

## Envisioning the Environment with Dance

Ar. Maharishi Thula, Assistant Professor at Anant National University.

It is said that any art characterizes nature. Art and nature are mutually complementary and inspiring. Convince of this comes from watching Sankalp Sharma's Vinyasa Dance Ashram. During my industrial site visit to stone mines industry in Rajasthan, I met Sankalp Sharma, Founder of Vinyasa Ashram. The way he has established the throughout journey of Vinyasa Ashram from its commencement till the way it is at present, the journey itself teaches us all lessons about specific sustainable lifestyle.

Sankalp Sharma lives in Jaipur, but he often goes to his village near Jaipur for holidays. His parents farm and live there. Sankalp has been connected with nature since childhood. Opted for science after passing the 10th standard exam, as his dream was to become an engineer. A lover of dance, Sankalp saw that he had to study so much in science that he could not devote the necessary time to dance. In school too, it was the case that a science student could not participate in cultural events. He didn't realize until he used to dance, but when he stopped dancing, he started to realize that how can he live without dance?

After clearing the 12th standard exam, got admission in a dance school in Mumbai and did a one and a half year diploma course. He learned many types of dance such as ballet and jazz. After completing a one-and-a-half-year diploma course, he went to New York to learn modern dance. After studying further here, he gave programs in many places. When Sankalp Sharma came to India for some time in 2020, he thought that he would go on a trip to India for a while and then return to New York, but due to the Corona epidemic, he had to stay in India for a long time. Initially, he did not get to go to New York, he was often embarrassed. She felt sad and stuck in India, but one day she remembered what one of her teachers had told her that to become a good dancer you must first connect with yourself. From that, Sankalp got the idea to start his own dance school in India and thirty km from Jaipur. Established Vinyasa Dance Ashram in remote Maheshwas village. Sankalp says, 'When I was learning dance in New York, I saw that everyone was constantly running. There are many comforts here, but nothing natural. So I wanted one to live one's natural life and thereby inspire others.'

During this time he met Chinmoy Parikh, an architect from Jaipur who was involved in eco-friendly construction. In 2021, with the help of Chinmoy Parikh, he started a vinyasa ashram in his village on two bigha land. Decided to use clay, lime and bamboo throughout the ashram. Seven cottages were built and

each cottage was roofed with green grass, the grass that would grow in it. A small pond was created in between, in which rain water can be collected. Also built an amphitheater, reception counter and office. A dormitory that can accommodate sixty students was also included here.



*Figure 1 Eco-friendly open dance studio (Dubey, 2022)*

The surprising thing about vinyasa is that there are no walls in the dance studio. The two thousand square foot studio has wooden flooring and a bamboo ceiling. Usually a dance studio has a mirror on the wall so that the dancer can see his movements while dancing, but Sankalp Sharma does not have a mirror. They believe that these gestures of the body are to be seen not through a mirror, but through one's own mind. Due to the absence of walls, the harmony of the dance can be achieved only with the natural sound. During the rainy season, the students danced to the sound of the rain and the experience was unique to everyone.



*Figure 2 Sustainable lifestyle at Vinyasa Ashram, (Earth, n.d.) (Earth, n.d.)*

Sankalp Sharma uses minimal plastic in his life and in his vinyasa dance ashram. He campaigned for a plastic-free Jaipur in 2021. It is difficult to bring about a complete ban on plastic, as tourists from all over India and from outside India come here. All those people bring plastic here in one form or another, but Sankalp Sharma does not allow that plastic to go into the ground or out of the ashram. From it they make chairs for sitting, which are durable enough to last for years. Also makes eco-bricks from extra plastic. Thus the plastic that comes here is not allowed to go out. Currently there are five teachers in Vinyasa Dance Ashram. Three teachers including Sankalp teach Samprat dance. While one teacher teaches Latin dance and one teacher teaches sculpture. Today many students from India and abroad come to learn dance and learn the lessons of environment along with it. (Dubey, 2022)

*It is difficult to bring about a complete ban on plastic, as tourists from all over India and from outside India come here.*



Figure 3 "Shunya" - Eco-Friendly room Interior (Earth, n.d.)



Figure 4 Vinyasa Dance Ashram, (Dubey, 2022)

- In the last decade, Pallavi, now 32 years old, has rescued more than ten thousand children and brought them into the mainstream.

Three decades ago, Pallavi Ghosh was born in Lumding town of Hojai district in Assam. Pallavi, studying in school, used to look forward to vacations, as her uncle lived in West Bengal, so she would get a chance to go there during the holidays. During the summer vacation of 2003, Pallavi went to her uncle's village in 24 Parganas. One day a tall man of fifty years of age bumped into a shouting Pallavi. He was looking for his missing daughter and was crying out in panic for her. Twelve year old Pallavi was watching this. He did not understand how a girl of his age or a little older could go missing from the village? The thoughts did not leave Pallavi's mind. She was constantly thinking and talking about it. Meanwhile, a child came and told Pallavi that a man is coming with a Yamaha motorcycle and thus taking the girls with him. Pallavi's holidays were over in two weeks of this incident, so she came to Lumding, but the thought kept running in her mind that her child would be gone in the blink of an eye? He often remembered the pained face of the father of the missing girl in his uncle's village. As a result, he decided to learn about human trafficking. He told his parents, friends and all the people around him about what had happened to his uncle and started asking questions, but no one gave him an answer that he could understand. When Pallavi was studying in the eleventh standard, she decided to investigate on her own.

