



Heartfulness

green

.....Kanha Initiatives





# THE SHADES OF GREEN

Maintaining the Integrity of  
the Landscape

Holistic Cultivation

Conservation of Water and Sanitation

Green Energy

Harmony Between Built and  
Natural Environments

Outreach and Community  
Welfare Programs

Rural Skill Development Programs

Education, Extension and Research

Methodology

Hon'ble President of India Shri Ram  
Nath Kovind Planting the 100,000th  
tree with The Governor of Telangana  
E. S. Lakshmi Narasimhan at Kanha  
Shantivanam Ashram, Hyderabad.  
Dec. 25, 2017







*Dasha-kupa-sama vapi,  
dasha-vapi-samo hradah  
Dasha-hrada-samah putro,  
dasha-putra-samo drumah*

A pond equals ten wells, a  
reservoir equals ten ponds.  
A progeny equals ten reservoirs,  
and a tree equals ten progeny.

- [Matsya Purana - 154:512](#)

## Vision

The Green Kanha Initiatives aims at:

- Creating a natural environment in tune with nature and the spiritual purpose of the campus
- Converting a semi-arid barren land into a lush green landscape without violating the integrity of the ecosystem
- Making Kanha a home to endangered species of trees, shrub and herbs
- Promoting green living
- Revitalizing and maintaining the myriad indigenous and traditional knowledge concerning local bio-diversity
- Help conserve the genetic bio-diversity of the country

## The Ethos

- Green living
- Conservation
- Retaining the integrity of the landscape
- Sustainable utilization of natural resources
- Community empowerment program and being a role model for the adjoining communities
- Education, extension and research



## Introduction

The locus of the green initiatives of the Heartfulness Institute is a spiritual retreat centre called Kanha Shanthi Vanam, on the outskirts of Hyderabad city in Telangana, India. It is an important centre of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission, a non-profit organization established in 1945.

Along with all other Heartfulness centres and ashrams around the world, Kanha offers the Heartfulness spiritual practices to all visitors and regular practitioners free of any fees and charges. These practices start with four basic elements: relaxation, meditation, inner cleaning, and inner connect, which are all offered in a scientific experiential way. The speciality of Heartfulness is the ancient art of Yogic Transmission or *Pranahuti*, which enlivens meditation, providing food for the soul. Heartfulness integrates our inner world with the outer world peacefully. Over a million people across 130 countries currently practice Heartfulness, and the number is growing every day. Go to [www.heartfulness.org](http://www.heartfulness.org) to learn more about Heartfulness with Transmission.

The Heartfulness Guide, Kamlesh Patel, also known

to many as Daaji, oversees all of the Heartfulness programs, as well as the green initiatives at Kanha Shanti Vanam.

Kanha Shanti Vanam is emerging as an international epicentre; a miniature township with a growing community of residents and visitors from across all parts of India and the world. It is a truly global community, with people from various walks of life, countries and backgrounds living in harmony.

Kanha majestically covers 388 acres and a world class infrastructure is being built here. The Meditation Hall will seat 50,000 people to meditate at any one time. The mechanized kitchen has a capacity to cook over 100,000 meals at a time (using steam) and the dining hall offers facilities for over 2,000 people to sit. Three overhead tanks with a 200,000 litre capacity take care of the water requirement of the campus.

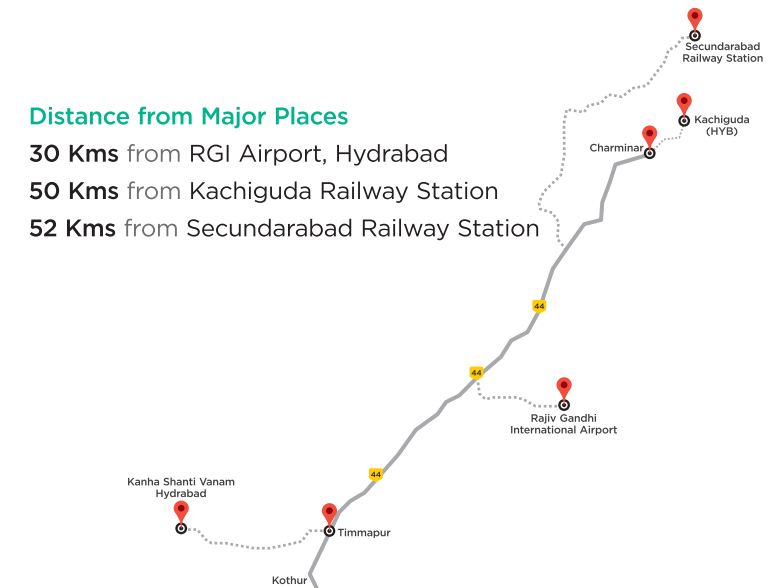
The campus is being developed as a resplendent green space, hosting a wide variety of herbs, shrubs and trees. Indian civilization has always venerated

