



Convergence

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“Experiential Environmental Programs for an Emerging World”

Convergence is an innovative environmental education center in the South East of India. We offer experiential environmental education programs for anyone interested in making their world a better place. Convergence is an opportunity to explore inspiration, creation and action.

Convergence engages people from different social and cultural backgrounds in a working dialogue, to enable deep observation and awareness of the self, society and the surrounding natural world that we are all a part of.

We explore our world views through workshops, field work and community outreach, living in the midst of an evolving forest, giving ourselves the time to relax and have fun and explore the desire to create change.

Participate in Convergence

Convergence is ideal for you if you:

- Are seeking a **cross-cultural team-based experience**
- Would like to **improve your theoretical and practical knowledge of environmental work**
- Are motivated to **create a positive change in the world**
- **Can make yourself available for 4 weeks**
- Are seeking to **expand your self awareness and that of the world around you**
- Are from Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America, North America, Australia, the South Pacific...anywhere!!!!
We welcome everyone and encourage them to come



CONVERGENCE

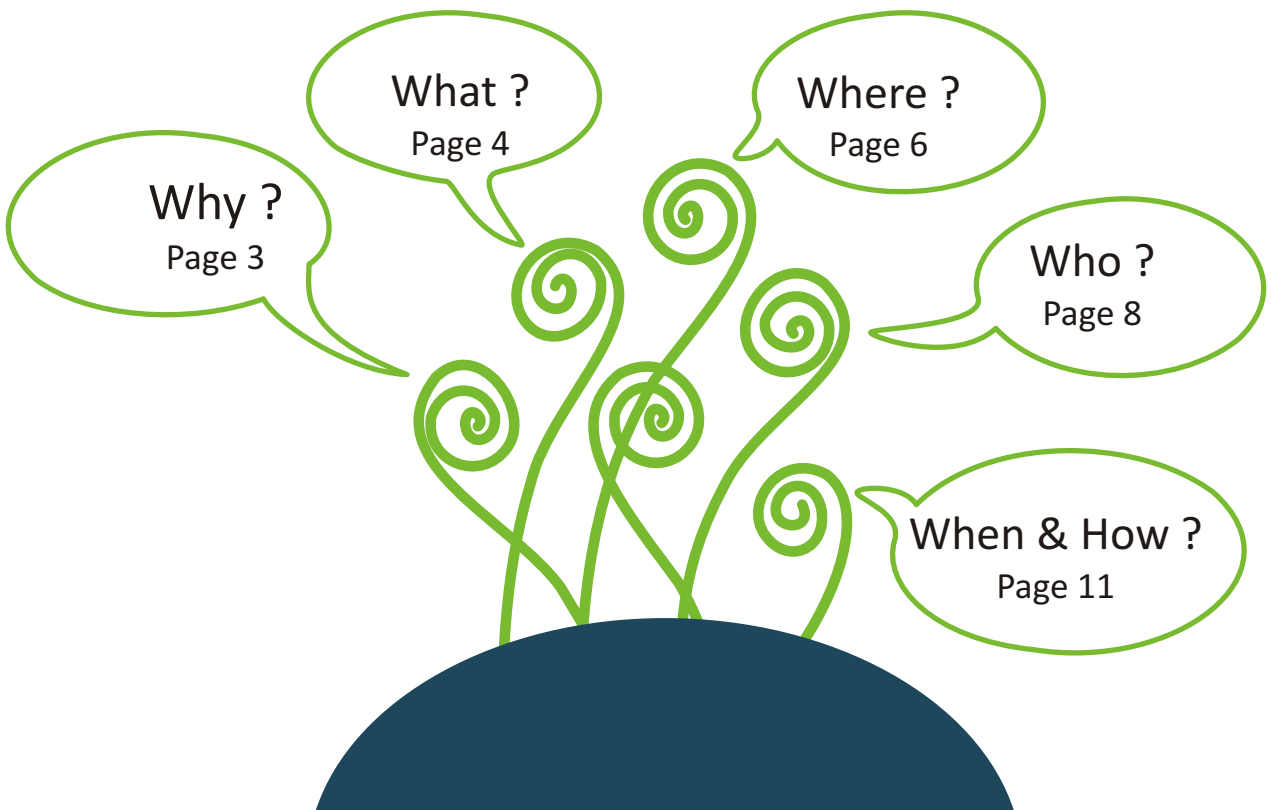
Experiential
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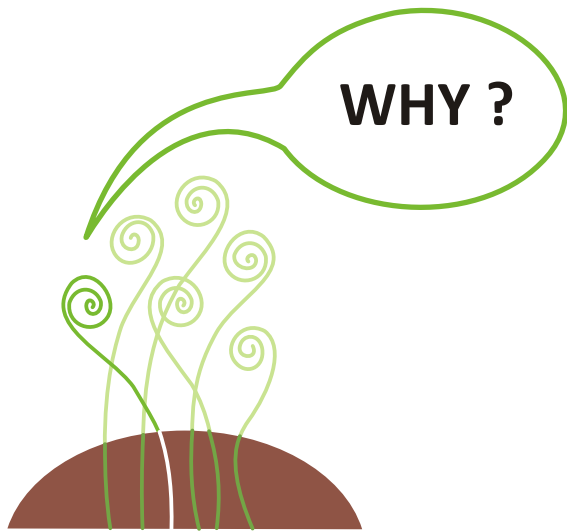
We are currently accepting applications for:

