शुभ यात्रा HAPPY JOURNEY UAD PNR No. 48243835

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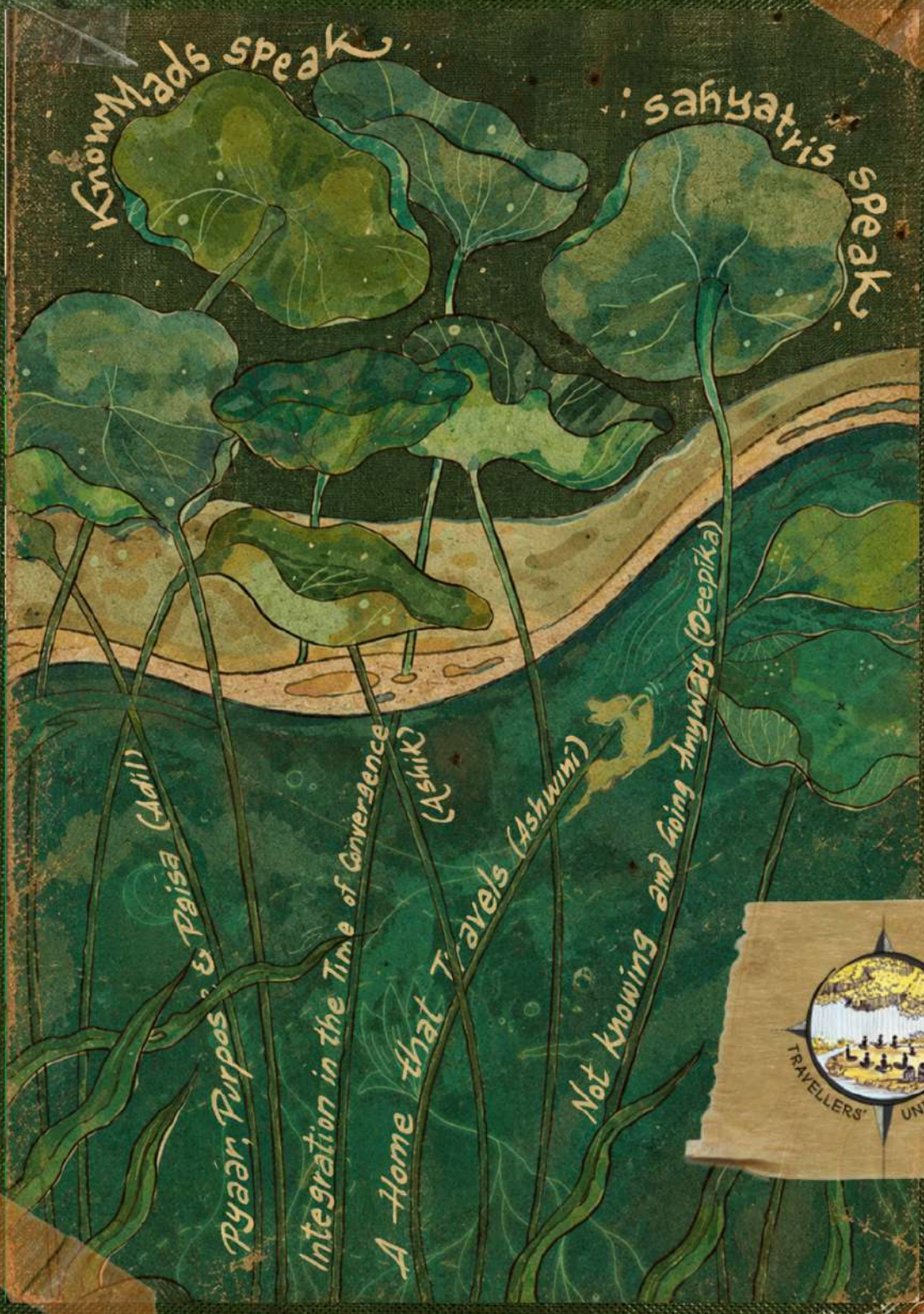
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TRAVEL JOURNAL AND REFLECTIONS