plants for the vital and benevolent role they play in the sustenance of life on earth. Much less is known about the significant role plants play in the elevation of consciousness of the people who live amidst them. Plants have a wonderful capacity to absorb and retain the subtle essence of Yogic Transmission and gently release these very fine vibrations back into the atmosphere.

One of the major aims of the Green Kanha project is to grow as many plants and trees as the land will naturally sustain, to an unprecedented scale. The vision is to create a home for many future generations, actively creating peace and harmony in the world, cultivating a culture of synchronicity and a loving relationship with nature. Currently more than 300,000 people visit the campus annually, and hence it is a knowledge centre for the dissemination of conservation values.

## Location

Heartfulness Institute, Kanha Shanti Vanam, is now a full-fledged village *panchayat* in Nandigam Mandal, Ranga Reddy District of Telangana State. Situated on the outskirts of Hyderabad city, covering 388 acres, the village is about 10 kilometers north of Shadnagar on the Bengaluru-Hyderabad National Highway 44. The campus is located 30 kilometres from the main Hyderabad Airport.





# Maintaining the Integrity of the Landscape

The uniqueness of this greening approach comes from the kind of plants and trees chosen. The project chooses plants with the following significance, while still giving importance to the aesthetic aspect of landscaping:

1. Ecological
2. Medicinal
3. Economic
4. Socio-cultural
5. Educational
6. Spiritual
7. Wildlife value
8. Intrinsic Value

Major efforts are being taken to grow indigenous species. This initiative gives importance to native species, which may be slow growing, and require specialized effort and knowledge. Indigenous plants have played a vital role in primary health care since time immemorial, but in contemporary society their usefulness is either undermined, or the knowledge of how to grow them and utilize them is on the wane. Growing of medicinal plants helps in conserving the plants and also help in revitalizing the traditional knowledge systems.



## An ex-situ conservation centre

### Kanha as a home to endangered species

It is a recent and unfortunate development that in this mega-biodiverse country a large number of plant species are under threat, and even those species that have been part and parcel of everyday living and considered holy by traditional people are on the verge of extinction.

The country has a large number of narrow endemic species, i.e. species with very limited natural distribution. For example, there are not more than twenty odd trees of *Hildegardia populifolia* (Schott & Endl.) that can be seen growing in the border areas of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, and this species is listed as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Similarly, species with much-valued commercial interest, like the Red Sandalwood (*Pterocarpus santalinus*) and the Indian Frankincense tree (*Boswellia ovalifoliata*) have natural distributions restricted to a few districts of Andhra Pradesh.

The daisy shrub, *Cyathocline manilaliana*, is limited in distribution to a few districts of Telangana, and found nowhere else on our planet Earth. All those narrow endemic species are threatened with extinction every time an electric line is drawn, a railway track is laid, or a damming project or construction project threatens their existence. In the face of global climate change, fluctuations of a couple of degrees Celsius may also wipe them out of existence. Owing to their very limited natural distribution, only a few people have ascertained their ecological or economical value. Thus, their disappearance may also go unnoticed.

Greening efforts at Kanha Shanti Vanam give importance to endemic species, and also provide a second home to very rare species of plants. The intrinsic value of all species of flora and fauna and their right to existence are appreciated. The initiative will also help to conserve the genetic diversity of the country.