- **August 2nd – August 30th 2008**
- **January 10th – February 7th 2009**

Convergence requires a big commitment as you will be interacting across cultures in a new environment. The rewards are immense as you will have the opportunity to explore a new understanding of the world we live in and how we interact with it. Convergence aspires to gain a whole new perspective on sustainability and social action.



CONTENTS



WHY CONVERGENCE?

Con – ver – gence

n. [kuhn – ver – juhns]

1. a point of commonality
2. a common result or conclusion
3. an amazing place to learn and grow

There is one undeniable thing that we as humans ALL share – our planet. Its health concerns us all. We, however, all come from very different perspectives. These perspectives are informed by our different, cultural, social, economic, geographic, and endless other realities.

In order to seek solutions to the planet's great challenges of climate change, shrinking natural resources and exponential increases in waste, to name but a few, a convergence of ideas is urgently needed. This convergence must involve the multi-dimensional perspectives of humanity as a whole. The solution concerns us all and the quest to find it must involve us all.

Convergence is an initial step towards finding that solution.

By bringing together concerned people from around the world for a 4 week program Convergence helps people to share their knowledge, experiences and inspirations with one another. The objective is to help people find locally based solutions that are informed by global perspectives.

KEY FEATURES AND BENEFITS

Key Features

- Short-term program – 4 weeks
- Programs starting in August and January
- Focus on environmental, social and financial sustainability
- Team based intercultural experience with participants from different continents
- Includes theoretical, hands-on and outreach components as well as opportunities for introspection, heightening of one's self awareness and one's connection to the larger picture

Key Benefits

- Global Involvement
- Change How Humans Impact the Environment
- Hands-on Experience
- Sharing Experience and Knowledge
- Long-term support and mentoring – Your experience doesn't end when the 4 week program is over. Grants are made available to alumni through a proposal writing process and mentoring is available to all.





WHAT ?

EXPERIENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

How am I going to change my world?

Convergence provides the space for people from all walks of life to come together in order to seek solutions and unleash the power that group dynamics can add to this work. We provide information and motivation, within a flexible structure to tap a powerful wave of energy. It is a point of convergence. This energy, having a distinct life of its own, aids in the process of finding and creating a meaningful life and a holistic view of how to create change. We believe that there are many different avenues, each appropriate for the individual perspective, which will bring back the environmental health of the planet.

