



పిల్లకాల్వలు

PILLA KALVALU

Imagine standing at the foot of a hill, and from its crevices, emerge the "Pilla Kalvalu" – tiny streams that sparkle like jewels under the sun. These delicate rivulets, born from the embrace of small stones, hold within them the promise of life. They meander through the landscape, gathering strength with each passing moment, until they merge into mighty rivers, the very lifeblood of civilizations. Like these streams, our small efforts have the power to shape a sustainable future rooted in our cultural heritage.



It is a gathering of young minds, each deeply connected to indigenous practices, weaving them into the fabric of contemporary India. Pilla Kalvalu is a sanctuary where ancient narratives find voice in the modern world. Through our passionate exploration and immersion in indigenous practices, we unearth treasures hidden within the folds of time, breathing new life into traditions long forgotten. Each member of this team is a storyteller, weaving threads of heritage and innovation into a vibrant tapestry of possibility. With each tale shared, with each practice revived, they pave the way for a future that honours the past while embracing the present.

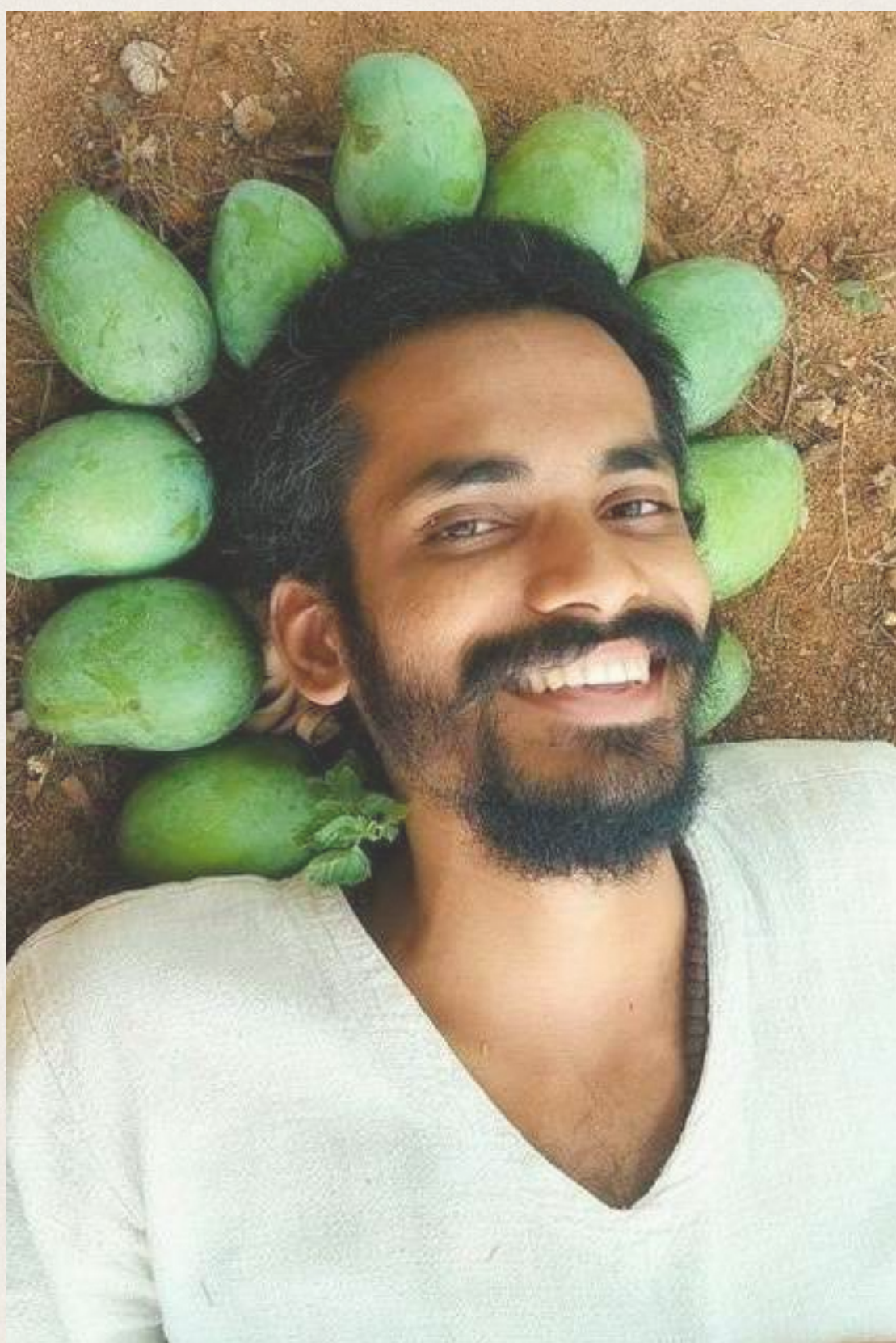
Pilla Kalvalu is a platform which offers rooted experiences based on indigenous knowledge. Whether it is a practice of creating yarn from cotton, weaving mud and bamboo or retaining soil moisture, our communities had the knowledge embodied in them and manifested in almost every cultural practice. We can still see the remnants of this knowledge across the country in their last forms.