## Theme-based gardens

Developing sacred groves in the form of Nakshatra vanam, Raashi vanam and other theme-based gardens will also help in the conservation of plants and the environment. The names of the plants in English and Sanskrit, their botanical names and their medicinal uses will be displayed, in order to educate visitors to these gardens.

### 1. Gardens of edible wild herbs and shrubs

The present mini herbal garden will be further developed to host around 30 species of edible herbs and shrubs.

### 2. Mini forests

An arboretum of native forest species, particularly representing the flora of the Deccan Peninsula, e.g. *Boswellia serrata*, *Boswellia ovalifoliolata*,

*Syzygiumcumini*, *Phyllanthus emblica*, *Dalbergia sisso* etc., will be constructed.

### 3. Unique clusters of trees

Trees like *Ficus arnoteanum*, *Cassia fistula*, *Butea monosperma*, *Holoptelia integrifolia*, *Syzygium cumini* etc.

### 4. Ruchi vanam (garden of edible wild fruits)

An arboretum of edible fruit shrubs and trees from across the globe include olives, sweet chestnut, different species of jamun, mango, guava, sapota, mangosteen etc.

### 5. Ayushya vanam (garden of medicinal plants)

Primary healthcare: A extensive herbal garden has been started which will contain primary health care remedies of 40 species of plants. These plants will

be a source for sustain ably produced and harvested natural medicinal products (flowers, roots, leaves, seeds, sap etc.).

Garden for hair care: A assemblage of plants like *Vetiveria zizanioides*, *Indigofera tinctoria*, *Bacopa monnieri*, *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* (Red-flowered) and other plants used in hair care since time immemorial will be grown in one place.

Fruits of medicinal value : An assemblage of plants like *Alangium salvifolium*, *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, *Citrus aurantium*, *Cordia dichotoma*, *Gmelina arborea*, *Limonia acidissima*, *Manilkara hexandra*, *Syzygiumcumini* will be grown at one part of the herbal garden.

Tuberous medicinal plants : Twenty-seven species of tuber-yielding plants having medicinal value have been identified and shall be planted as a part of the herbal garden. These include *Curculigo orchoides*, *Curcuma amada*, *Curcuma longa*, *Dioscorea alata*, *Dioscorea bulbifera*, *Dioscorea oppositifolia*, *Dioscorea pentaphylla*.

### 6. Nakshatra vanam

A sacred grove of twenty-seven species of trees, shrubs, herbs and lianas, corresponding to the lunar star signs as per Indian astrology, will be planted.

### 7. Raashi vanam (garden of zodiac signs)

Twelve tree species corresponding to the signs of the zodiac will be planted in a circle: *Acacia catechu*,

*Acacia ferruginea*, *Alstonia scholaris*, *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, *Butea monosperma*, *Dalbergia latifolia*, *Ficus benghalensis*, *Ficus religiosa*, *Mangifera indica*, *Mimusops elengi*, *Pterocarpus santalinus* and *Stereospermum personatum*.

### 8. Palmeral

A palmeral is currently spread over 4 acres. It comprises mostly coconut palms, but other native palms like *Careyotaurus*, *Areca nut palm*, and *Borassus palm* are also represented.

### 9. Fernarium

A good collection of terrestrial and epiphytic ferns will be conserved in an ambitious walk-through structure giving the feel of a tropical jungle.

### 10. Fresh water ecosystems

A series of ponds are being created to host the water lilies of India, the two species of lotuses of India, and a host of other aquatic plants.

### 11. Rock Gardens

The Deccan Plateau is home to magnificent rock formations. Two rock gardens are currently being developed.





## Protection and translocation of trees

More than 300 trees that were marked for felling in different parts of Hyderabad and adjoining areas have been translocated and planted at Kanha Shantivanam. Nearly 100 came from the Thumkunta road widening project in Shamirpet Mandal. Nearly 100 coconut trees came from the Krishnagiri District of Tamil Nadu. A few of the banyan trees were a century old, and hence it was a difficult proposition to ensure that they withstood the severe pruning and uprooting required to transplant them. Most of the translocated trees are now regaining their health and returning to their former resplendent form.

