



HIS HOLINESS  
SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

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Uniting the World into a Global Family



## BIOGRAPHY



- ◆ Born in 1956 in southern India.
  - ◆ Often found deep in meditation as a child. At the age of four, astonishes his teachers by reciting the Bhagavad Gita, an ancient Sanskrit scripture.
  - ◆ Starts lessons with his first teacher, Pandit Sudhakar Chaturvedi, a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi.
  - ◆ Becomes a scholar in Vedic literature and obtains an advanced degree in modern science by the age of 17 from St. Joseph's College, University of Bangalore.
  - ◆ In his late teens and early twenties delivers lectures on Vedic Sciences and Literature all over the world on invitation from the Maharishi Europe Research University (MERU) between 1978-81.
  - ◆ In 1981, establishes the Art of Living.
  - ◆ In 1982, cognizes the Sudarshan Kriya.
- Conferred with:**
- ◆ Doctor of Literature Honoris Causa, Kuvempu University, India, 2004
  - ◆ Doctor of Philosophy (Holistic Medicine) Honoris Causa, Open International University for Complementary Medicine, Sri Lanka, 2006
  - ◆ Doctor of Science Honoris Causa, Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, India, 2007
  - ◆ Doctor of Letters Honoris Causa, Maharaja Sayajirao University, India, 2007
  - ◆ Doctor of Letters Honoris Causa, Nagarjuna University, India, 2008

His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar is a universally revered spiritual and humanitarian leader. His vision of a violence-free, stress-free society through the reawakening of human values has inspired millions to broaden their spheres of responsibility and work towards the betterment of the world.

Sri Sri is a multi-faceted social activist whose initiatives include conflict resolution, disaster and trauma relief, poverty alleviation, empowerment of women, prisoner rehabilitation, education for all and campaigns against female foeticide and child labour. He is engaged in peace negotiations and counselling in conflict zones around the world. His expertise in bringing opposing parties to the negotiating table in areas such as Sri Lanka, Iraq, the Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Kashmir and Bihar is widely acknowledged.

In 1981, Sri Sri established the Art of Living, an educational and humanitarian Non-Governmental Organisation that works in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. Present in over 140 countries, it formulates and implements lasting solutions to conflicts and issues faced by individuals, communities and nations. In 1997, Sri Sri founded the International Association for Human Values (IAHV) to foster human values and lead sustainable development projects.

Sri Sri has reached out to an estimated 300 million people worldwide through personal interactions, public events, teachings, the Art of Living workshops and humanitarian initiatives. Not since Mahatma Gandhi has one person united people of different traditions and faiths into a spiritual communion across the length and breadth of India. Amongst various threats to India by the misguided Naxalite and Jehadi forces there is one name that emerges as a universally accepted ambassador of peace. To the Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Dalits, Sikhs and the minorities alike, Sri Sri is the only Hindu spiritual leader in whom people have reposed faith and confidence.

He has brought to the masses ancient practices which were traditionally kept exclusive, and has designed many self-development techniques which can easily be integrated into daily life to calm the mind and instil confidence and enthusiasm. These techniques have helped thousands overcome depression and violent and suicidal tendencies. One of Sri Sri's most unique offerings to the world is the Sudarshan Kriya, a powerful breathing technique that facilitates physical, mental, emotional and social well-being.

Sri Sri travels to nearly 40 countries every year, exemplifying his call to globalise wisdom. His universal and simple message is that love and wisdom can prevail over hatred and distress.



## ONE WORLD FAMILY



On March 9, 2007, under Sri Sri's leadership, Dalit and upper caste leaders came together and vowed to end untouchability at the Truth & Reconciliation Conference in New Delhi. The gathering culminated in the leaders taking a pledge to implement a seven-point action plan to spread the spirit of reconciliation to every corner of India.

Sri Sri is engaged in bridging religious, social, ideological and economic divides in society by enlivening the ancient Indian ideal of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (One World Family). He reminds us that diverse traditions and cultures have their roots in the same basic human values of peace, compassion, truth, belongingness and non-violence. The Art of Living serves society with a non-denominational, secular and holistic approach.

