

ECOLOGICAL NURTURANCE



AN APPRENTICESHIP

AUGUST 1ST 2019
TO MAY 31ST 2020

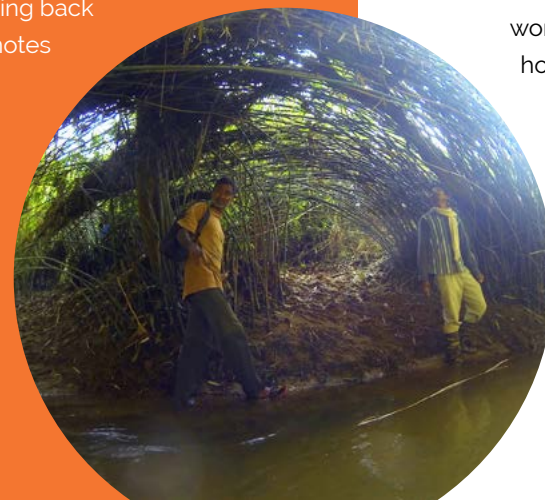
All human societies are faced with the urgent task of reviving healthy ecosystems. This apprenticeship offers the opportunity to learn and start acting concretely about it in three locations in South India.



You will be guided by a team of experts who have dedicated decades to regenerating natural ecosystems in South India. Their conservation, restoration and community work involves close interactions with natural and human communities, and understands that human wellbeing is inseparable from that of the natural environment. The course therefore takes a bio-geographical-horticultural-community oriented approach to ecological health.

The focus of the course is on developing a close relationship with nature and a sense of care for the infinitely complex living world. Neither of these can be learnt from books. The course is about lifestyles and livelihoods and about gardening back the natural world. It promotes an understanding of the exploitative practices that have brought us to the edge of global collapse, and the skills to collaborate with others to nourish a sane approach to living on this planet.

We invite you to learn from each other in the field, as well as from neighbouring communities and from us. The apprenticeship includes direct, personal contact and first-hand learning with the natural world; practical work on the land to hone useful skills; the study of relevant subjects such as ecology, natural history, anthropology and political economy; sharing one's learning with others; exploring one's personal interests and capacities.



THREE LOCATIONS

The course runs for ten months (August to May) over three locations: in Wayanad (Kerala), Tiruvannamalai (TN) and the Nilgiris (TN). Each of these learning communities provide skills in land and habitat care and in sustainable living, specific to each landscape/ecosystem.

I. THE FOREST WAY, TIRUVANNAMALAI (AUGUST-OCTOBER)

Understanding life in Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest (plants, trees, birds, insects, ..)

- Working on tree nursery skills (seed collection, germination, sapling maintenance, planting out)
- Working on the vegetable garden and farm on the school campus
- Learning basic life skills like stitching, rope making, knots, building with mud
- Case study of legal action for environmental protection
- Different perspectives on education
- Local food economy: case study of on-campus store

II. GURUKULA BOTANICAL SANCTUARY (NOVEMBER-JANUARY)

Understanding life in Medium Elevation Evergreen Rain Forest; riparian ecology, forest recovery on GBS protected lands, nature surveys (plants, birds, insects; amphibians, reptiles and mammals, ...)

- Exploring different ecological knowledge systems (modern natural history, traditional and indigenous, uncovering one's own)
- Conservation through rainforest gardening, learning the different life forms in the forest (epiphytes, annuals, trees, climbers, shrubs etc).
- Horticulture, organic gardening, food forests, rice cultivation
- Basic plant and soil science
- Community based conservation (caring for a river, rewilding tea and other plantations, monitoring toxic practices and stopping them, forging ecological governance through dialogue and partnerships)
- The politics of land use, environmental and social justice
- Self and nature
- The problem of civilization (through an Indian lens)

III. UPSTREAM ECOLOGY THE NILGIRIS (FEBRUARY-APRIL)

Understanding life in High-Elevation Shola-Grassland ecologies (plants, mammals, hydrology, indigenous people, climate change impacts, ...)

- Restoration of high elevation montane shola (focus on grasses)
- Working on grassland nursery skills (propagation, seed collection, planting out, de-weeding, maintenance etc...)
- Removing light invasion of exotic invasive species on existing grassland tracts
- Learning the impacts of climate change on ecosystems
- Understanding landscape level pressures, such as urbanization and industrial farming on fragile habitats
- Interaction with local school children in combined nature activities
- Learning from the Toda community



SOME QUESTIONS WE WONDER ABOUT



- How to awaken a genuine sense of care for living beings, which alone can keep our actions on the right track?
- Is it possible to enrich rather than diminish the biosphere?
- How can a human community's sustenance be met without undermining nature?
- How did our global society get into its present dangerous predicament?
- What is a true relationship with nature?
- What understandings will provide us the global perspective to chart our way?
- How does ecological nurturance interact with other fields of action?

SOME ESSENTIAL AREAS OF LEARNING

As a first step, we need to meet the creatures of a natural community directly and "personally", learn about their interactions and the important processes they go through. In particular we need to open our senses to soil and plants, as they are the fundamental organisms that we work with. We will get to know the many animals that live in these habitats too. Working with people is an important aspect of the course, and in life.

There are other tasks as well that have to be undertaken to build and maintain the organisation we form part of, whether big or small, formal or informal. For instance, planning and implementing meetings, writing progress reports, fundraising, drawing up and maintaining a budget, building relationships with government departments and other groups, basic legal skills, etcetera.



Education is an integral part of our work. We shall complement our learning about the natural world with exploring meaningful education, with this apprenticeship providing a case for study.

**If you would like to join,
write to us at
ecologicalnurturance@gmail.com
to receive an
application form from us
or leave a message on this
facebook page:**

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