



Vanvadi Forest Eco-versity Association, VanFEVA

(A Nature-Community Learning Alliance... for Ecological Regeneration & Harmonious Living)

12-week 'Learning-by-Doing' Programme: 2nd January to 27th March 2021

Context: The current extractive economic system and consumerist society have gravely breached ecological boundaries. With the turmoil churned by Corona – and growing environmental and social crises – the urgency and importance of sustainable, community self-reliance increases each day. Clearly, we need to pause and learn afresh from nature ... the secrets of harmonious and holistic living.

While much information/misinformation is readily available today at the click of a button, what is sorely missing is understanding, wisdom and practical application ... for meeting basic biological, emotional, socio-cultural and spiritual needs in a healthy and sustainable way. The lure of modern consumerism has further accelerated with mass-scale digital penetration, making us unfit to relate with the natural world. This is already true for most urban dwellers, and steadily increasing among many rural and tribal communities. We have witnessed mass exodus of youth to cities, where they live like refugees, learning very little of relevance to their rural lives – to which they return as misfits. Our rich natural and cultural heritage – enabling the most economical & ecological way of community living – is rapidly getting lost.

Aim: To reintegrate learning with living – particularly, nature, community and our deeper, cultural aspirations – with emphasis on 'hands-on' experience and practice to supplement 'theoretical' understanding.

More specifically, ours main focus is on:

- (i) Conservation and regeneration of forest, biodiversity, soil; and watershed management
- (ii) Progressive self-reliance for meeting basic needs, including food, water, habitat
- (iii) Understanding the significance of indigenous knowledge and bio-culture
- (iv) Personal nurturing of cultural aspirations related to music, arts, health, meditation, ...
- (v) Experiencing and learning from community living.

Vanvadi Forest Eco-Versity Association (VanFEVA): is a newly formed, 'not-for-profit', Section 8 Company, with a wide range of objectives, particularly ecological conservation, education and sustainable 'lively-hoods'. It is formed by several members of Vanvadi Agro-ecological Regeneration Association (VARA). We envisage evolving organically into a symbiotic community, eco-versity and eco-village ... where people can learn from and support each other in meeting their varied needs and realizing their creative aspirations.

The Vanvadi Forest: is located between Ware and Chinchwadi villages in the undulating Sahyadri foothills of the Western Ghats, about 90 km from Mumbai, and 9 km from Neral station on the suburban Central Railway route from Mumbai to Karjat. Regenerated over the past 25 years, it is now a dense, tall and bio-diverse forest with over 120 traditionally useful plant species, including over 50 forest food species; also a rich diversity of micro-fauna. We have had high success too in rainwater-harvesting and groundwater recharge, enhancing the water security of the land and surrounding downstream regions. (VanFEVA will continue such work, spreading its ambit to neighbouring villages through learning programmes and field projects). Natural/organic farming of some fruit, vegetables, tubers, millets, rice, sesame is presently done on a small scale. Since the last 15-16 years, Vanvadi has also been hosting an annual Vanutsav or Forest Festival, 'celebrating nature and community, and sharing creativity'. Vanvadi has also hosted numerous other educational workshops and activities over the years.

The Vanvadi Community House: can accommodate about 30 people. We are still off the grid with basic electrical needs provided by a solar panel. Cooking is mainly done on firewood. Internet connectivity is available at our networking huts, but not in our Community House. The nearest small town, Kalamb, is about 4 km from Vanvadi.

Affiliation: VanFEVA is a member of 'Indian Multiversity Alliance' (IMA), and 'Global Eco-Versity Alliance' (GEVA). VanFEVA members have previously worked and/or are currently associated with 'Bhaskar Save Natural Farming Learning Centre', KhulaAasmaan Trust, Redstone Eco Center & Organic farm, SECMOL, Himalayan Institute of Alternatives Ladakh, Earthcare Books, BNHS, Me2 Kids Club, New Acropolis, and many others.

Pedagogy: will be mainly through experiential learning and practical application, supplemented with theoretical discussion, facilitated by VanFEVA members and visiting resource persons, assisted by volunteers. It will particularly engage village youth and other urban participants in understanding and responding to the issues and challenges faced by adivasi/rural people living in Sahyadri foothills of the Western Ghats, especially in the domains of ecologically sustainable livelihoods, education and culture. It will also include music, arts, crafts, natural healing, silent meditation, etc.

The 'hands on' work will include forest and watershed regeneration, natural/organic farming, and various projects for rainwater harvesting and groundwater recharge, reclamation of eroded topsoil from silted water bodies. It will also include a variety of ecologically sustainable livelihoods, including forest foods, natural processing for preservation, sustainable habitat construction, enhancing and documenting the biodiversity of flora and fauna, woodwork, palash leaf-plate making, etc.