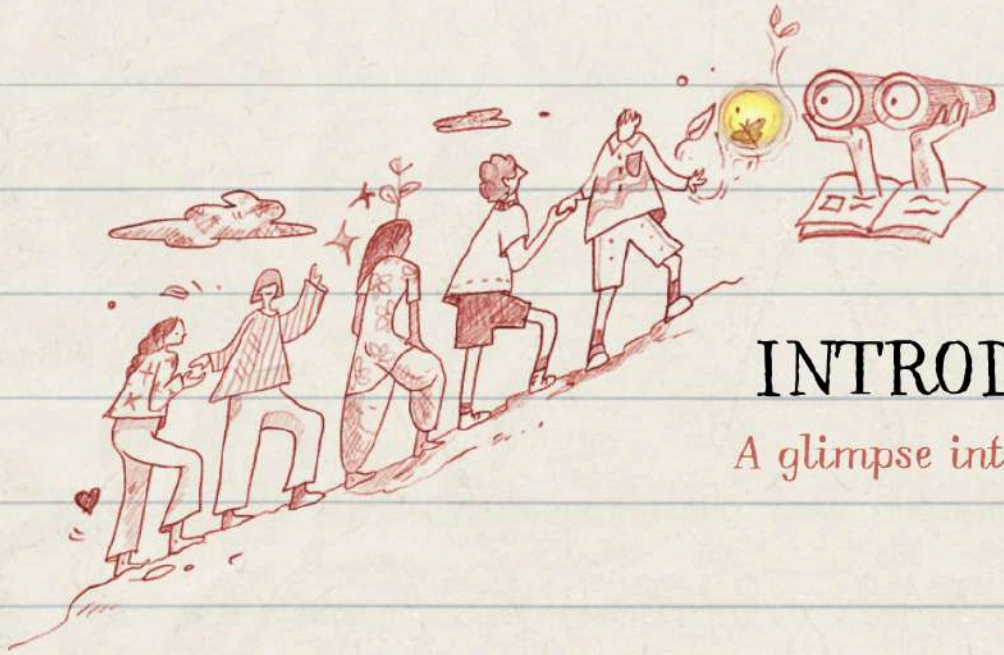
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TRAVELLERS' UNIVERSITY



INTRODUCTION

A glimpse into where we are

What does it mean to build a life around what we care about? Can purpose, pyaar and paisa find their place alongside each other? What does it take to create spaces where people can experiment, belong and imagine lives beyond what is expected of them?

These questions have shaped much of what we have been exploring at Traveller's University. Over the past few months, through our programmes, workshops and learning journeys we have been bringing together things that are often kept apart.

The past few months have also brought us face to face with some of the practical realities of these ideas such as finding ways to sustain ourselves, sustain the work and hold on to what matters to us. Designing a life differently does not mean stepping outside the realities of making a living, it often means navigating the very systems we are trying to move beyond.

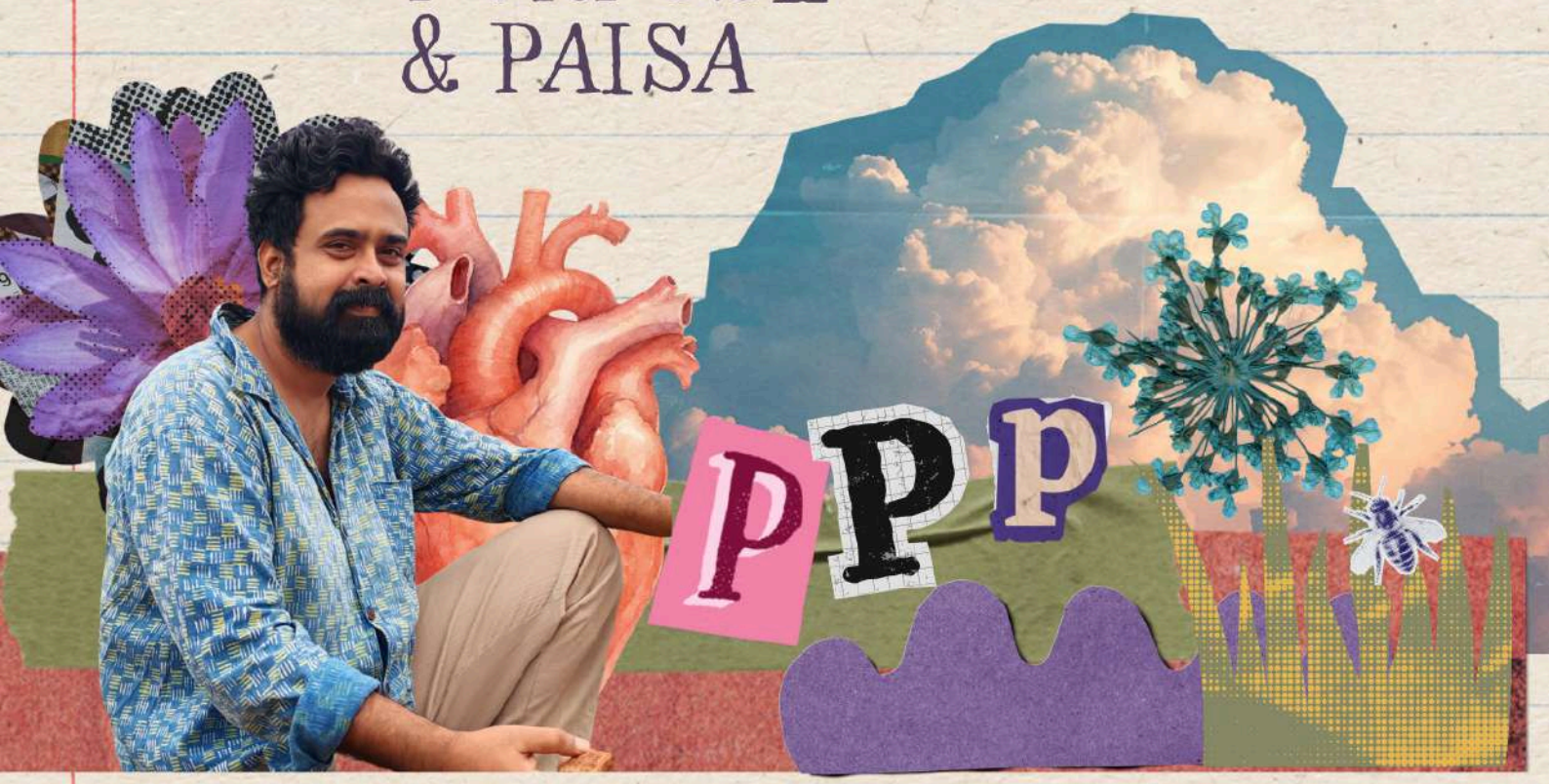
Rather than a report of everything TU has been up to, these pages bring together reflections from our team, KnowMads and participants.
Some are about particular programmes and journeys, others are about questions that continue beyond them.

