

Madan Bhaiya, one of the participants of the Prison Smart Course said, "I was very unhappy and depressed. I kept thinking of the past and was worried about the future. But after following the techniques taught in the programme, I feel very light and way

better. I'm very optimistic and positive about the future."

Ashwni Chaube, a 22-year-old student, who is now in Later jail for attacking the Deputy Commissioner of Police, said the past six months have transformed him. "I learnt to control anger and handle negative emo-

tions, techniques taught here helped in releasing all my stress and aggression." He has decided to concentrate on his career seriously and wants to help other youngsters to deal with such anxiety. He intends to be useful to the society by helping people overcome stress.

Flood victims demand Govt help



Kishor Khole & farmers with Tahsildar of Shahatpur. (Inset, Deputy CM of Maharashtra, receiving the letter)

Sanjiwani Warkade 09822184791

Amaravati, Maharashtra: The flooding of Poorna River has affected several lives but the villagers are limping back to normalcy, said Yuvacharya Kishor Khole (09921276828). All the crops have been destroyed completely, and these families have no other sources of income. Only the government has to come forward and help the villagers, he said.

"If the situation is brought to the notice of the central and state governments, villagers will get some help," he thought. So he started a signature drive. He wrote a letter to the government about the prevailing situation

in these areas and convinced all the villagers to sign the letter. The letter was sent to the collector and to the Agriculture Minister, and then placed before the Cabinet of Ministers.

The drive started from Aagar, and now covers Gaandhigram, Vallabh Nagar, Ugawaa, Khekadi, Navthal, Nimba phaata, Antree, Ural, Morgaonsaadijan, Nimkardaa, Paaras, Baalapur, Batwaadi, Waadwgaon, Chachni, Sasti, Babhulgaon, Deulgaon, Haatalaa, Lonaagra, Haatrun, Kaaranja and Paatur.

Many yuvacharyas and villagers have now joined Kishorji's campaign of making these flood-affected villages self-reliant and prosperous.

Policemen learn stress management



Bikaner, Rajasthan: Rajasthan's Police Department took an initiative to enroll their staff members in Art of Living programmes. Serving as a police personnel is a tough job, and AOL programmes are designed to reduce stress levels while at work. Mahesh Sharma (09414196101) trained 850 police personnel who participated in the programme with great enthusiasm.

Anutosh Chatkar, Superintendent of Police of the area, had taken up the course and is now keen on spreading the word. Most of the participants were on the verge of their retirement, and this will help them to keep themselves busy. This will also help them to channelize their energy.

Kumlin Engtipi 08761823371

Reformed alcoholic works against farmer suicide

Touched 3000 lives through YLTP programs

Anil Tupe 08275278023

Maharashtra: Sharad, a resident of Jalana village, could study only up to matriculation. Though he enrolled for the ITI programme, he had to discontinue. He shifted to his brother's place but soon fell in bad company and got addicted to alcohol and tobacco. His life became worthless and aimless. His near and dear ones lost all hopes of his recovery and a bright future.

Sharad (09766338619) turned over a new leaf after his sister made him to join YLTP (Youth Leadership Training Programme), an Art of Living programme. Initially, he was reluctant to go there but he soon felt comfortable among many others like him. By the end of the programme, he realised that some change had come over him. He shed tears in front of Sri Sri's picture realising that someone was there to take care of him.

After completing the programme, he became actively involved with the Ashram at Bangalore. He served in various



Maharashtra Sharad with Guruji at event

departments like transportation, kitchen, and light and sound for four years. These four years transformed him and he had given up his addictions. He realised that he was capable of uplifting others.

Sharad was sent to Vidarbha, Maharashtra, where farmers were committing suicides due to failure of crops and heavy loans. He worked very hard for two years and taught at more than 300 Nav Chetna Shibirs (free programmes for villagers). These programmes strengthened the villagers emotionally and spiritually to deal with any situation. The number of suicides came down in these areas.

Sharad's tireless efforts were rewarded by the master who honoured him in a public event in Yavatmal. This honor uplifted him and motivated him to work even more. He became an Art of Living teacher in 2010.