In February 2006, at the Art of Living Foundation's 25th anniversary celebrations in Bangalore, India, an estimated 2.5 million people from 110 countries gathered to celebrate the spirit of service and togetherness. The historic gathering included 1,000 leaders from ten main religious traditions of the world and 750 key political figures from various countries. It was the largest recorded meditation for world peace in history.

In March 2007, the Universal Declaration of Human Values, authored by Sri Sri, was unveiled at the John F Kennedy Centre for Performing Arts in Washington DC. This document, in the form of a proposed resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations, represents Sri Sri's vision for a fresh approach to fostering understanding and harmonious coexistence between different peoples and cultures.



Sri Sri addressing the 'Religions and Peace: From Terrorism to Global Ethics' conference at the historic Kremlin Palace in June 2005. Sri Sri called upon all leaders to sow the seeds of love and harmony in every corner of the

In January 2005, Sri Sri gave the keynote address at the First World Congress of Imams and Rabbis for Peace held in Brussels.

Sri Sri has hosted and facilitated several dialogues and reconciliation events between different caste groups in various parts of India. In 2002, he hosted a three-day conference at the Art of Living International Centre in Bangalore to showcase the contribution of Dalits to the rich heritage of India.



Sri Sri at the Interfaith Conference for World Religious Leaders in Seville, Spain. Sri Sri has played a vital role in promoting interfaith dialogue. He encourages individuals to follow their chosen spiritual path while honouring the path of others.



## CONFLICT RESOLUTION



Sri Sri in dialogue with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki during his three-day peace mission to Iraq in May 2007.



Despite security concerns, Sri Sri took his message of peace to Iraq. He met with key political and religious leaders as well as the public to offer solutions to rebuild the country. Special emphasis was given to youth and women empowerment.



Sri Sri in discussion with Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa in Colombo. In his efforts to resolve the Sri Lankan crisis, Sri Sri has engaged the government, parliamentarians, Tamil leaders and the general public, particularly the youth.

Respected as a neutral party with unquestionable integrity, Sri Sri has inspired many groups to adopt peaceful means to resolve conflicts. He has engaged stake holders in the peace process in areas such as Sri Lanka, the Balkans, Iraq, Kashmir, Israel, Lebanon and the Ivory Coast. Trauma relief programmes have been conducted extensively in these areas to help individuals release negative emotions such as anger from the past, revenge and frustration, which can hamper the peaceful resolution of disputes.

### IRAQ

Art of Living volunteers have been working in Iraq on a sustained basis since September 2003 to facilitate the physical, mental, emotional and social well-being of the Iraqi people. To date, 5,000 Iraqis have benefited from the trauma relief and community empowerment projects in Baghdad, Basra, Suleimania and Karbala. In May 2007, Sri Sri visited the nation on a three-day peace mission at the invitation of Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki. The Prime Minister requested Sri Sri to expand the Art of Living programmes to more parts of Iraq, including the prisons.

During the visit, Sri Sri urged Iraqi leaders to give non-violence a chance. He met with a wide spectrum of Iraqi society including senior political figures, Shiite leaders, tribal heads, representatives of humanitarian organisations, women, soldiers and youth. Following Sri Sri's visit, the Iraqi government sent 55 youth to the Art of Living international headquarters to attend a month-long training. As a result, Iraq now has many more agents to bring about peace.

Despite volatile conditions, Sri Sri visited the country for the second time in less than two years, reaffirming his commitment to rebuild Iraq and galvanise people to action for a stress-free and violence-free Iraq. Travelling in various locations across the country without limiting himself to the secure Green Zone, Sri Sri took his message of peace to people from different backgrounds.

He met with key political and religious leaders, offering support for the health sector and women empowerment. Sri Sri met with key Shiite and Sunni leaders to mend fences between the two communities. To transform youth into peace ambassadors, Sri Sri signed an MoU with the youth ministry for youth empowerment programmes.