Together, they offer a glimpse into TU as it is today. A space built not only through programmes but through people, relationships, shared purpose and a community that continues to hold and shape it.

For us, this is a moment to pause, reflect and honour the journey that has brought us here.

– Team TU

PYAAR, PURPOSE & PAISA



At 14, I obsessed about nothing but having a girlfriend. It was the thing I daydreamed about, being funny so that I could impress girls. In fact, I just wanted to woo one. That was my idea of pyaar, as skewed and poorly constructed an idea as pop culture could provide me with. Everyone and everything around me seemed to suggest that I was doing it all wrong. I should have been working hard to make getting into IIT my purpose so that I could make paisa and that pyaar would eventually come, or I might just fall in love with making money.

At 21, I finally found pyaar and made it my sole purpose in life, and I spent all my money on my pyaar. I am not going to lie, at that point, it felt like it was worth it. My friends disagreed. They felt I had abandoned my yaar for my pyaar. It did happen, but I didn't do it on purpose.

At 28, I was hopeless and jobless. My pyaar and yaar clung on to me with the hope that I would find some purpose in life. But the thing about finding purpose in life is that it can take you away from yaar, pyaar and paisa. And it did. But it was worth it. Working with youth to mentor, support, annoy and irritate them has brought me immense well-being.



At 35, my pyaar couldn't tolerate my polygamous nature. I was now in love with my purpose and the people I got connected to through it as well. In fact, it was difficult for me to tolerate this shift myself. So me and my purana pyaar parted. Now I had paisa and a new pyaar to splurge on. And I did. Helping my yaar with their projects, nurtured with pyaar, became the shift towards aligning my paisa with my pyaar of my purpose.

Now, out of my paisa but full of pyaar, I've joined my yaars at TU as they try to find paisa for their purpose, which is also my purpose: helping youth find purpose, pyaar and paisa in their lives and livelihoods.

Phew! Enough of P-ing, I need to pee.