Since then, he has taught more than 2000 youngsters in different areas of Marathwada, Maharashtra. The motivated youths are in turn doing a remarkable job in various places. Villages like Thokale in Beed district were awarded the Nirmal Gram Puraskar, and the Thokale School became Aadarsh School. About 70 percent of the population here has been trained under Happiness programmes and 60 Yuvacharyas are actively trying to transform the area.

Youngsters are now being encouraged to enroll themselves in Art of Living programmes. A team of more than 50 volunteers is striving to make the panchayat free of drugs and chemicals. A workshop on chemical-free farming was conducted, after which 15 farmers subsequently adopted organic cultivation.

Nilgiri tribal village lit up by solar power

24 houses in Kadamban Kombai see new light



Green tech for poor Above Kadamban Kombai villagers near the newly intalled solar panel. Right is a picture of batteries for solar installation

Gurucharan Ambreshvar
09566328604

Coimbatore, Tamilnadu: On 22 September, 2014, bright electric bulbs lit up 24 households in Kadamban Kombai, a remote village of Tamil Nadu. The families had to manage with only kerosene lamps till then. The villagers were thrilled to see the electric bulb burning in their homes and a 50-year-old man saw his dream of seeing light in his village come true.

Situated on the hills, the village has no roads and there is limited access to bus and other forms of transport. Public transport is available only six kilometers away from the village. For nearly 1.5 kilometers, there are no vehicles and this was a huge challenge that volunteers had to face. Yuvacharya Arul Murugan (09487592891), who wanted to set up solar lights in the village, found it difficult to bring the necessary equipment to the village.



After spending time in the midst of the villagers and interacting with them, Arul felt the need for change. With the help of the project coordinator Venkatesh, he finalised everything. As a result, villagers have seen light in their homes. Art of Living met the expenditure towards the equipment and also helped set up these lights. A few villagers were also trained to operate the systems.

Realize the joy of giving in seva

H H Sri Sri Ravishankar

Often, people who take responsibility do not pray, while those who pray do not take responsibility. Spirituality brings both together at the same time. This combination of prayer and responsibility has inspired millions across the world to a global phenomenon of caring, sharing and service.

Seva (Service) and spiritual practices go together. The urge to share increases, the deeper you go in to meditation. If you do some work for others, you gain

merit for yourself. Most intelligent businessmen will do seva because it brings them a lot of gain. If people are happy, they usually say they must have done some seva in the past. Conversely, if you are not happy, do seva and gain more merit. It is like adding to the bank balance. The more you give, the more strength will be given to you. The more we open ourselves, the more room we have for God to fill in us.

Serving purpose

It is tested and proven that when we make service our biggest



agenda in life, it eliminates fear, brings to focus in our life, purposefulness in action and long term joy. When we do seva, it

brings naturalness and human values back in society. It helps in building a society that is free from fear and depression.

I find that for young people, spirituality is all about bringing up the sharing quality in the Haves while enabling self-confidence in the Have-nots.

If you have the desire to serve and help others, you don't have to worry; your life is not a big responsibility for the divine, who can take care of you very well. Don't be worried about money so much. Be filled with love instead; Be filled with gratitude and get rid

of the fear in you by being in love.

The joy of giving

Seva always seems to give one a big kick. It is the most effective antidote to depression. The day you feel hopeless and horrible, just get out of your room and ask people, "What can I do for you?" The service you then do will change the tape in your mental deck to a song of joy. When you ask questions like "Why me?" or "What about me?"; you get depressed because the Universe does not always hand

you a straight answer.

Instead, do some breathing practices like the Sudarshan Kriya and maintain a couple of minutes of silence every day. It will flood your body and brain with Oxygen and enhance your power.

There are two types of joys. One is the joy of getting. The child says, "If I get something, I will be happy. If I get toy, I will be happy." This is the joy if a child. We are mostly stuck at this level and don't seem to grow beyond. But ahead of us is mature joy, the joy of giving.



Gurudev launches 'Seva times' with YLTP Media & Documentation Team During Yuvacharya's Refresher Meet (YRM) at Art of Living International Ashram, Bangalore on September 9, 2014

Seva Times

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