### SRI LANKA

Since 2004, Sri Sri has been actively involved in resolving the Sri Lankan crisis. He was instrumental in the formation of the 'Committee for Peace in Sri Lanka' comprising Hindu and Buddhist leaders, including the Dalai Lama.

Sri Sri had extensive meetings with the President, opposition leaders, Tamil leaders and the general public during one of his visits to the nation in April 2006. During the visit, he was inundated with letters from the public seeking his help to bring about peace in Sri Lanka. In September 2006, Sri Sri ventured into LTTE stronghold Kilinochchi for peace talks.

In two separate visits, former Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe and two parliamentary delegations from the United National Party (UNP) and Tamil National Alliance (TNA) visited Sri Sri in India in 2006 to discuss the Sri Lankan issue.

Since 2005, over 1,000 Tamil youth, mostly from Jaffna, have undergone the Art of Living youth leadership training programme after which they have given up violence and taken on community empowerment projects.



## CONFLICT RESOLUTION



Sri Sri with Kashmiri leaders during his visit to the state in 2006. The visit led to a rare dialogue between leaders of several Kashmiri separatist groups, including both factions of the All Party Hurriyat Conference and representatives of the Kashmiri Pandits.

### JAMMU & KASHMIR

Sri Sri's peace initiatives in Jammu & Kashmir focus on:

- ◆ healing the trauma of decades of militancy
- ◆ facilitating dialogue between people from different ideological groups
- ◆ improving the inhumane conditions in migrant camps
- ◆ reforming prison inmates
- ◆ de-stressing army and police personnel
- ◆ channelling misguided youth toward constructive activities.

Sri Sri has visited the state three times in as many years to open up avenues for dialogue and negotiation. His visit in 2006 culminated in a rare dialogue between leaders of several Kashmiri groups, including both factions of the All Party Hurriyat Conference and representatives of the Kashmiri Pandits. Inspired by Sri Sri, thousands of youth who had been trained in terrorist camps, have shunned the path of violence.

In 2005, IAHV established a child care centre to provide education and a safe haven for children affected by militancy and the 2005 earthquake.



Kashmiri children at the Art of Living International Centre in Bangalore, India. The children were previously staying in refugee camps. They have now found a safe haven at the centre.

### CLASS CONFLICT IN INDIA

Sri Sri's teachings and initiatives have transformed many villages in the Naxalite-infested areas of central Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. During his visit to Bihar in 2002, more than 100,000 youth from warring factions such as Ranvir Sena, CPI-ML, People's War Group and Maoist Communist Centre vowed to spread the message of non-violence.

As a result of Sri Sri's timely intervention, there was no retaliatory massacre in the aftermath of the 2006 Jehanabad killings. Instead, warring groups came together soon after the incident for a community gathering organised by the Art of Living in Ekwari, the nerve centre of Naxal violence in Bihar, which avoided further escalation of violence.

### KOSOVO

In Kosovo, the Art of Living has successfully carried out programmes to promote dialogue between people on both sides of the ethnic divide, thus expanding the circle of belonging to transcend narrow identities.

The Health Ministry of Kosovo directly supports the Art of Living's trauma relief efforts which have helped thousands of people including war veterans, prisoners, health workers, victims of war crimes, UN peace keeping forces and children in Kosovo.



Women learn breathing techniques at an Art of Living trauma relief course in Plemetina Camp, Kosovo. The 105 participants, mostly Albanians, Serbs and Roma people, were all suffering from severe post-war trauma.



## CONFLICT RESOLUTION



Sri Sri's intervention ended the 19-day imbroglio between the Gujjars and the government who then came to the dialogue table. Sri Sri spoke to both parties and encouraged them to mediate peacefully.

### Dialogue for Peace

#### In Rajasthan (India)

Sri Sri went to Rajasthan, India in June 2008 to diffuse the violence and tension that had engulfed the Indian state of Rajasthan following an agitation by the Gujjar community demanding recognition as a backward community (scheduled tribe status) and reservation benefits.

Thanks to his mediation, the Gujjars agreed to hold negotiations with the government.

An amicable solution was reached between the agitators and government bringing an end to the 19-day imbroglio.