– Adil Basha



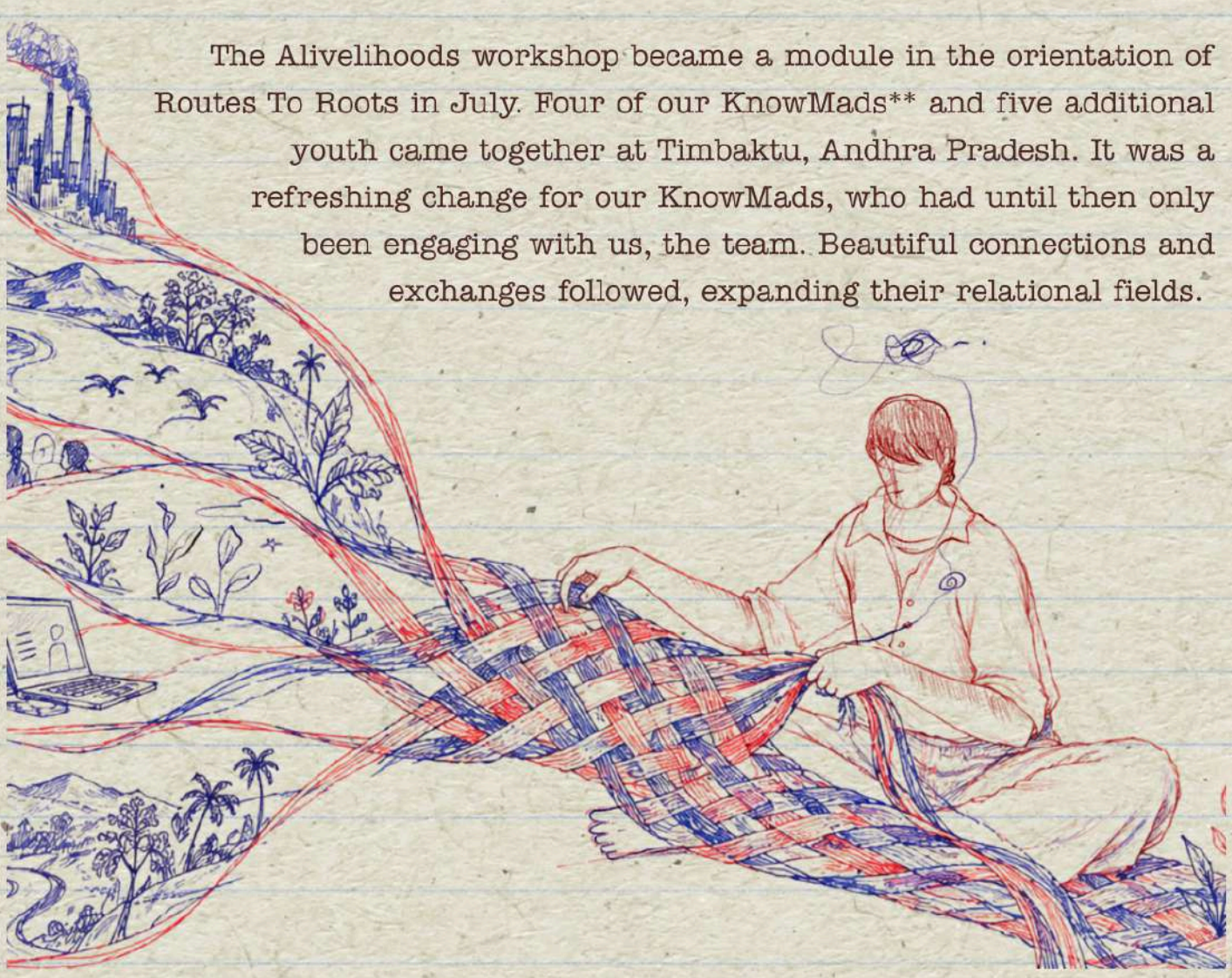
INTEGRATION IN THE TIME OF CONVERGENCE

Integration emerges as a theme in an era marked by the convergence of crises. When social, ecological, economic, political, cultural and personal crises intersect and compound each other, we find ourselves in a metacrisis: a situation so complex that even making sense of it becomes a challenge, let alone responding to it. In such times, integration of principles and practices becomes not just desirable but necessary. Integrating meaning-making and livelihoods, art and activism, learning, joy and action. Integrating pyaar (love), purpose and paisa (money), as Adil puts it.

The question of what other integrations I might facilitate has been with me for the last few years. It has manifested in navigating multiple complexities: travelling across India and finding joy in designing travel-based experiential learning programmes, while simultaneously wanting to root myself more meaningfully in my hometown of Thrissur; designing learning journeys for youth in different phases of their changemaking journeys, while also bringing them together in shared spaces for cross-learning.

The last few months have been about actualising these integrations. Our 'Alivelihoods & Alternatives in a World of Crises' workshop helps those in early phases of changemaking see the larger picture of crises and responses, build systemic perspectives and design personal learning journeys. The 'Routes To Roots' youth leadership journey is for those ready to deepen their skills in specific Alivelihood* areas they have identified as long-term domains of engagement. We chose to integrate these two.

The Alivelihoods workshop became a module in the orientation of Routes To Roots in July. Four of our KnowMads** and five additional youth came together at Timbaktu, Andhra Pradesh. It was a refreshing change for our KnowMads, who had until then only been engaging with us, the team. Beautiful connections and exchanges followed, expanding their relational fields.



We attempted this again with the 'Yatra of Alivelihoods' in August, a group learning journey initially designed for the KnowMads, where we also opened participation to others. Nine more co-travellers joined us in Kerala, travelling through multiple districts, meeting and learning from Alivelihood practitioners across diverse sectors. Both experiences were designed so that participants received complete immersion, while for the KnowMads, each piece fit seamlessly into the larger design of Routes To Roots. Integrating the Yatra into the Travel-Learning phase also created the opportunity for KnowMads to engage with uncertainty while held by a group of co-travellers before setting out on their individual journeys.

