**Bringing out the healing power in food: Das Sreedharan**

An entire farm with an aim to return to the simplicity of natural food, thus building up the culture of healing through food—this is the vision of the famous UK food philosopher Das Sreedharan, whose Rasa Gurukul is taking shape almost 5000kms away from Britain, in Chalakudy in Kerala.

The concept of Rasa Gurukul is to educate and empower young and old minds alike through a holistic approach through cooking, farming, yoga and meditation. “The idea is to go back to the gurukulam (method of learning followed in ancient India where students stayed with their teachers for their learning) way of teaching where the students learn through the natural and practical way of learning cooking by doing it with love and passion towards it,” said Das Sreedharan, who has secured 25 acres of land on the banks of a river in Kerala and has developed it into an organic farm.

The Rasa Gurukul emanated from the strong belief of Sreedharan that food has an innate ability to unite people, liberate them from the disturbances of the mind, and connect them across their differences. He has brought together eight children from orphanages across India who would be educated in the traditional gurukulam way in Rasa Gurukul. They would be taught not only cooking but to experience nature in a more spiritual way, where they would know the journey of a small seed and how it becomes a fruit in this organic farm. Sreedharan hopes to converge the power of organic farming with simple, clean food to provide an opportunity for orphans and senior citizens to learn and educate from each other.

“I am envisaging my project as a global heritage village, where the goodness of our villages would be brought back in the purity of the farm produces and in the simplicity of the cooking methods, very much like a mother’s love. It is a personal experiment of mine which came from the strong belief that it is the responsibility of people like me who has made it big in the culinary scene to let the world know the real healing power, simple pure food can provide,” added Sreedharan.

The heritage village will have five important pivots of a Kerala village life such as carpentry, blacksmith, traditional coconut oil from the mill, pottery and weaving loom. “But we would not be showcasing these as in a museum,” reiterates Sreedharan who believes that the language of healing through traditional and local food habits is applicable globally. He informs that people from across the world as far as Portugal, has asked him to set up similar projects there.

Sreedharan’s attempt is to find like-minded people to take this dream project forward and believes people of older generation are treasure houses of knowledge and experience which they could pass on to the future generation. He said that a person from Switzerland is teaching Kalari (traditional martial art of Kerala) at Rasa Gurukul, while a Chartered Accountant from UK is teaching the children English already. Sreedharan shares with pride the fact that it will be his 86 year old father who will be managing the Gurukul in his absence.

Taking his healing philosophy further, Sreedharan has ‘Evenings with Das’ in London, where he shares his passion for cooking and `Chai Talk’ in Bangalore, where he opened his first restaurant in India which takes people through a spiritual journey.

Sreedharan opened first of his line of restaurants ***Rasa*** in London in 1994, and now has seven successfully running restaurants all over the capital city. He has cooked with stalwarts such as Jamie Oliver, Madhur Jaffrey and Anthony Bourdain and is featured in the celebrated BBC series on extraordinary lives, *Peschardt’s People.* Rasa group of restaurants has bagged many awards over the year which includes the Time Out award for the best vegetarian restaurant from 1995-1997.

Taking inspiration from his mother’s cooking and grandfather’s tea shop, Das Sreedharan has preserved the virtues and goodness of simple, traditional Kerala cooking and carved a niche for himself in the chicken tikka dominated Indian cooking scene in London.