We enjoy exploring the last strands of knowledge our culture still holds. This primarily involves the traditional building techniques, farming practices and sacred ecology. The communities which hold the knowledge are our teachers. Documentation and offering of these learning experiences go together. As Pilla Kalvalu, we immerse ourselves to document and learn these practices by discovery of the artisans. And we feel that our learnings can be communicated to young people and kids through workshops and other immersive experiences.





**PILLAKALVALU
TEAM**



MAYANK

Mayank's upbringing in Hyderabad's Old City immersed him in its rich history. In college, he discovered a passion for environmental issues, propelling him to engage with organizations addressing urban ecological concerns. His journey took him across South India, where he found kindred spirits in environmental movements. In the journey, he met Shri Ravindra Sharma, whose Kala Ashram became a beacon of rural wisdom. Mayank's time there made him experience the coexistence between rural communities and nature, contrasting sharply with city life. Interactions with rural artisans enriched his understanding of farming, architecture, and age-old traditions. This immersion reshaped his focus, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between culture and the environment.



Mayank now works towards holistic education, believing it should extend beyond textbooks. He practices experiential learning, emphasizing a connection to one's roots, nature, and culture. Collaborating with educational institutions, he seeks to impart this ethos to younger generations.

Aligned with like-minded friends, Mayank embarks on a mission to honour indigenous knowledge. Together, they delve into the traditions of skilled artisans, documenting and preserving their expertise. Their collective endeavour embodies a dedication to learning, respecting, and perpetuating living traditions.



DHEERAJ

Dheeraj comes from a small town Miryalaguda in Telangana. He graduated from School of Planning and Architecture, Bhopal in 2014. He started his exploration of Natural Buildings at Thannal under mentorship of Sri Biju Bhaskar and Sri Sindhu Bhaskar (the founders of Thannal natural homes, Tiruvannamalai).

In the journey of exploring traditional building practices, Dheeraj has found an architectural style that aligns with his belief in ecological and social harmony. His teachers are the simple artisans who work with grasses, woods, stone, bamboo, and mud in the rural India. The constant discovery of new methods of incorporating locally available material gives him confidence in his cultural roots.

He is now a practicing Grameen Architect who has been in pursuit of collecting artisan narratives around shelters and organising awareness workshops sharing them with the Architecture fraternity.





VIJAY DIXIT

Dixit was born and brought up in Hyderabad. Having graduated in Economics from Nizam College, he moved on to pursue Liberal Arts at Ashoka University. Under mentorship of Aseem Shrivastava, he immersed himself in a Himalayan village and worked on various aspects of ecological education and wildlife documentation.

Understanding natural habitats holistically and the cultural perspective towards nature interests him the most. He enjoys strolling around the forests, listening to birds and gazing at the butterflies. He is currently based in Hyderabad with Pilla Kalvalu.