Our programs bring together people from different backgrounds, in order to expand their understanding of themselves and their world. We encourage a sharing of knowledge and perspectives, while working hands-on in an ecologically friendly way.

- We are currently offering 4-week programs for up to 16 participants
 - August 2nd – August 30th 2008
 - January 10th – February 7th 2009
- Half of the participants are from India and half from other continents of the world

We provide food, accommodation, transportation, volunteer opportunities work, workshop assistance, outside facilitators who bring additional expertise to the workshops and a living and working space in the midst of nature for the convergence experience.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Walking Many Paths In Four Weeks

The programme takes you through the process of creating a picture of the world you want to live in and then helps focus your energies into building it. We offer information, experiences, resources and a general understanding about your global environmental context.

An essential part of the programme is how we combine all of the above with an opportunity for introspection and self-discovery. We hope that while at Convergence you will take a deep look at your own path and it's meaning as part of the network of paths connecting life as a whole. Thus we serve only as catalysts in your personal journey.

Together at Convergence you will experience a unique opportunity to gain insight and knowledge from your fellow participants as you lead each other in workshops. The programme includes working hands-on in areas such as organic food production, renewable energy, sustainable building, reforestation and water management. Most importantly we provide the experience of living as a community exploring both



global and local issues and solutions. The power of people is in their ability to create change in their daily actions and innovations, which over time, create our collective reality. Through participating in Convergence you will not change the world in 4 weeks. What you will do is gain the knowledge and skills necessary to make a truly integral change in your own life upon your return.

OUR APPROACH

A way of learning

At convergence we explore through deep questioning both the bigger picture and the fundamental root causes of our current global environmental reality. The aim is to reach a level of fundamental change in attitudes, behaviours and awareness. We aspire to go beyond merely promoting technological fixes that are based on the traditional consumption – oriented values and methods of the industrially conditioned economy.

Our programme aims at developing an integrated and holistic world-view using a **systems approach**. We have embraced the holistic trinity, first introduced by Satish Kumar— soil, soul and society. Soil represents the natural world. We come from the earth and return to the earth. We take our sustenance from the Sun and Moon. Nature is the source of all life. We need to take care of the soil and replenish it constantly.

While respecting the soil, we also care for the soul. The soul is the vessel for mind, body and spirit. The individual soul is an integral part of the world soul, the *anima mundi*. Social justice, restrained consumption, sustainable economics, a sense of community and diversity of cultures are part and parcel of the larger picture.

Convergence is a catalyst along the individual participant's path of personal transformation.

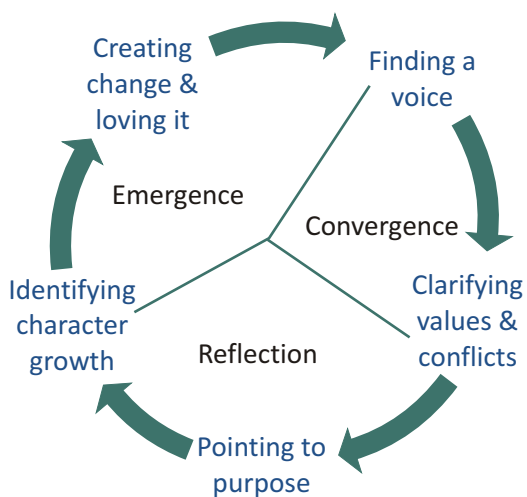
THE EXPERIENCE

Being at Convergence

The convergence of human diversity with varied approaches, taking into account individual interests and needs, will lead both participants and facilitators to a great deal of learning through hands-on experience.

Life-changes stem from a deep understanding on the experiential level, and not only on the mental level, so the emphasis on actual experience is very significant.