*Boswellia serrata*, *Boswellia ovalifoliolata*, *Syzigium cumini*, *Phyllanthus emblica*, *Dalbergia sisso* etc., will be moved when under threat.

## Soil amendment measures

Soil erosion is one of the major factors affecting sustain ability of agricultural production in India. One of the key things is the soil's capacity to absorb water like a sponge and then hold it. Soil is a living environment, including billions of microorganisms per cubic foot. Plant roots, fungi, worms and insects found in the top layer of the soil play a crucial role in the regeneration of life on earth.

When the topsoil is disturbed by human activities like unmanaged grazing, physical uprooting of plants and grass cover, pollution and other causes of disturbance, its structure is broken and the life of the microorganisms decreases. Then, rainwater is easily drained, and a crust forms on the soil hampering the absorption of water. Seeds and microorganisms then wash or blow away, thus depleting the soil's

ability to absorb water and sustain plant growth. These weakened soil conditions then increase the impact of raindrop splash, wind, and storm water run off. Soil erosion in the form of sheet flow, rills (small erosional rivulets) and gullies then follows. The falling rainwater runs over the land surface, resulting in poor infiltration.

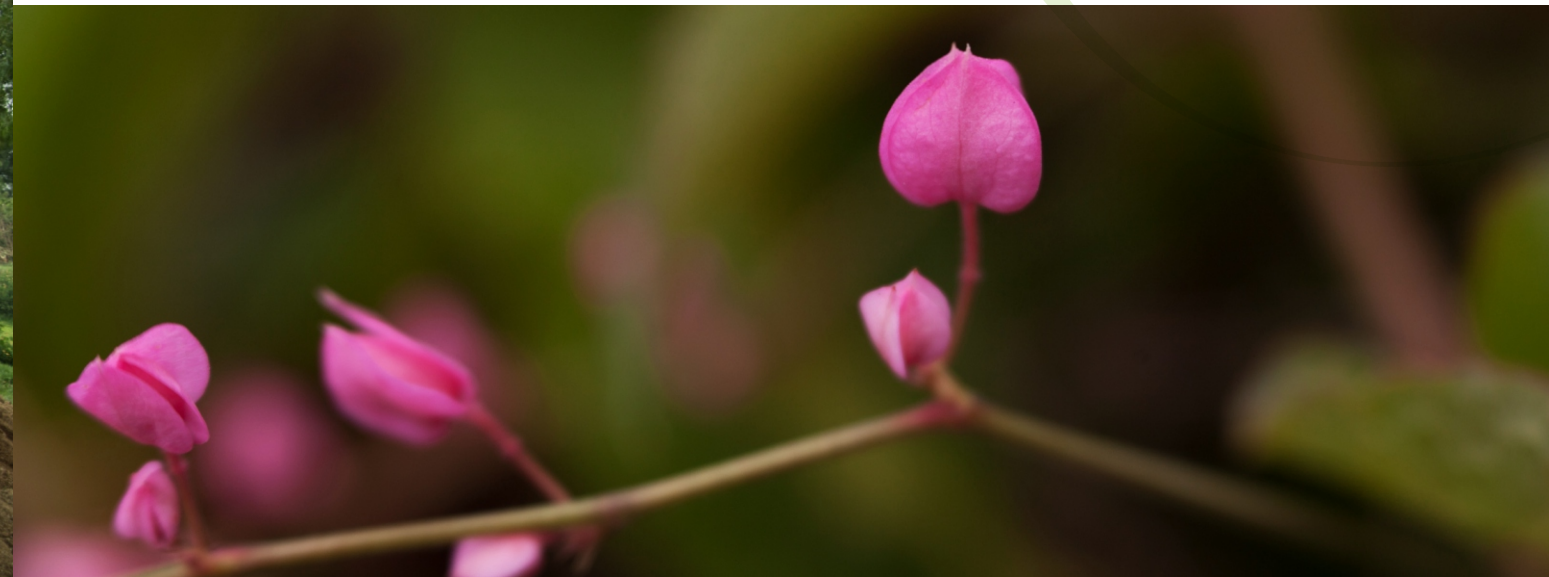
Soil is a finite and non-renewable resource (it takes between 200 and 1000 years for 2.5cm of topsoil to form under crop land conditions). Fertile soils have always been the mainstay of prosperous civilizations, and great civilizations have fallen in the past because they failed to prevent the degradation of soils, which they needed for survival. It is estimated that around 40,000 hectares of our land in India is permanently lost to cultivation and a much larger area is rendered less productive every year due to wind and water erosion.