SUJAN

Sujan, an architect who's not only skilled in designing buildings but also has a deep love for filmmaking and photography. He's been a valued member of our team for the past two years, bringing his creative flair and unique perspective to our work.

Our first encounter with Sujan was at his college. Alongside our team member Phanindra and a handful of their classmates, Sujan would sneak away from classes to lend a hand in constructing a mud structure on campus. Little did we know that this chance meeting would lead to a lasting collaboration filled with inspiration.



If you've watched any of our Pilla Kalvalu workshop films, you've seen Sujan's name in the credits. He's been an integral part of bringing those stories to life, infusing them with his artistic vision and expertise.

Sujan's passion for working with nature and filmmaking shines through in everything he does. He has also been actively involved in the farming activities we take up and leading parts of it.



PHANINDRA

Phani, a passionate architect, is deeply committed to weaving social narratives into films. He has been with us for the past two years, joining forces with Sujana. Our journey together began when we were constructing a small mud structure at his college. Phani has played an instrumental role in shaping our educational experiences, infusing each project with his unique touch.

His dedication extends beyond the confines of our workspace into the handcrafted villages. One of Phani's remarkable qualities is his eagerness to explore rural Bharat with us, immersing himself in the community and capturing their stories.



His interest in agriculture and natural building systems has grown immensely during these journeys, and he is always enthusiastic about uncovering more about rural life and its wisdom, fuelled by his curiosity to explore rural knowledge systems.

Phani's dedication to integrating social narratives into our work is truly inspiring. His contributions go beyond just being a team member; he is a driving force behind our mission, infusing our work with emotion and depth.



OUR WORK

DOCUMENTATION OF INDIGENOUS ARCHITECTURE

Our communities have been building homes attuned to the agro-climatic conditions and design them according to their artisanal needs. A potter's home and a blacksmith's home have different design patterns depending on craft's demands. Similarly, the Chenchus living in Nallamalla forests have different homes from that of Konda Reddis living in the forests near Badrachalam. We are fascinated by the diversity of shelters our communities have built and sustained that knowledge of building techniques. Through our travels, we keep an eye out for shelters like these and if possible, pause and understand the different elements that went into building these homes.



HOME & BEYOND AT PUVIDHAM, TAMIL NADU - 2 EDITIONS

These are weeklong workshops at the Puvidham Alternative School in Dharmapuri founded by Meenakshi and Umesh. We took our inspiration from Puvidham's way of life, where everything is natural – the food, the clothes, the houses, and how people live together as a community.

The primary idea was to give the participants a hands-on experience of rural community living like making healthy food, building with natural materials, farming with indigenous seed varieties, spinning the charkha and creating herbal products. We carried the lessons from the previous workshop to make the learning experience of the participants more enjoyable.



By the end of our workshops, we all had a shared knowledge about like alternative medicine, education that's focused on kids, making yummy and healthy food, how to farm naturally, and building houses that are good for our planet. We were enriched by the free flow of knowledge in the groups of young and old.



CULTURE AND ECOLOGY WORKSHOP AT JEEVIKA ASHRAM, JABALPUR, MADHYA PRADESH

Indrana is one of the few villages we came across where remnants of an artisanal economy rooted in the ecology still alive. We were fortunate to have known Jeevika Ashram started by Ashish Gupta. The Ashram is dedicated to documenting and preserving cultural customs and practices in collaboration with local artisans. The focus of the Ashram is on the larger aesthetic milieu in which this traditional culture flourished.

About half of the time of this workshop was spent in learning from the village, by spending time with the artisans of the village and learning something of their craft, by walking in the forested hills with a local shepherd to understand how they see the land and their place in it, by observing the rituals and festivities of the village.



Then there was time for discussions. These discussions brought in the numerous existing doubts and questions that participants have been carrying from their experiences in their life and work, the observations from their time in the village and the ashram, the perspectives of the artisans and the ideas with which the Ashram has been set up - on economy, society, culture, ecology, knowledge, and lifestyle.