The first batch will be from 2nd Jan '21 to 27th Mar '21.

Typical Daily Routine:

6 am	Wake up
6 to 8.30 am	Getting ready, prayers/ yoga, breakfast, etc.
8.30 to 12 noon	Hand work - on the field (<i>shramdaan</i>)
12 to 2 pm	Lunch break
2 to 6 pm	Head work - in the class (subject understanding, group work/ planning, assignments)
6 to 8 pm	Free time/ personal reading, writing/ dinner
8 to 10 pm	Heart work - music, dance, meditation, interaction, etc.
10 pm	Bed time
There will be one day weekly holiday every Thursday; and two days every fortnight - on Wednesday and Thursday.	

Main VanFEVA Facilitators: Bharat Mansata, Sarita Ganesh, Dilip Jain, Ganesh Subramanian, Divya Bhatia, Mona Patrao, Phiroze Palkhivala, MahaduBuaPardhi, AmbibaiPardhi, MainaPardhi. The facilitators will be supported by volunteer coordinators.

Visiting Facilitators: These would include experienced practitioners/mentors proficient in their respective domains, including farming, soil and water conservation/regeneration, bio-diversity. We plan to have at least one such visiting facilitator each month, offering guidance for 2-5 days.

External Learning Visits: This would include a 3-5 days external field visit.

Certificate: VanFEVA would be happy to provide a Certificate to desiring participants with at least 90% presence.

Participants: maximum 20, with an equal mix of urban folks and rural/tribal youth, mainly from nearby adivasi villages. The urban participants will be resident at Vanvadi, while the local youth will participate through the day, and return to their village at night.

Requested Contribution for Urban Participants: Rs 30,000 per person for entire 3 months (inclusive of food, accommodation and learning programme.):

Sponsorship/Scholarship(for urban participants) - If you are unable to pay the full amount and need support, please write to us. We will try to get sponsorship/ concessional scholarships, especially for deserving urban girl participants. We also encourage families to come for the entire program at a 10% concessional rate.

Local Adivasi/Rural Participants: will be paid a stipend of Rs 3,000 per month; and also provided breakfast, lunch and tea. We will give preference to participants from villages around Vanvadi.

Resident Volunteers: We already have 2 volunteers, and need 2-3 more volunteers who can commit to stay a minimum of 3 months. They will facilitate/teach, administer, and help with varied work, including field projects and documentation. We expect them to pay Rs. 5000 per month to cover their basic costs related to food & accommodation.

Non-Resident/Weekend Volunteers: About 3-5 are needed for special weekend workshops/short learning programmes; also for wider communication, creating and updating website, publication programme, raising funds, etc, ... depending on their strengths & interests.

Application for Participants and Volunteers: **FILL OUT FORM** to apply for longer duration learning programme of 3 months from 2nd Jan '21 to 27th Mar '21. After receipt of your application, we will have a one-to-one interaction to shortlist.

Short Duration Weekend Programmes: We plan to offer at least one or two short learning programmes/ workshops every month. They will be separately announced in advance for each month. For these, about 10-15 more participants will be accepted. Urban participants in such programmes will be required to pay Rs 1,000 per day. To get regular updates about these programmes you can join our admin only whatsapp group...
<https://chat.whatsapp.com/EvJ9BHuo3II3oIWBcktkfd>

Payments: These should be made latest by December 24, 2020.

We welcome support in cash and kind to enable us to offer more concessional scholarships and undertake additional regenerative field work!

Name: - VANVADI FOREST ECO-VERSITY ASSOCIATION

Account No :- HDFC Bank 50200053927526

IFSC Code :- HDFC0000356.

Please intimate all payments/donations by email to bharatmansata@yahoo.com, sarita.vanwadi@gmail.com, jaindilip80@gmail.com for issuing receipts.

To know more: media coverage/ our videos

<https://www.thebetterindia.com/224182/maharashtra-mumbai-vanvadi-forest-collective-ecofriendly-water-conservation-tribal-food-ang136/>

<https://weather.com/en-IN/india/news/news/2019-06-16-world-day-to-combat-desertification-drought-vanvadi-forest-regeneration>

<https://www.thehindu.com/life-and-style/food/walking-in-the-woods-with-bua/article25339387.ece>

<https://www.outlookindia.com/outlooktraveller/explore/story/65597/enjoy-a-feast-in-the-forest-in-maharashtra>

<https://thewire.in/environment/the-story-of-indias-private-forests>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvDPV9jABjU&t=24s> (bio-diversity fauna)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uW4fqz-iLxM> (VARA vision)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPUXxfVWbKk&t=68s> (water harvesting)