A study conducted by Maji et al (2010) indicates that more than two-thirds of the state of Telangana is

affected by soil erosion; hence it remains one of the most vulnerable states in terms of soil erosion.

At Kanha Shanti Vanam, areas susceptible to erosion have been identified and a comprehensive soil conservation plan is underway. Site-specific best management practices, such as water harvesting structures, stream bank protection, head cut treatments etc. are envisaged.

Structures that retain or divert storm water run off, such as rolling dips, diversion drains, swales and berms, and micro-catchments are being put in place. These structures are designed to hold the water back (they will be high enough to retain or divert the water flow). Also, structures that slow the flow of water to give it more time to infiltrate, such as one-rock dams and rock lines on contours will be put in place. Gully treatments include grade control structures, induced meandering, water harvesting and re-vegetation.







# Holistic Cultivation

## Organic farming

With a view to being self-sufficient in food production, large areas of Kanha Shanti Vanam are under cultivation, as rice, different millets and vegetables are grown. As an alternative to cultivating crops with extensive use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, hormones etc., the holistic cultivation adopted at Kanha relies only on farmyard manure, compost, and jeevamrutham prepared out of cow urine and cow dung from the native races of cows. Organic pesticides, companion planting and other pest control methods are also used.

As of now, sorghum, jowar and foxtail millets, pigeon pea, horse gram and rice are the crops cultivated at Kanha Shanti Vanam. Organic vegetable farms across the campus caters to the food needs of Kanha Shanti Vanam. Tomatoes, peas, beans and

marrows and gourds are cultivated using trellises.

## Organic composting

An organic composting system converts much of the food and plant waste into fertilizer for the gardens.

## Goshala

Native breeds of cows play a significant role in organic and holistic farming. As many native species of cows are also threatened with extinction, rearing them also help conserve the genetic diversity of the country. Kanha Shanti Vanam maintains over 100 cows from various regions of India, especially the Gir, Red Sindhi and Sahiwal from North and North-western India.

## Apiculture

Beekeeping is an ancient vocation in India, and is referenced in ancient Vedic and Buddhist scriptures. At Kanha Shanti Vanam beekeeping is done not only for extraction of honey, but to enhance the productivity of organic farming and as an integral part of holistic cultivation. We have around 50 hives of Indian bees as of now, and plan for 150 more hives to be placed at different locations.

## Legume cultivation and mulching

The spreading of a protective layer of organic mulch on top of the soil to protect and enrich the soil, also prevents evaporation and adds organic matter while decomposing. Mulch also provides a more cohesive structure. Mulching is combined with other techniques, such as enriching the soil with compost.

## Biochar

An initiative is underway to enhance the soil with biochar, made out of twigs and other organic waste through the process of pyrolysis. This stable solid which is rich in carbon can endure in the soil for thousands of years. Kanha Shanti Vanam is a smoke-free zone, as no organic matter is ever burnt here, and biochar is also an approach to carbon sequestration.

## Mushroom cultivation

As a part of holistic cultivation, the Oyster mushroom is being cultivated at Kanha Shanti

Vanam. Hay from agricultural residue is utilized for mushroom cultivation and subsequently for organic composting. In collaboration with the National Institute of Rural Development, 2-day training are also imparted to the aspiring farmers from adjacent villages along with residents and visitors to Kanha.





# Conservation of Water and Sanitation

Kanha Shanti Vanam is located in one of the worst drought affected districts of India. The groundwater levels in the state of Telangana plummeted by 2.78 metres during 2015 and bore wells are drying up at most places. Rainwater harvesting thus becomes an imperative here.