To provide solace to the protesting Gujjars, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar met 50,000 members of the community on the rail tracks of Pilukapura, the nerve centre of the violence. Significantly, it was the first time, since the agitation began, that the Gujjars were willing to listen to a mediator.

Sri Sri urged them to shun their violent protest and hold dialogue in a peaceful manner: "Do not take to arms for that doesn't hold the answer. We can achieve our rights in a non-violent way."



Advocating peace and non-violence for the larger good of the Valley, Sri Sri spoke to all parties in Jammu and Kashmir. His message helped to bring diverse people across the table.

#### In Jammu & Kashmir

In August 2008, Sri Sri played a major role in finding an amicable solution to the Amarnath land imbroglio that triggered large-scale violence and protests throughout Jammu and Kashmir. Sri Sri visited the state and managed to convince leaders from all sections of society to stop violent protests and come to the negotiating table. "Dialogue is the only way to resolve the present crisis," he told them. Thanks to the dialogue process that began after Sri Sri's visit, the differences were resolved and violence ended soon after.



## DISASTER MANAGEMENT & TRAUMA RELIEF



Sri Sri consoles the victims of the December 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami in Nagapattinam. This coastal town in Tamil Nadu, India was among the worst affected areas.



The Art of Living conducted trauma relief programmes for army personnel (involved in rescue operations), families, children and school teachers in the aftermath of the Beslan school hostage crisis.



Art of Living volunteers provide emergency relief in remote areas of Assam and Bihar in the September 2007 floods.

Sri Sri leads a worldwide network of volunteers to bring immediate relief and long term rehabilitation to people affected by disasters. The Art of Living has implemented disaster management and trauma relief initiatives for affected people in the aftermath of almost every major disaster in the world, including most recently:

- ♦ Trauma relief after 26/11 attack in Mumbai (2008)
- ♦ Flood relief in Bihar, India (2008)
- ♦ Flood Relief in Eastern India (2008)
- ♦ Ossetia (August 2008)
- ♦ Sichuan earthquake, China (May 2008)
- ♦ Bihar and Assam floods, India (September 2007)
- ♦ Virginia Tech Campus shootings, USA (April 2007)
- ♦ Vidarbha farmer suicides, India (2007)
- ♦ Surat floods, India (August 2006)
- ♦ Lebanon war (July 2006)
- ♦ Mumbai train blast, India (July 2006)
- ♦ Kashmir & Pakistan earthquake (October 2005)
- ♦ Hurricane Katrina, USA (August 2005)
- ♦ Mumbai floods, India (July 2005)
- ♦ London subway blast, United Kingdom (July 2005)
- ♦ Gujarat floods, India (June 2005)
- ♦ Indian Ocean tsunami, India/Sri Lanka (December 2004)
- ♦ Beslan school hostage crisis, Russia (September 2004)
- ♦ Madrid train attack, Spain (March 2004)
- ♦ Iraq War (ongoing, 2003)
- ♦ Bam earthquake, Iran (December 2003)
- ♦ Jakarta floods, Indonesia (February 2007 & January 2002)
- ♦ River Elbe floods, Germany (August 2002)
- ♦ Gujarat riots, India (2002)
- ♦ Kosovo conflict (2002)
- ♦ Afghanistan War (October 2001, ongoing)
- ♦ 9/11 terror attack, USA (September 2001)
- ♦ Gujarat earthquake, India (January 2001)
- ♦ Orissa cyclone, India (October 1999)



## EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES



As a result of the Youth Leadership Training Programme (YLTP), people in this remote village in Cameroon have taken the initiative to build a road rather than wait for other agencies to help. Hundreds of youth in Cameroon have undergone the YLTP and are engaged in implementing the 5H programme in their villages.

Through grassroots initiatives, the Art of Living has empowered rural communities to become partners in the process of sustainable development.