There was a police station near Pallavi's house. One day the officer on duty said that such missing boys are begged at railway stations or on the four roads, while the girls are sent to brothels. Pallavi was shocked to hear this. One day she reached Guwahati railway station. He saw that there were some children talking in Hindi language. Pallavi was shocked to hear that. He remembered the officer. Because in Assam everyone speaks Bengali and how did these children learn Hindi? He started a dialogue with the children, only to discover that they were originally from Rajasthan and Bihar. This is how they commit human trafficking by luring poor and needy children with the lure of a better life. Everything was getting arranged in Pallavi's mind slowly and her intention to fight against it was also becoming firm. (Shah, 2023)

In 2012, Pallavi came to Delhi University to study. Here he came to know about human trafficking by joining NSS and started working with an organization in Delhi that was doing such work. Through research, he found many reasons for human trafficking. Like, child marriage, female infanticide, lack of awareness among people etc. One day the leader of his organization was about to leave for a rescue mission for a child in Delhi, but at that time the health of the team leader suddenly deteriorated. So Pallavi took the lead and was successful. Pallavi was very happy that day. As if his life got a direction, but gradually he realized that this work is not easy. She was attacked and even threatened with death in Delhi's Tis Hazari Court, but she was undeterred.

After obtaining her master's degree from Chennai, she joined an anti-trafficking activist organization. While doing this work, I realized that it is not enough to save the children from this hellish life. Equally important is the arrangement for their rehabilitation, so that they do not fall into the trap of trafficking again. When Pallavi went to explain about human trafficking in the northeastern states, people would barricade the doors of her house. He started dialogue instead of inquiry and founded the Dialogue Foundation in 2020. Soon, Sahu started inviting him to drink tea at home. Over a period of one and a half years, Pallavi sensitized seventy-five thousand women in the Northeast against this contamination through several programs and workshops. A woman came to Pallavi and told her that child marriage would be stopped in her village and that she would become aware of human trafficking and report it to the police. (Shah, 2023)

In the last decade, 32-year-old Pallavi has rescued more than 10,000 children and brought them into the mainstream. A girl was saved in 2019. He is currently studying medicine. Most of the girls are married. Many have been made self-reliant by vocational training. Ask Pallavi if she's not afraid of death and she'll laugh and say, 'Many times I get threats because of my work, sometimes I get flowers too.' (Shah, 2023)



Figure 5 Vinyasa Earth Heritage Culture

*“India is a land of varied heritage and culture. Amidst beautiful heritage, the country also includes a plethora of art history which dates back to a thousand years.*

*To reach out to a magnitude of people who would like to experience art and a natural way of living, that can help in providing a platform to explore a simpler approach to life, we are pleased to bring forth –*

*Vinyasa Earth - A place to ground, explore and connect.*

*We at Vinyasa envisage the safe abode with elements from the mother earth, a space that is designed in an ecological setting with natural architecture. The earthen cottages, the amphitheatre, reception area, waiting area, and storage rooms everything contains the goodness of mother earth to provide the artists and visitors a perfect blend of nature and art.*

*With the zero usage of cement, bricks and any form of chemicals, and reusing and upscaling plastics in a unique way we at Vinyasa aim to provide people connection to themselves and nature with the utmost gratitude towards the mother earth!”*

(Earth, n.d.)



*Figure 6 Vinyasa Earth*

Image Sources - (Earth, n.d.)

## Conclusion

Ultimately it is a matter, what specific decision we take to endure our lifestyle and to fulfil our dreams along with considering ourselves within the ultimate boundary of Natural Ecosystem. Through not breaking the barriers of Ecosystem. Surely it takes lot of time, patience and struggle to actually live an authentic based sustainable lifestyle with all parameters of liveable gesture as well as without compromising overall nature's ecosystem. But at the end, it gives the best result. This entire case study of *Vinyasa Earth* and especially the way it has been evolved as per timeline, It specifically teaches us the lessons of "Do not compromise on sustainable lifestyle while upbringing our ambitions to achieve in overall lifespan.

## References

(n.d.). Retrieved from [hindi.thebetterindia.com](http://hindi.thebetterindia.com).

Dubey, A. (2022, 07 21). Country's first clay dance ashram built in Rajasthan, people from abroad also come to learn dance. *Newsday Express*.

Earth, V. (n.d.). *Vinyasa Earth*. Retrieved from Vinyasa Earth: <https://www.vinyasa.earth/>

Shah, P. (2023, 04 23). નૃત્ય સાથે પર્યાવરણનો સંકલ્પ. *Gujarat Samachar*.