The environment of openness, comfort and community, in an evolving forest, engenders an atmosphere that allows for convergence of interests, ideas, feelings and needs. To enable this leaning process, the experience will require flexibility as much as possible, engaging different methods such as work groups (through body, emotion and mind), field trips, volunteer work, private time for contemplation, study, discussions, or visits to places of interest and open, spontaneous events, evolving out of the diversity of the participants.



WHERE ?

**EVERGREEN,
AUROVILLE,
INDIA**

Where is Convergence Located?

Convergence is located in a small family community named Evergreen. Evergreen is part of Auroville, an intentional community in the South East of India with almost 2000 residents from more than 40 countries.

Convergence's location at Evergreen is the ideal setting for learning. Our center is surrounded by an emerging tropical dry evergreen forest (TDEF). Being in Auroville provides you with exposure to many different lifestyles, you are surrounded by alternatives.

In the upcoming years perhaps no country can have more of an impact on the environment than India. For years India has been a leader in medicine, economics, population growth, technology and manufacturing, as well as being home to some of the world's longest lived traditions. It is the perfect home for our environmental education center!

ACCOMODATION

Living Comfortably In A Tropical Forest!

We offer our course participants accommodation in a variety of lodgings, all situated in Evergreen Community, Auroville. These range from a 'regular' brick and cement room to 'hut-like' structures, built with local techniques (called 'capsules' in Auroville jargon). We offer dormitory, double and single sleeping spaces.

The capsules are of different styles, but all are constructed out of only natural, local building materials, such as palm leaf, thatch, wood, bamboo, granite pillars, coconut rope, mud, papier mache etc. All sleeping spaces are screened with mosquito nets and have been constructed taking air-flow and natural ventilation into account. Fans are provided for the hotter months.

Apart from the 'regular' shower and toilet facilities, there are also composting toilets on the site, which are also constructed purely out of natural materials.

Our focus is eco-friendly, beauty and comfort. We aim to provide an experience where sustainability need not lead to discomfort or compromising of one's aesthetic tastes, rather, our campus has been created with the idea to utilize nature's beauty and practicality to its utmost, resulting in structures with minimal impact, while maximizing sense exploration.

THE FOREST

Soil, Saplings and Simplicity

Convergence is housed within Evergreen community, which forms the nucleus of Evergreen forest. The entire site comprises 22 acres of land, of which approximately 70% is forest land.



AUROVILLE

Auroville...A Universal City In the Making

“Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.”

Auroville is home to Convergence, as well as many other people, projects, undertakings and practices. We're proud to call Auroville home.

As part of Auroville, we believe deeply in, and are working towards, realizing the collective vision of Auroville:

1. Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole. But to live in Auroville, one must be the willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.
2. Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages.
3. Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realisations.
4. Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity.

A cashew plantation is scattered across much of the forest and each year we harvest the organic nuts, process and package them by hand and sell them within the larger community of Auroville. The income goes toward sustaining the forest.

The reforestation project running in Evergreen (and in many other green-belt communities) focuses on the re-introduction of the Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest (TDEF) species. This is a local species of forest trees, most suited to the local soil and climate. Twice a year, during monsoon time, we prepare the land for planting, by digging holes and composting, and approximately 1,500 saplings are planted annually. Some of these saplings are cultivated in Evergreen's nursery and others in other Auroville communities.

Many of the new TDEF saplings have been planted under the existing cashew trees where the soil has been enriched by these trees. As the TDEF saplings grow, the cashew trees will die out and a TDEF forest will emerge, replacing the cashew plantation.

Other than the bi-annual planting and annual cashew harvest other forest work includes maintenance of the fence (largely a natural, live fence of local thorn bushes), bunding, culling of dead trees, clearing parasites, seed/sapling collection, mulching of newly planted saplings etc. Our forest manager, Erumalai, is a passionate forester, a true inspiration and a most enthusiastic guide.





WHO ?