### 5H PROGRAMME

Sri Sri started the 5H Programme (Homes, Hygiene, Health, Harmony in Diversity and Human Values) in 1997 to engineer a socio-economic transformation that will eradicate poverty, misery and disease and ensure peace and harmony among communities. The 5H programme is implemented by rural youth trained under the Art of Living's Youth Leadership Training Programme. In India, 56,146 trained youth leaders are working in 32,000 villages. The 5H projects are operating in villages and slums across Africa, Asia and South America.

### EDUCATION FOR THE MARGINALISED

86 schools have been set up providing free education to 7,500 children every year in the tribal, rural and semi-urban belts of India, where child-labour and poverty are widespread.

### ADDRESSING FARMER SUICIDES

The Art of Living is pursuing a comprehensive programme in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, where farmers have become suicidal due to successive crop failures and mounting debts. Earlier statistics suggested that one farmer was committing suicide every eight hours. In the 308 villages where the Art of Living volunteers have worked so far, there has not been a single reported instance of suicide. Encouraged by the results, the Government of Maharashtra has requested Sri Sri to take up the work in all affected districts.

The Vidarbha programme focuses on:

- ◆ Building community support systems
- ◆ Instilling confidence and enthusiasm in farmers
- ◆ Promoting alternative farming techniques such as organic farming and zero-budget farming, to improve the yield of crops in the long run
- ◆ Rainwater harvesting
- ◆ Implementing the 5H programme for overall self-sufficiency in villages.

### WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Sri Sri has inspired numerous initiatives to uplift and create opportunities for women, especially in rural areas. He has initiated mass campaigns against female foeticide. With female literacy rates abysmally low in some parts of the world, the Art of Living rural schools encourage parents to send girl children to school. At one such school on the outskirts of Bangalore city, 46% of the children are girls, with the numbers rising every year.

Women are given vocational training to reduce economic dependencies, and are given free homes registered in their names. Health education for women covers nutrition, hygiene and disease prevention, while self-development courses help to instil inner confidence.



The Art of Living's 5H programme has revolutionised lives in thousands of villages in India. Thanks to its hygiene initiatives, nine villages in Maharashtra, India have won the Nirmal Gram Puraskar award from the Government of India for achieving total sanitation targets.



Sri Sri has led and promoted campaigns to end the practice of sex selection in India.



## EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS



Over 30 million people from all walks of life have benefited from Art of Living workshops world-wide.

“A disease-free body, a stress-free mind and a violence-free society are the birth right of every individual,” says Sri Sri. He has designed a myriad of self-development programmes to release stress, create a sense of well-being, restore human values and encourage people from all walks of life to come together in a spirit of service and celebration.

### SUDARSHAN KRIYA

The Sudarshan Kriya, a powerful breathing technique cognised by Sri Sri forms the cornerstone of a diverse range of self-development programmes catering to all sections of society. Customised courses are available for executives, youth, military, children and villagers. Special programmes have been designed for prisoners, as well as individuals with drug and alcohol dependencies.

Independent medical research from reputed institutions such as NIMHANS (National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences) and AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences) have documented the benefits of the Sudarshan Kriya, including:

- ♦ alleviation of depression
- ♦ heightened awareness and enhanced brain activity
- ♦ reduced cortisol levels (stress hormone)
- ♦ improvements in the blood cholesterol profile, with significant drops in total cholesterol and LDL (harmful) cholesterol, and increases in HDL (beneficial) cholesterol
- ♦ strengthened immune system.



Sri Sri and Mayor of Houston Bill White sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Houston on October 30, 2008.)

The Art of Living programme has given peace of mind to hundreds of thousands of people across the globe. As a testimony of the programme's effectiveness in providing useful stress-elimination tools, the City of Houston and the Mayor's Council on Wellness signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Art of Living. Under the MoU, the Art of Living will bring its stress relief and service programmes to the people of Houston, to promote health and wellness.

### PRISONER REHABILITATION

Since 1990, over 200,000 prisoners in countries such as India, USA, South Africa, Denmark, Cameroon, UAE, Serbia, Argentina, UK, Argentina and Russia have been provided the opportunity to reform themselves, and break the cycles of violence, guilt and self blame, through the Art of Living programme. In Denmark, the nation's judicial system recognises the effectiveness of the course and sends juvenile offenders to the Art of Living programme in lieu of jails.