ARCHITECTURAL DOCUMENTATION OF HOMES OF INDRANA, JABALPUR

As we walked through the streets of Indrana as part of the Culture and Ecology workshop, we couldn't help but marvel at the old architectural heritage that still stands strong, beckoning us to understand why and how different communities chose to build their homes here.

So, with eager hearts and curious minds, and so, we returned to Indrana for another week, this time with a specific focus on exploring the cultural ecology through an architectural lens. This documentation project served as a gateway to two kinds of explorations: one that involved physically and technically examining the buildings themselves, and another that delved into the intimate relationship between artisans and their humble abodes.



VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE WORKSHOPS AT SIRIPURAM AND RAMANNAPET, TELANGANA

We have had the opportunity of extending the hands-on training in Grameen Architecture at the Ashoka School of Planning and Architecture to the seekers. Having set in the Hilly grasslands of Rachakonda, it was a perfect premise to teach the journey of natural materials from the source to building them into the Grameen shelters.

Telangana's villages have nurtured her artisans, and their shelters are uniquely designed to their needs, they are a seamless blend of art and function. The architectural exploration workshops in villages of Ramannapet and Siripuram are our tiny yatras to document the vast diverse knowledge of Indigenous shelters of Telangana and share them with our peers and seekers.



The habitants of the villagers are part of the greater history, most of them belong to Padmashali community and are pioneers of Ikkat weaving. This is a great premise where you have day to day life interwoven with art, a walk in these streets teaches us how a village works together and have designed spaces to complement each other's work. While introducing the seekers to such rich heritage itself was rewarding, making sense of the harmony between ecology and these practices is also an important step towards learning native practices of Architecture.



INTRODUCTION TO NATURAL BUILDING FOR LIVING VIKASA VIDYA VANAM (LVVV) AT GUDUR, TELANGANA

A short immersive experience was curated for the class 9 kids of LVVV to introduce them to the process of Natural Building in a village in Telangana. The kids were made to stay in a mud home and were introduced to natural materials that go through in the making of a home. The experience involved visiting old homes in the villages and understand the transition from old to new homes and the human aspect of these shelters. The workshop also involved a hands-on component for them build a wall with the learning they had about the natural materials.



PEER LEARNING AT AKSHARAVANAM

Aksharavanam, an education research organisation trying to explore a peer learning space based on the idea of New age Gurukulam. Pilla Kalvalu has practiced natural building and farming at Aksharavanam. Pilla Kalvalu has created an enabling environment for the kids of the centre to naturally picked up these practices without active teaching. This experiment encouraged other young people from different parts of the country to understand the artisanal heritage around the region and created a similar learning environment.



FARMING CURRICULUM FOR LVVV, VIJAYAWADA

Living Vikasa Vidya Vanam is a residential school located in Vijayawada.

Jeevana Vikasa Vidya Vanam School was born from a beautiful idea: learning through experience, deeply rooted in nature. They focus on experiential learning, which means students learn by doing things themselves. Here, the school community grows its own food, embracing an ecological way of life, which is an important part of their learning experience.

However, the school has faced some challenges in fully embracing this hands-on learning approach. Our team has been working closely with the school to help them move forward. We started by fine-tuning their farming practices, making them more sustainable. Now, after just a year, we've been able to produce surplus green leaves for the school's meals. Then, we focused on creating systems where kids take ownership of the farm and lead it.



Our next goal is to involve the children more deeply in their learning. We want them to experience building shelters using natural materials found around them. To prepare for this, we recently held an orientation camp, sparking excitement in the kids' eyes.

We also plan to teach the children about clothing production. We want our kids to understand where it comes from. They will learn about the different materials used for making clothes and get to meet traditional weavers to understand their craft better. It's about more than just clothes; it's about honoring centuries-old traditions and the people behind them.

Our ultimate aim is to weave sustainability into every aspect of learning. Through this journey, our children are not just learning; they're rediscovering the beauty of the villages and the wisdom it holds. And with every shelter built and every piece of clothing made, they're one step closer to becoming true stewards of their community.