At Kanha, natural irrigation ponds are set up throughout the campus, of which five are being further widened and deepened to cover the entire catchment area. Rainwater is collected and redirected to these water bodies. Before the onset of each monsoon, a rainwater harvesting system of storage tanks and reservoirs is prepared at multiple locations. The three natural lakes and two man-made lakes have a spread of 22.28 acres and the water stored in them caters to the needs of people as well as the ambitious greening project. An advanced drip irrigation system is already in place.

Further research is making it simpler, more eco-friendly and sustainable.

## Grey water utilization and management

A waste water treatment plant was set up early at Kanha. A natural, environmental friendly and zero-power-consumption system, known as Constructed Wetlands methodology, has been adopted for treating both grey water and blackwater. Treatment happens through Phytoremediation, Bioremediation and Rhizoremediation.

## Waste segregation and zero waste management

At Kanha Shanti Vanam, garbage and food waste collected from the kitchen and surroundings are separated from plastic and other waste. All food

waste is dumped into a huge pit. Before dumping, the pit is filled with dried leaves and sprayed with a microbial solution and then the food waste is dumped into the pit. The solution is sprayed again and the whole thing is covered with mud. The pit is then left for about 45 to 50 days. The food waste is automatically converted into organic compost, which is then used as manure for the plants and trees at Kanha.





# Green Energy



Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all is one of the goals of the United Nations. Polluting energy sources are the dominant contributors to climate change, e.g. fossil fuels, accounting for around 60 percent of total global greenhouse gas emissions. As is well appreciated, sustainable energies have a tremendous impact on lives and economies.

In the face of global climatic change, there are many things that each one of us can do as individuals and as a part of our communities. Reducing the carbon intensity of energy is a key objective in long-term climate goals. Sustainable energies, reducing our carbon footprint, transform the planet. We have the vision of making available such green energy in this remote area of Telangana.

## Power Generation using Solar Energy

Among all the alternative energies available, solar

energy can be utilized to maximum effect in Kanha. Typically a 2 KW photovoltaic system could supply energy to five households. Also, for every unit of power generated through the solar plant and fed back into the existing grid, based on the government regulations there is a monetary benefit earned.

## Use of battery run vehicles and bicycles

The campus has a well-developed road network running for 11.86 kilometres, which connects the upcoming meditation hall, kitchen, dining hall, administration block, welcome desk, book stall, accommodation etc. Kanha encourages walking and cycling over other means of transport. Over 100 bicycles are already available for use on the campus, including bicycles for children. We are exploring electric bicycles and electric carts for the elderly. Already there are a handful of battery-operated vehicles to help people move around.



# Harmony between Built and Natural Environments

Buildings are designed so as to be interwoven with greenery. Building design should be such that “A building should be constructed so as to minimize the need for fossil fuels to run it.” Optimised design to ensure minimal use of conventional energy.

Natural ventilation, unlike fan-forced ventilation, uses the natural forces of wind and buoyancy to deliver fresh air into buildings. The amount of ventilation will depend critically on the size and placement of openings in the building with equal consideration given to supply and exhaust. Openings between rooms such as transom

windows, louvres, grills or open plans are techniques to complete the airflow circuit through a building. Providing ridge vents, the use of clerestories or vented skylights and attic ventilation are other design measures used for natural ventilation. Further, use of radiant-cooling technology, solar air-conditioning, solar heating will be used as required. The building design will utilize natural light coming into the building during the daytime. All built areas have to integrate rainwater harvesting and sequestering systems during construction.





## Outreach and Community Welfare Programs

On 10 June 2016, the first ever outreach program was taken up successfully. Grafted mango and guava seedlings were distributed to the two adjacent villages. The volunteers of Kanha Shanti Vanam, accompanied by the Officer Trainees of the Telangana Forest Academy and its faculty, visited Maddur and Bandoniguda, distributed the grafted seedlings to the villagers, and also planted them in their homesteads. Only those homestead gardens were chosen which had compound walls so that free ranging sheep and goats did not eat the seedlings. The coordinates of the planted seedlings were also recorded. The villagers were so happy

that even the people who were antagonistic towards each other because of political alliances came together in this activity, which turned out to be a big celebration.