WHO WE ARE

Families, Friends, Cats and Dogs

We are 2 families, 9 residents, 5 adults, 4 children, it all depends on how you want to look at it. The 9 of us live at Evergreen in Auroville and are happy to welcome you into our home for Convergence. We come from India, South Africa, Israel, Canada and England with professional backgrounds as diverse as insurance, international development, ecology, yoga instruction and education.

Our staff are also an integral part of our family. We employ 4 people from nearby villages who help us with everything to do with the forest and our lives in it. Erumalai, Rajaswari, Kala and Kamla are integral to what we do and we feel blessed to be able to work with them.

YOUR HOSTS

Five Diverse Individuals, One Family

The five of us below will be your hosts and organizers throughout your stay. We'll be making sure that everything runs as smoothly as it can and that your time at Convergence will benefit everyone involved.

Natasha

I was brought up as a farm child in rural India. I spent most of my higher academic life in the megalopolis of Bombay, trying to make sense of this tantalising urban machine. The city of Bombay was a cultural and sociological monster that I could never really come to grips with. I soon realised that to continue living in Bombay after my graduation was living off the fruits of a dubious progress.

I made the decision to move back to my village in India. My return to my family farm was an attempt to return to a lifestyle more in tune with nature, away from the fast-paced consumerist lifestyle of the city. I soon felt the need to fill the gaps in my knowledge and went to the Netherlands to do a masters degree in Ecological Agriculture. This experience changed my life. It was not the knowledge I gained, rather the Man I married.

David and I shared a dream we both had independently - to share the simple pleasures of life in the company of friends. We spent 5 years in various counties all over the globe looking for the right spot to do this. In 2002 we made Auroville our home and realised a dream, we share with our children, Zea and Jasmine and many wonderful friends. I look forward to expanding this circle in sharing with you.

Dave

I come from somewhat confused origins, with a background in England, Australia, Taiwan, Nepal, India, Europe, North America, Laos, East Timor, and East Africa. Formative experiences include a missionary upbringing with schools



ranging from a hippy haven to traditional English public school followed by 12 years in international relief and development, sprinkled with stints in universities.

Unsurprisingly this eclectic background evolved into a thirst for knowledge in “what’s it all about? “How do these things hang together?” Alternatively, “how can I make sense of it all, and join the dots?” In time, this led to a Eureka moment with a personal discovery of systems thinking and deep ecology.

For the last few years my dream has been to have the opportunity to interact with likeminded people, share experiences and provide mutual support and opportunities for learning. I feel deeply fulfilled to finally have that opportunity.

Tamar



I was born and spent my childhood in South Africa. A search for change took me to Israel after high school where I completed my undergrad. studies in linguistics, and eventually found myself immersed in the corporate world of advertising. It was around that time when I met Amir, and found that we shared a common yearning for something more fulfilling, deeper, inspirational.

We spent 3 years in India on a journey, focussing on Yogasana (practice, training and teaching children) and Vipassana meditation. When we reached Auroville in 2002, we found a place that enabled us personal growth, freedom and a deep connection to nature, as well as a wonderful place to bring up our two children, both born here. Motherhood has for me been a discovery, a practice of yoga and a journey of growth. I hope our convergence experience will hold such experiences for us all.

I look forward to our journey together!



Amir

For me, Convergence is a stepping stone in a journey that began in Israel about 10 years ago; when I started to realize that the aspiration for social status, financial stability and physical comforts would not change the sense of emptiness and shallowness that life can hold. Around that time, I met my future wife, Tamar, who helped to strengthen my desire to continue the search. I decided to sell the business I had developed and all my belongings and left for India. There I found myself experimenting with different disciplines to stimulate the experience of awakening the individual spirit, acknowledging more and more the limitations of our personal conditioned mind.

This journey, which began in northern India, has brought me to Auroville where I practice and teach awareness through the body in Auroville's schools and watch my children grow up in our unique Evergreen environment. This Evergreen experience enables me more and more to feel the present – the experience of connecting the outer with the inner. Looking forward to sharing the experience in Convergence...

