

Rivers Rise Again: The Art of Living's Journey of Rejuvenation

Category: Business

written by News Mall | September 27, 2025



A river never truly dies. Beneath cracked beds and parched banks, it waits – for rain, for care, for people to act. When communities come together with vision and dedication, rivers flow again, aquifers breathe, and fields turn green.



The desilting of the Mauda river benefitted 2,00,000+ people across several villages

At the centre of this movement is Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's vision – that caring for nature is caring for life

itself. Under his guidance, The Art of Living Social Projects has ignited one of India's largest people-led water revival initiatives. From Tamil Nadu's plains to Karnataka's highlands, from drought-hit Maharashtra to Uttar Pradesh's thirsty fields, rivers are being rejuvenated, empowering communities along the way.

Tamil Nadu: Naganadhi – A River Reborn

Once a dry scar across Vellore, the Naganadhi River was on the verge of being lost. Farmers watched crops wither, women walked miles for water, and villages faced scarcity. The Art of Living Social Projects, in collaboration with the district administration and under MGNREGA, launched a transformative project.

- Structures built: 354 recharge wells, 207 boulder checks
- Direct participation: 1,050 women
- Groundwater rise: 1 – 8 metres
- River flow: uninterrupted for over three years

The project revitalised agriculture, enabling three crops a year and strengthening local economies. Its success at Naganadhi motivated a larger movement: from the 1,050 women directly involved, over 44,000 women across 14 districts later participated in constructing 6,500+ recharge structures, turning water conservation into a community-wide initiative.

Recognition:

- PM Narendra Modi praised the initiative multiple times on Mann Ki Baat
- Vellore was awarded Best District in the Southern Region for River Revival (2019)
- The Governor of Tamil Nadu honoured Dr. Chandrashekhar

Kuppan

- TN Government recognised the Department of Rural Development and Panchayats; District Administration won three additional awards

Karnataka: A Tapestry of Rivers Revived

Across 12 districts and multiple basins, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's vision inspired the Antharjal Chetna / Jal Sanjeevini Project. Thousands of recharge structures restored groundwater and rejuvenated rivers.

- Recharge structures: 9,778
- Talukas with groundwater rise: 39+ (2019-2023)
- Rural youth trained: 1,500+

Rivers revitalised: Vedavathi, Kumudvathi, Krishna, Cauvery, Palar, Uttara Pinakini, Malaprabha, Tungabhadra

Case highlights:

- Kumudvathi River (Bengaluru Rural): 2,513 recharge structures and 86,000 saplings restored a 460 sq. km watershed
- Vedavathi River (Chikmagalur & Tumkur): Pilot project in 2013 expanded to a basin-wide rejuvenation with 17,224 recharge structures
- Palar River (Chintamani Taluk): 788 recharge structures and 40,000 saplings revived one of Karnataka's driest belts

These rivers are more than channels of water; they are veins of prosperity, sustaining agriculture, livestock, and communities.

Uttar Pradesh: Farmers Find Water Again

Rampur district, declared an 'overexploited zone' by the state groundwater authority, faced severe water scarcity. Wells ran dry, diesel pumps failed, and farmers struggled. Guided by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's vision, the Bhujal Shakti Project brought relief:

- Structures built: 351 recharge shafts, 122 ponds, 1 subsurface dyke across 88 villages

Groundwater levels gradually rose, pumps resumed operation, and farmers regained confidence. In Bundelkhand's Lalitpur district, a parallel initiative with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited constructed 175 recharge structures in the Gobind Sagar catchment, strengthening water resilience for drought-affected families.

Maharashtra: Transforming Water-Scarce Landscapes

Maharashtra has long faced severe water scarcity. Guided by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's vision, The Art of Living Social Projects initiated large-scale rejuvenation programmes, including Jal Jagruti Abhiyan, [Jalyukt Shivar Abhiyan 2.0](#), and JalTara. Since 2013, these efforts have:

- Revived 33 rivers, streams, and tributaries across 27 districts
- Built 57,000+ recharge structures
- Desilted 29 crore cubic metres of riverbeds and canals (over 1,383 km across 19 districts)
- Planted 7.28 lakh trees
- Benefited 2,000,000+ people. The desilting of the Mauda river alone benefitted over 2,00,000 villagers.

Landmark projects:

- **Mauda (Nagpur District):** In partnership with NTPC Limited, 29 micro-watersheds covering 150 villages and 29,000 hectares transformed a water-stressed region into a water-surplus one. Awarded the Water Sustainability Award 2021-22 by UNDP, TERI, and India's Ministry of Water Resources
- **JalTara Project (Jalna District):** 20,000 recharge pits raised groundwater by 14 feet, increased crop yield by 42%, and eliminated waterlogging. Programme scaled to 80 villages with 25,000 additional structures

Recognition and Ripples

The river revival efforts have gained national recognition:

- PM Narendra Modi praised the 44,000 women who led Naganadhi's revival on Mann Ki Baat
- The Governor of Tamil Nadu honoured Dr. Chandrashekhar Kuppan
- The Jal Shakti Ministry awarded the initiative twice on National Water Day
- Universities and independent researchers continue to validate project impact

When Rivers Rise, Life Rises

River revival is never just about water. It is about farmers planting again, children drinking clean water, women finding dignity through leadership, and youth discovering purpose in conservation.

When we heal rivers, we heal ourselves. When rivers rise, life is rejuvenated.

About The Art of Living Social Projects

The Art of Living, a non-profit, educational, and humanitarian

organisation founded in 1981 by the world-renowned spiritual leader and humanitarian Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, is committed to addressing India's pressing water challenges. Through its large-scale River Rejuvenation Projects, the organisation works to mitigate water scarcity by restoring rivers, reviving ecosystems, and improving the quality of life for communities across the country. Get involved, donate now: [NGO for Water Conservation in India, Top NGO in India for Social Projects.](#)

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