

Second Quarterly Report Weltwaerts-Programme Auroville 2011/12

By Hannes Dettmann

It's been six months now that I arrived in Auroville and started my work in the community Sadhana Forest. It's strange to think about it, time is passing by so fast...six months already... on the other hand I find asking myself "only six months? It feels like I've been here for years!". Well, my perception of time works definitely in a different way here. And luckily I am not left alone with this for me astonishing realization.

So thinking back, what have I done and learned so far... Right now I would say: I don't know. The days in Sadhana Forest are so packed with interactions, experiences, realizations, activities, lessons and so on that it is really hard for me most of the time to actually stop, reflect and process what is going on for me here.

But one thing is for sure, I've been growing a lot since I came here and I guess that is true for most of the people that stay for some time in Sadhana Forest. And growing isn't always fun, it is also a result of the challenges I encounter occasionally, they aren't unusually profound, but many times I still find myself in situations I would have never imagined to find myself in before, situations that often require an honest look at and within myself to re-examine the image I have of myself, my opinions, my motives, my thoughts, my behavioural patterns and my personal priorities. These encounters with my self might be sometimes unpleasant, but in the end they bring me in closer contact with myself and enable me to get to know this guy that carries my name a bit better every time. It feels like life is accelerated and more dense while staying at Sadhana Forest, probably because in a such a close-knit community there is no escape from it.

In the end, Sadhana Forest has a lot of invaluable things to offer – if your eyes are open and you are looking for these things. In my case, it was my interest in Permaculture – amongst many other elements that Sadhana Forest embraces - that led me to come here. It was a rather intuitive choice in the beginning and finally it felt like destiny when after I got accepted by weltwaerts I learned that there will be a 3-month permaculture design course being held in Sadhana Forest which would start one day after my supposed arrival there.

And it did. So the first three months I was more than busy with permaculture theory classes, the work in the morning, engaging in community life, attending the meetings and exploring Auroville. Now – after acquiring a more than 100 hour long introduction to permaculture – I am finally able to take on my own projects within Sadhana Forest where I can experiment and get lots of practical experience. As I said, Sadhana is a great place for learning – if you are able to learn by yourself without relying on a teacher that will talk into your face for hours and only requires you to listen. Now that I am implementing my permaculture design by building a garden for a Tamil family in Koot Road and leading my own team while actually getting my hands dirty combined with the theoretical knowledge I gather from the classes, books and conversations gives me the feeling that I actually learn something that is **really** relevant – a feeling I was most of the time missing when I attended school and university.

It is the opportunity to create something productive, beautiful and valuable that keeps my spirit up over this long period of time. It feels like having a work or project that one is really passionate about is crucial to being able to stay for a long time in Sadhana Forest, because the general atmosphere in Sadhana is quite transient.

Being in Sadhana makes you see a lot of people come and go and you can't really hold on to them (or sometimes even remember them). This can be really challenging but can also be seen as a lesson in non-attachment, a lesson that I find really valuable (similar to the experience of seeing your favourite book or your passport rotting away under mould during monsoon season or noticing that your 250€ backpack is being eaten by squirrels). On the other hand it gives you the opportunity to get to know a lot of wonderful people from all over the world to learn from them, make friends and network. Or just share a wonderful time in an amazing place with them.

So these are some of my thoughts on my first six months in Sadhana Forest. I could write a book about my time here, but not now and not while I am here. That would be impossible. And it is all subjective, but real (for me). Other people might experience this place differently. But that's their story, not mine.