As of now, Heartfulness Institute is taking baby steps towards helping rural school children, and in the years to come many more outreach activities are envisaged, including regular free medical camps for the residents of the local villages: Chegur, Bandoniguda, Buggoniguda, Venkammaguda, Damaralapalli and Madhur.



## Education, Extension and Research

All the above proposed activities and the planting of unique plants offer a tremendous potential for imparting education, extension activities and research. Already many training programs are held at Kanha Shanti Vanam, that too on a regular basis involving a wide section of society. Those training programs range from on hands-on training in pottery and organic farming to farmers, nature education to school and college students, teacher training programs, Brighter Minds programs for children, training in the Heartfulness practices for beginner, intermediate and advanced levels,

Heartfulness trainer certification programs, and programs for corporate executives.







# Endangered Species

According to a report published in the scientific journal, *Science*, between 22% and 47% of the world's plant species are endangered. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) regularly updates a Red List of those species of plants and animals that are threatened or endangered in various parts of the world.

India sustains about 17,000 species of flowering

plants, accounting for 6 to 7% of the total flowering plant species of the world. 33% of India's plants are endemic. The number of Indian plants and animals in the IUCN Red List has been steadily on the rise, and currently about 20% of plant species are threatened or endangered. In all, 632 species of plants in India are red-listed. In 2012, the Red List highlighted 62 critically endangered species of plants in immediate danger of going extinct.

Kanha Shanti Vanam now sustains and nurtures 53 IUCN red-listed species, including:

**four critically endangered tree species –**

*Hildegardia populifolia* Schott & Endl.

*Syzygium travancoricum* Gamble

*Vateria indica* L.

*Nothopagia casterneifolia*

**and nine endangered species –**

*Cycas beddomei* Dyer.

*Cycas circinalis* L.

*Dipterocarpus indicus* Bedd.

*Dysoxylum malabaricum* Bedd. ex C.DC.

*Hopea parviflora* Bedd.

*Hopea ponga* (Dennst.) Mabb.

*Kingiodendron pinnatum* (DC.) Harms.

*Shorea tumbuggaia* Roxb.

*Syzygium alternifolium* (Wight) Walp.







# Methodology

## Creating a database of native plant species

A botanical study carried out with the help of Dr J. Swamy, a taxonomist, has revealed that Kanha Shanti Vanam is home to a total of 742 species belonging to 113 families of plants. As a result of greening activities, currently Kanha Shanti Vanam sustains 307 species of herbs, 290 species of trees, 58 species of shrubs, 12 species of under-shrubs and 73 species of climbers and twiners.

## Soil testing, botanical investigation, study of rainfall and other data

Kanha Shanti Vanam falls under the semi-arid area of the State of Telangana and has a predominantly hot and dry climate. The potential of the land is

assessed with regard to its capacity to sustain different herbs, shrubs and trees that would be grown in the times to come. This is done through soil testing and other measures.

## Expertise and care

Daaji is the central source of inspiration, guidance and support for the Green Kanha initiatives. He has come up with a slogan, "Each one teach one to plant one," and his love for greenery has motivated each and every member of the Heartfulness Institute.

A retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, who is resident at Kanha Shanti Vanam, plans the greening activities based on scientific principles of landscaping. An entrepreneur in the field of the

plant nursery business, who is also resident at Kanha, takes care of the nursery, plantation activities and maintenance. Two IT professionals, who are residents at Kanha offer their valuable inputs with regard to sustainable technologies adopted at the campus. A fulltime volunteer with a postgraduate degree in Agriculture coordinates the organic farming.

## Sourcing and planting

With the vision of Kanha Shanti Vanam as an ex-situ conservation centre, efforts are being made for collecting plants from far and wide places within the Deccan Region. Plants that are representative of the Deccan Peninsula have so far been sourced from the Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka Forest Departments, the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding, ICFRE, Government of India, Coimbatore, Foundation of Revitalization of Local Health Tradition (FRLHT), Bengaluru, and from the Nursery of Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam Board. The rare plants of the Western Ghats were mainly sourced from the Kerala Forest Research Institute, Trissur, M.S Swaminathan Research Foundation, Wyanad, Kerala, State Forest Research Institute, Government of Tamil Nadu, Kolappakkam, University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru, Foundation of Revitalization of Local Health Tradition, Bengaluru and Shivaji University of Kolhapur, Maharashtra.