Iain

Hi Folks,

I'm grateful that you are taking the time to learn more about Convergence. It has been a dream of ours for many years to create a community that is living and working together towards affecting positive change. Convergence is our living expression of that change.

I am originally from Canada where I studied International Development at the University of Guelph. I've worked many jobs since from managing an eco-lodge in the Andes to facilitating social advocacy workshops and leading international volunteer trips. Throughout all those years I have been working towards the dream of Convergence. I want to be part of a large family of change makers who are constantly making our world a cleaner, safer, healthier and more harmonious place. Sending you all an Earth Hug...

In peas,
Iain

CO - HOSTS

In addition to the core team at Evergreen, we will be assisted by Marc and Matilde as our food coordinators and Theresa as the international liaison and “coordinator of funk”.

Theresa

Hi, my name is Tea. Ok, its Theresa but people call me Tea. I am a twenty three year old student seeking to build a funky, diverse, and nurturing community. I would rather give a hug than shake a hand, have a secret passion for the socially conscious hip hop scene, and enjoying interviewing mountains and trees.

I feel incredibly blessed and honor to be a volunteer of the Convergence team in Auroville, India. Last fall my heart became alive when I experienced my own inner revolution while in the presents of the Convergence community. I found myself hugged by Mother Nature, embraced by a new family, and pushed to find what my own heart was saying I need to do for the world. Above all I learnt the benefit from a willingness to face struggle and a continual commitment to give love when



working to bring positive change. So much hard work and commitment needs to happen from each of us to make this world a better place. We must nurture each others gifts, ask difficult questions, and continue to embark to find the unity that connects us all. In the words of Dr. Seuss, " Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot nothing is going to get better. Its not."

Matilde and Marc

We are both born in Spain and met at high school and felt that our friendship would lead us to live an adventurous life. After finishing our studies we both went in search of the "promised land" where people from all over the world could live in harmony among themselves and with Nature. Matilde went to South America and Marc went to India and discovered Auroville.

After these life changing experiences we decided to move to Auroville in 1997 with the idea of starting a new life and expose our children Aloe and Eden to a different environment and an integral education.

We love good food and enjoy cooking and during our Convergence weeks we will cook and eat together, organic and wholesome foods with a good dose of creativity and fun!





WHEN & HOW ?

HOW TO APPLY

Applying is easy!

We are currently accepting applications for the following sessions:

August 2nd – August 30th 2008

January 10th – February 7th 2009

If you are ready for serious environmental action you can apply to Convergence today. For an application form please write to us at :

creatingchange@thepointofconvergence.org

OR

Convergence

Evergreen, Auroville, Tamil Nadu

605 101

We'll get back to you within a week of writing to us with more information. Successful applicants will be requested to complete a phone interview.

Course Costs

Just like Convergence itself, our course costs are very unique. The fees for the course work on a sliding scale with different prices for international participants and Indian participants. Because we are a non-profit organization we have sought the most sustainable way to ensure diverse participation. To do this we offer scholarships to 3 Indian and 1 international participant every course.

The fees that we collect cover your food, accommodation, transportation, course materials, travel and all course related activities. They also go towards providing scholarship opportunities for people that would otherwise not be able to afford to participate in the program. We believe that our fees are reasonable and that providing these scholarships greatly enriches our program. This structure may not be for everyone and we are open to any questions and suggestions that you may have. If you are interested in participating and are unable to raise the funds to participate please ask us to send you more information on our scholarship options. We will preference to participants who can bring in new and unique perspectives otherwise not represented by other participants.

- International Participants – US\$3000.00
- Indian Participants – RS 34,000
- International Scholarships – 1 per course
- Indian Scholarships – 3 per course

Fees do not cover the cost of transportation to Chennai such as flight or train costs, but they do include transportation from Chennai to Convergence.