

The Art of Living's Powerful Water Warriors Are Rewriting India's Future

Category: Business

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India, the land where rivers once sang through the seasons, is now grappling with a hard truth: water scarcity is no longer a distant threat – it's here. From villages to districts, swathes of the country are grappling with dangerously low groundwater levels. Rivers that once flowed year round are reduced to trickles or memories. Floods and droughts now alternate like a grim cycle, damaging crops, displacing communities, and threatening food security.



JalTara under construction – a low-cost, scalable solution for Indias groundwater crisis

Even with the monsoons sweeping across the land, only 20% of our water needs are met by rainfall and surface water. The remaining 80% – for drinking, cooking, farming – comes from beneath our feet: groundwater. But for over two decades now, India's aquifers have been draining faster than they can refill.

So where do we go from here

A Vision Rooted in Nature, Powered by People

Under the guidance of spiritual leader and humanitarian Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, The Art of Living Social Projects has stepped up with not just hope – but action. Action that is deeply rooted in ecology, powered by community, and backed by cutting-edge science.

The organisation's mission is bold: to make India water-positive. And the results, even in just a few years, are nothing short of transformational.

With 72 rivers/streams and tributaries rejuvenated and

1,05,050+ groundwater recharge structures built across 8 states – including Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Haryana, and Madhya Pradesh – this is no small scale effort. It's a nationwide movement, and it's changing lives.

What's the Secret Tailored, Scalable, Local Solutions

Every drop of water saved starts with understanding the land. That's why The Art of Living's Water Conservation team is made up of experts – retired ISRO scientists, hydrologists, geologists, civil engineers, and IT professionals – who have spent years studying the terrain.

Using geo-informatics, GIS mapping, and remote sensing, they design region-specific models that treat both the area and the drainage lines. The strategy is simple yet powerful: slow down the rainwater, let it sink, not run away.

Recharge structures like check dams, contour trenches, and recharge pits help retain water, increase soil moisture, prevent erosion, and refill aquifers naturally. The base flow of rivers is sustained, turning seasonal streams into perennial ones.

And the impact Across multiple states, groundwater levels have seen dramatic improvement. In Vellore, Tamil Nadu, for instance, the water table rose by 12 feet – verified by the state's Water Supply and Drainage Board.

JalTara: A Game Changer in Farmers' Fields

Perhaps the most groundbreaking initiative is JalTara, a flagship project of The Art of Living Social Projects. The idea is ingeniously simple: dig a small recharge pit at the lowest point of each farm plot and flank it with two fruit-bearing trees.

This pit acts like a natural funnel – directing rainwater past

the impermeable topsoil and deep into the aquifers. In just six months, JalTara can turn struggling farms into thriving fields.

Sulabai Chavhal, a farmer from Jalna, Maharashtra, is just one among thousands of success stories. *“Earlier, I barely harvested a single bag of grains,” he says. “Now, my godown is full.”*



Ramchandra Mandale of Shirur saw water return and yields rise, thanks to The Art of Living

Ramchandra Mandale, a farmer from Shirur, shares a similar transformation. He recalls that a population of 3,000 had to manage with only one barrel of water per week until The Art of Living Social Projects intervened.

The stats also speak volumes: Water tables are up by 14 feet, crop yields up by 42%, waterlogging down by 100%, farmer income up by 120%, year-round employment up by 88%. With a 100% success rate, JalTara is now set to scale up to 5 lakh structures across 1 lakh villages in the next five years.

Not Just Water, Hope is Flowing Back

This isn't just about water. It's about restoring balance – to nature, to rural economies, to people's lives. When water

returns, so does biodiversity, fertility, and livelihood. Farmers grow more. Women walk less. Children attend school. Communities thrive.

Contributing significantly to this revival is The Art of Living's 4R approach – a holistic model addressing water challenges from every angle. 'Reduce' empowers youth through the Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP), equipping them to raise awareness and inspire communities to reduce water waste through mindful usage. 'Reuse' taps into Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) to treat wastewater for daily and agricultural needs. 'Recharge' uses terrain-sensitive water structures to replenish groundwater, while 'Recycle' employs natural methods like bioremediation and phytoremediation to restore polluted water bodies. Together, these four strategies form a replicable, scalable solution to India's water crisis.

Achievements are current till August 2025, the count continues:

1,74,52+ Crores worth of water conserved

3,45,00,000+ People empowered

72 Rivers/streams and tributaries being rejuvenated across **8** States

1,05,050+ Recharge structures constructed

2,90,64,668+ Cubic metres desilted

7,00,000+ Trees planted along river basins in River Rejuvenation Projects

As Dr. K. Satyagopal, former Chairman of Tamil Nadu Water Resources Corporation, puts it: *"The Art of Living's ability to mobilise communities – especially women – has been the cornerstone of its success. It shows what can happen when the government and citizens work hand-in-hand."*

And that may be the most powerful takeaway: this isn't just one organisation doing good work. It's a blueprint – scalable, science-backed, and people-powered – for every village, district, and state. The results are already visible: as the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) reports, several once “**critical**” regions now have “safe” water levels thanks to these interventions.

Yet the journey is far from over. India's water future still hangs in the balance – but with committed action and community-led leadership, The Art of Living Social Projects has shown us not just what's possible, but what's already underway.

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 humanitarian and spiritual leader Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. The organisation works closely with the Government of India and Corporate Entities to relieve the country from water scarcity through various water conservation projects.

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