Another integration unfolded organically was that of my work at Travellers' University and Learning City Thrissur. At TU, we design travel-based experiential learning programmes. At LCT, we facilitate place-based and lifelong learning to build an active citizenry. The common thread of connecting with self, community and the rest of nature runs through both. The first programme born from this integration was 'The Little Known City', a treasure hunt-inspired process to identify markers of Thrissur's social-political-cultural history, followed by a visioning process using the Alternatives Framework developed through Vikalp Sangam, the same framework used to build the Youth Manifesto for Thrissur last year.

In a way, every integration is a response to the convergence of unfavourable situations, a way of navigating through crises. While they might not always be perfect, each is an attempt to move towards a more just and equitable world. And I believe the glory lies in the attempt itself.

– Ashik Krishnan

* Alivelihood: *A term that integrates 'alive' and 'livelihood', referring to livelihoods that bring aliveness not just to the people who pursue them, but also to communities and the planet.*

** KnowMad: *A term that integrates 'knowledge' and 'nomad', referring to our Routes To Roots participants who travel seeking knowledge.*





A HOME THAT TRAVELS



It has been 7+ years of my association with Travellers' University. Wow, that's a huge amount of time for someone who has not been able to stick to any livelihood for more than 2 years at a stretch, which makes me wonder, why?

As our four KnowMads from the Routes To Roots programme are travelling to find, explore and deepen their learnings, I too have been travelling within to make sense of the last few years with TU. Building TU has been like building a community, a home that travels, a space of belonginess, things that I needed for myself to survive in this vast mechanised world. It was an inner need that manifested as the design and pursuit of my Alivelihood (*Purpose*). TU has created a space for youth to imagine, create, live and feel belonging to a community of deep changemakers. And along the way, it became that space for me too.

And yet at the start of this year, I felt drained and unsure of how to keep walking this path. The reality is that I have found a *purpose* that I feel deeply connected to (after years of meandering and quitting multiple times), have been showered with different forms of *pyaar*, and have finally met with the *pyaar* of my life, yet finding *paisa* for the organization and my own survival has been tough. The force of capital was beginning to dictate the terms and conditions of a life that I had consciously tried to design differently.

Different forms of capital, most importantly, social capital has been integral to what has kept TU and me moving. That is whom we reached out to again this year, in times of despair, but with a lot of conviction, and a bit more of desperation. And the community has responded with love, care and paisa. It is the first time we have been able to pay the team a monthly remuneration.

The support received leaves me feeling overwhelmed but also accountable and responsible for putting all this love, care, and paisa into my purpose wholeheartedly. With this belief we have been able to conduct multiple programmes this year.



I now find myself sitting with another deep irony. In the last decade, I created a life away from the 'meet-the-expectations' cycle that young people are put through either in work, friendships, or family life. Nowadays, I find myself working non-stop, day in and day out, with increased screen time, playing multiple roles (some of which I am not fully equipped to do) to keep creating opportunities for the youth.

Is this self-defeating? Or is it a reflection of the realities of designing a life differently, while still having to live within a system that requires us to work and live in certain ways for us to sustain ourselves? I do not have an answer for it yet. Perhaps that is what I am trying to make sense of now; how much to 'tweak' my life design to 'make it work', without slowly becoming what I moved away from.

As I sit with these deeper questions of purpose and paisa, one thing continues to feel clear. TU, my space of belonging, my home, gives me hope and reassurance that, after everything, this is deeply meaningful work. And something which, even with all its contradictions, I am not ready to trade for anything else. I am still figuring out the balance between purpose and paisa for myself. However, what I do know is that TU is home to me and many others. And I want to keep nurturing this home, for myself, for my fellow wanderers, and for the young people who are still looking for spaces where one can fail, feel safe, grow, seek, unlearn, imagine, think, dream and pursue an Alivelihood of their own.

– Ashwini Shah



NOT KNOWING AND GOING ANYWAY

Before I joined the Yatra for Alivelihoods, I wasn't entirely sure what journey I was stepping into. From the organisational perspective, I knew the idea, but nothing could have prepared me for the warm embrace I felt as a participant.

As part of the TU team organising and facilitating the workshop, I arrived at a moment when its questions felt particularly close to home. I was transitioning out of my Master's, finding my footing in research and academia, and returning to India. I had found myself stepping into this ecosystem quite naturally, and it felt like the right place to be. Yet, I didn't expect the Yatra to make me reflect so deeply on my own transitions. So I write this account not as a member of the TU team, but as a participant.