With due attention and care, the plants of the Deccan Peninsula are thriving at Kanha, with robust

growth. With regard to the species from the Western Ghats, especially those that thrive in rainforest ecosystems, special care is given by providing irrigation at the bottom and also a fogger from above. Wherever necessary, partial shade is provided by green nets and coconut fronds.

## Nursery

Kanha has developed a full-fledged nursery, covering 5.7 acres, with a stock of over 200,000 saplings of about 200 species of plants.

## Recognition for the Green Kanha initiatives

'Haritha Haram' means Green Garland, and is a flagship program of the Telangana State Government, with a vision to increase the tree cover in the state from the present 24% to 33% of the total geographic area. This program started in 2015. In recognition of the contribution to this ambitious greening movement outside the notified forest areas of the state, Heartfulness Institute Kanha Shanti Vanam was awarded the 'Haritha Mitra' (Green Friend) award for the year 2016.

This ecological movement at Kanha Shanti Vanam has inspired citizens from all over the world. People of different nationality, language, race, class and gender are coming together to meditate and to also create resplendent green spaces, where the beneficial vibratory fields generated by plants resonate an ideal inner environment.



# Brighter Minds



'Brighter Minds' (BM) is a unique whole brain wellness program offered by the 'Cognitive Skills Private Limited', Bangalore, which aims at enhancing the observation and cognitive functions of the brain for children. The theory and the training modules of the BM program are informed by some of the latest scientific theories and advances in the field of cognitive neurosciences as well as on-the-ground experience and programs.

## What is cognitive function?

Cognitive function is the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses. It encompasses processes such as knowledge, attention, memory, judgement and evaluation, reasoning and

computation, problem solving and decision making, comprehension and language etc.

## What are the various interventions and activities adopted by the Brighter Minds program to improve cognitive functions?

Based on the review of latest scientific literature and actual experience on the ground through pilot projects, a set of interventions are finalized as a part of BM training program. They include the following:

- Age and context appropriate dance and physical exercises to generate an environment of lightness and joy.
- Breathing exercises, relaxation and prayer.

- Specific brain exercises and eyeball exercises.
- Specifically developed music for relaxation and entrainment.

All the above activities are engaged by the facilitator in an environment of love, joy and positivity which is found to be vital for the success of the program. The parents are also taught the skills and techniques to generate similar environment at homes so that the children can continue to practice and nurture their innate abilities.

## What research has been undertaken by the Brighter Minds team? What changes have you observed in children?

Preliminary anecdotal reports and qualitative exploration with few children and parents revealed that children showed changes in the following traits:

focus, retention, comprehension, empathy, intuition, observation, self confidence, emotional stability.

We followed up with an online, random survey of parents to know what proportion of children actually showed these changes to what extent. This was important to be able to systematically document and understand from a programmatic perspective. Out of 71 parents that participated in the survey, close to 91% agreed that their children were more calm, focused, and self-confident with improved comprehension and memory as a result of the BM program. About 85% reported that their

children were emotionally more stable and about 87% reported that their children's abilities to share and understand feelings had increased. About 93% of parents expressed that they were satisfied and will be likely to recommend this program to other parents.

## Why this program is only for children?

A child's brain during formative years is more plastic (mouldable) than that of an adult and hence offers greater opportunities for development and change. This is already studied extensively and hence we currently focus on children.

## What is the duration of Brighter Minds Alpha program?

Alpha program is a fun filled 30 hrs program distributed over 8 weekends.

## Why do you call it a 'Gift for a Lifetime'?

We spend a lot of money to buy gifts for our children in order to bring them happiness and joy. Often it is short-lived. Brighter Minds gives children the unique gift of enhanced brain capacity so that they can acquire knowledge, understand and apply it to problems throughout their lives. We often look for a gift that is outside, but this program will unlock the gift hidden inside each and every child.





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