In India, 100,000 inmates, including terrorists, in over 100 jails have been provided an opportunity for serious rehabilitation. To provide a more holistic rehabilitative intervention, Sri Sri has also initiated recreational opportunities such as theatre, music and dance workshops and vocational training for inmates. In cooperation with the jail authorities, production units have been started in select jails.

### DE-ADDICTION

Sri Sri has initiated programmes to help people come out of drug, alcohol and substance dependencies which have been highly effective in USA, India, Mongolia and Bahrain. In India, de-addiction centres are operating in West Bengal, Punjab, Delhi, Kolkata, Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. Thanks to the education imparted by the 5H programme, thousands of villagers have given up alcohol and other addictions, reducing the incidence of domestic violence.



More than 200,000 inmates in jails around the world have been provided an opportunity for serious rehabilitation through the Art of Living prison programme.



## AWARDS & HONOURS



Sri Sri conferred with the Order of the Pole Star, the highest civilian honour of Mongolia, by the President of Mongolia, Mr. Nambaryn Enkhbayar.



The Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, India's largest medical university, confers Sri Sri with an Honorary Doctorate in Science in 2007.



Sri Sri is honoured with the Illustrious Visitor Award by government officials in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Over the years, Sri Sri has been bestowed with several awards, including:

- ◆ Phoenix Award, Atlanta, USA, 2008
- ◆ Honorary Citizenship and Goodwill Ambassador, Houston, USA, 2008
- ◆ Proclamation of Commendation, New Jersey, 2008
- ◆ Honorary doctorates from five universities  
Kuvempu University; Open International University for Complementary Medicine, Sri Lanka; Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, India; Maharaja Sayajirao University, India; Nagarjuna University, India.
- ◆ Architect of World Peace Award, India, 2008
- ◆ 'Light of East' National Award, India, 2008
- ◆ National Veterans Foundation Award, USA, 2007
- ◆ Varshada Kannadiga (Kannadiga of the Year), ETV, India, 2007
- ◆ Leadership Award for Extraordinary Promotion for World Peace and Harmony, Amity University, India, 2007
- ◆ Sant Shri Dnyaneshwara World Peace Prize, India, 2006
- ◆ Order of the Pole Star, Mongolia, 2006
- ◆ Fervent Global Love of Life Award, Taiwan, 2006
- ◆ Peter the Great, First Grade Award, Russian Federation, 2006
- ◆ Prime Minister's Award, Mongolia, 2006
- ◆ Mahavir-Mahatma Award for Contribution to Peace, Times Foundation, India, 2005
- ◆ Dara Shikoh National Award for Harmony, New Delhi, 2005
- ◆ Global Humanitarian Award, Illinois, USA, 2005
- ◆ Member of Martin Luther Collegium of Scholars, USA, 2005
- ◆ Bharat Shiromani Award, New Delhi, India, 2004
- ◆ The Illustrious Visitors Award, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2004
- ◆ Phoenix Award, Atlanta, USA, 2002
- ◆ Guru Mahatmya Award, Government of Maharashtra, India, 1997
- ◆ Title of Yoga Shiromani (Supreme Jewel of Yoga), India, 1986

### “His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Day” (partial listing)

- ◆ Irving, Texas, USA (October 29, 2008)
- ◆ Edison, New Jersey, USA (July 4-6, 2008)
- ◆ New Jersey (July 4th - July 6th, 2008)
- ◆ Pomona, California (July 29, 2007)
- ◆ Washington DC (March 28, 2007)
- ◆ Ottawa, Canada (September 13, 2006)
- ◆ Edmonton, Canada (September 7, 2006)
- ◆ Halifax, Canada (September 10, 2006)
- ◆ Chicago, Illinois (June 28, 2002)
- ◆ Beverly Hills, California (May 8, 2002)
- ◆ Atlanta, Georgia (April 29, 2002)
- ◆ Austin, Texas (January 10, 2002)
- ◆ Washington DC (August 26, 2000)

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