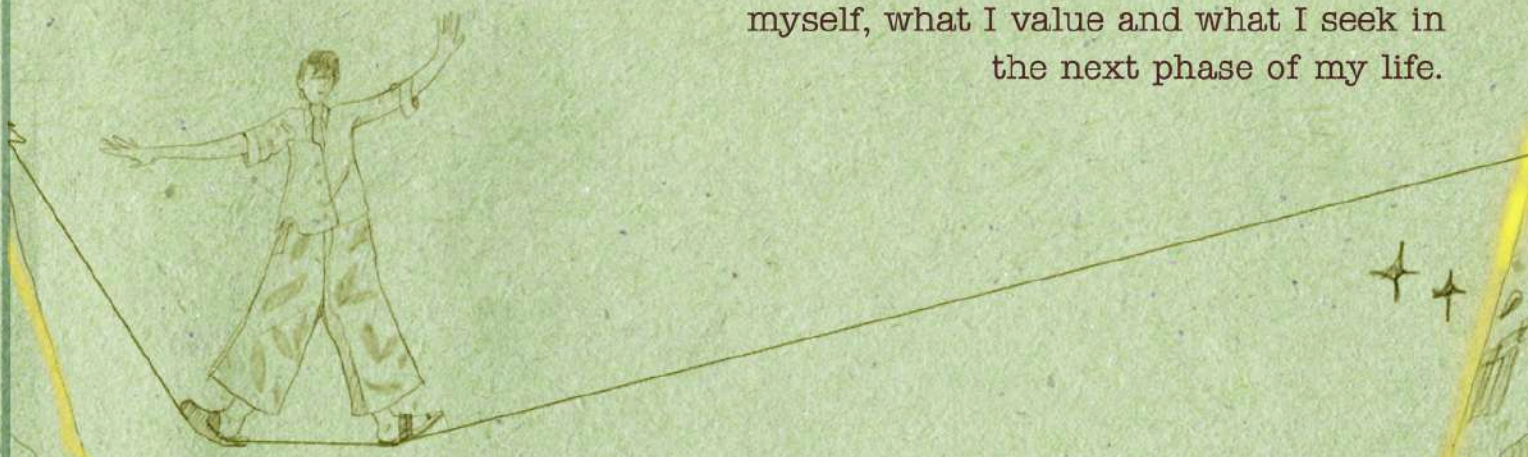
On the first day, arriving at Ala Centre for Culture & Alternative Education in Mulanthuruthy, Kerala, from Hosur, Tamil Nadu, I expected to take time to settle in. I have always found transitions difficult, whether navigating new places, unfamiliar spaces or different routines. Yet, as the days passed, I found myself settling in just fine. Reminding myself to "be comfortable with discomfort", I realised I might be better at transitions than I had given myself credit for.

Every place we visited and every Alivelihood practitioner we met carried a sense of openness and vulnerability. Each had, in their own way, stepped outside familiar ideas of work, livelihoods and a meaningful life. This challenged my own understanding of stability. I had imagined it as finding the right research position, a long tenure or a permanent contract. The Yatra helped me see that stability could look different.

I kept thinking about Manju Vasudevan, founder of Forest Post. Having worked in academia researching forests, she now works with communities in ways that, as she shared, feed her soul. Her sense of presence, happiness and purpose made me wonder whether stability could also come from feeling deeply connected to what you do and the people you do it with.

Perhaps stability doesn't always have to mean permanence.

While the practitioners gave me much to think about, what stayed with me most were my conversations with the sahyatris: in transit, over tea and around scrumptious meals. Each person brought a perspective I could learn from, and in those conversations, I also learnt more about myself, what I value and what I seek in the next phase of my life.



We spoke often about the metacrisis. In academic spaces, its scale and complexity can feel paralysing, with so many systems to understand and untangle. The Yatra felt different. It felt like an act of doing: a reminder that we need not begin with all the answers. We can begin by finding one another, building communities and taking small but meaningful steps towards the world we want to see. The "small wins framework" I had vehemently disagreed with as a graduate student finally made sense.

For someone trained to sit at a desk and research these questions, it was refreshing to step outside that distance and simply be with others trying to make sense of what comes next. I return from the Yatra without one definitive answer or a clear idea of where I am headed, but with a little more faith in the possibility of finding my way there with others, relying on community and feeling aligned with myself. And, for now, that is enough.

– Deepika Manoharan

ADVENTURES of this year

MARCH

Decided to continue with TU for another year

Adil joins the team + decides to relaunch 52 PARINDEY FELLOWSHIP as Routes to Roots

APRIL

18th APPLICATIONS OPEN for Routes to Roots

25th Pursuit of alivelihoods AT BANGALORE CREATIVE CIRCUS.

MAY-JUNE

Routes to Roots SELECTION PROCESS

29 JUN

PHASE I

COHORT starts w 4 NOMADS.

online introduction & welcome

JULY

Routes to Roots ORIENTATION WORKSHOP. 1-14th

ALIVELIHOODS & ALTERNATIVES in a WORLD of crises 9-12th

@TIMBAKTU Chennekothapalli Village Andhra Pradesh

9 PARTICIPANTS INCLUDING 4 KNOWMADS

19 JUL to 5 AUG

Online sessions w/ VINOD PALLAVI REMA SUSRUTHAN + TU team.

AUGUST

Deepika joins the team

yatra OF ALIVELIHOODS 10-16th

12 PARTICIPANTS INCLUDING 4 KNOW-MADS

Routes to Roots CREATIVE EXPRESSION WORKSHOP {4KNOWMADS} 17-20th

Routes to Roots KnowMads INDIVIDUAL LEARNING JOURNEY begins 21st

Little Known City THRISSUR 23rd

learning city Thrissur [14 PARTICIPANTS]

KnowMaDS SPEAK



NAVAMI MOHANAN

Three months ago, I saw a reel about the Routes to Roots programme and applied without much hope. During the process, I was not sure about what I was going to do. When we first met at Timbaktu, I was scared, wondering how I was going to spend a whole week with strangers. Then our first meeting happened, and I felt somewhat comfortable. At the end of that day, some akkas came and started dancing to a beautiful song. Suddenly, I realised that I was standing in a new place, with new people, and I was going to do what I love. I still remember the feeling of realising that I was living the dream of my past self.

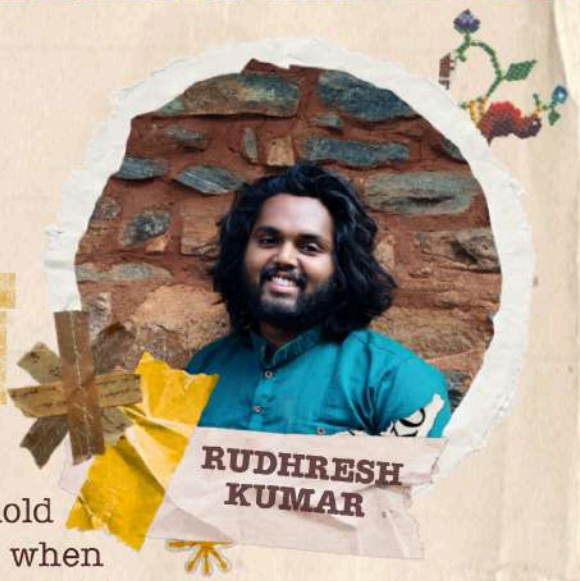
From then onwards, so many things happened. I met amazing people, went to different places, had good conversations, and felt a sense of belonging. Every place I went to and every person I met gave me something new to think about or a new perspective. Knowing new things made me even more confused, but along with that, I was also clearing some of the tangled thoughts in my mind.





Currently, I am in Ahmedabad, still confused, as always. But now, I am in a phase where I enjoy the confusion because my confusion is about the things I really want to do.

KnowMaDS SPEAK



Looking back at my journey with the RTR program, I sense a yearning to move beyond exploration to wanting to be a focussed contributor and towards integrating into a rounded human being. During the orientation at Timbuktu, I got to inquire deeper into this intention. There were dialogic circles and reflective processes as part of the program which helped me to be in silence and contemplate how I want to creatively imagine my livelihood.
Putting these insights forward into the circle was initially scary, but slowly I began to trust people to hold my vulnerabilities. This sharing deepened even more when I realised people deeply listened to me and remembered little nuances. I felt seen by warm co-travellers.

With the Yatra of Alivelihoods that happened in Kerala, the group was larger and my insecurities came back to me. The mind presented ways to express myself calmly but eventually these strategies became walls that stopped personal connection. However, unbeknownst to me, I gradually loosened up simply through sharing presence and showing up to the circles in an open way. By the time we said our goodbyes, it hit me how much we had bared our inner self's, and how we created a tight bond collectively to hold each other. The circle also helped temper my inquiry into the "Alivelihood" practitioners we visited. It allowed me to stay present without the pressure of understanding every little detail about them.



After this, we began to travel on our own. I began to volunteer at a rural construction site as a helper. Initially it felt unnerving to be an outsider in many ways, and I felt eyes around me looking judgingly. Again being with people during lunch circles, post-work waiting times, and so on, eased me up. Also the fact that villagers take life easy and don't over-intellectualise things, made the environment relaxed. I also got to stay with a beautiful family who re-taught that you don't need to do anything to be loved. Again, this took away the pressure of arriving at deep insight and ultimately helped me "feel" the sense of place and time.

KnowMads SPEAK



SATYAJEET PATIL

I had a poster of Sean O'Connell, a character from the movie *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*. And every day I used to look at it and think, I want to travel, I want to be on field. I don't know, somehow the manifestation worked. Today, I'm sitting on the floor in a simple mud house in a forest while it's raining outside, with a smile on my face.

So, in June, I visited Timbaktu and met the TU team for the first time, and by the end of the orientation, both had found a place in my heart. Sitting, sharing and learning in a circle was something that I was experiencing for the first time, which gave me the idea of an alternative world. I came expecting teachers but ended up finding go-to friends. The fellow KnowMads felt like a family, and the place was so quiet that it made me think, should I just live here? Everyday treks to the nearest hill to see the sunrise started an inner journey in me. Looking at the clear sky every night, sleeping under the stars, was a lifetime experience.

Soon after the orientation, with the Yatra of Alivelihoods, I was visiting Keralam for the first time. I was talking and connecting with everyone, which I usually avoid, opening myself up. I was listening to stories and observing spaces and thinking how creative ideas can work out if you really put real effort into them. During travel, I was sitting under waterfalls, under trees, on the bank of the river, walking in rain, looking at the sky, floating in water, walking in mud. Nature showed its beauty in different ways, and I was soaking it in and filling my heart with it.



And now the individual journey is taking me both inward and outward. I am looking at people, their lives, as they unfold each chapter of their life. All these people I meet in the alternatives have dived into the unknown, but still hold a clear idea of what they want, and they are doing it anyway. This journey is helping me have deep introspection of myself, my thoughts, the life I envision.

KnowMads SPEAK



I came across this programme, "Roots To Routes", through Susruthan, a TU alumni, whom I met accidentally. When he said maybe the programme will suit me, I didn't know it would lead me to my own self exploration phase.

The Yatra of Alivelihoods in Kerala was the beginning phase. Hectic travel plans with a heavy luggage packed for four months was something shoulder killing. But, I did survive it, making me believe I can do it.

But, the big difference was, I had people with me, to talk, to share, or to just be there for me. But, then when the individual journeys started, sometimes it felt really lonely and isolating in a way. The video calls with the other KnowMads were the helpline system built on its own as a strategy to deal with it.

Recently a new meaning has been added to my travels. Usually, I try to know about the places to see, foods to eat and activities I can do. Now it changed into looking deeper into how communities are affected or benefitted from my travel or of anyone's as a matter of fact. I even started looking deep into people's lives, their stories as the Yatra of Alivelihoods has equipped me to. I even realised a fact about me that I need rest- real stress-release time or I get overwhemed and emotions hit me harder and I pull inward. But, I always bounce back and I show up.

So many learnings and observations. I started learning new skills, adding value to myself, creating videos, learning about birds, gifting Origami to mentors and so much more. I even started picking up small, strange specific things I don't wanna lose. The people I met on the journey have taught me so many things, one common thing being they do what they love to do, they all have that passion to do the things they love.



One month, three places, many people and mentors. Mumbai, Udupi and Bangalore. Each connection built along the way, feels like people in life I earned, to whom I can come back to. Life might not have to be too complicated, you just have to be yourself and things will fall into place. Because, initially in each place, I was too overthinking about how to build a conversation, and when I stopped worrying about it, then only it felt natural.

SAHYATRIS SPEAK



I have come here when I was feeling stuck, when I was having questions about my life and profession. I just wanted to take a break and honestly I did not come with any expectations with an open mind. I feel this as a meaningful break, where I feel rested, also I could self reflect and connect. It was not a one way transfer of information, the facilitators held the space in a way the whole circle participated, deep conversations and responses emerged. It was not just an information transfer but a place where we slowed down to bring connection with ourselves and others. The activities we had on the arriving day at Timbaktu helped us to ease into the interaction openly.

Overall, I feel everyone who feels or thinks about the different crises on the planet and want to respond to it, or understand what can be done, this is a space they can look up to. I carry back the sense of the connection, inspiration and the collective wisdom.

- SINDHU M
Alivelihoods & Alternatives in a World of Crises

Travelling through Kerala and meeting diverse organisations, communities and changemakers gave me an opportunity to learn beyond the boundaries of a classroom. Every visit, from community-led learning and education to environment, independent media, agriculture, livelihoods, theatre and culture, offered a different perspective; What touched me most was seeing how ordinary people are creating meaningful change through collective action. These experiences made me reflect deeply on my own journey and the work I am building.



The Yatra taught me to listen more carefully, ask better questions and look at communities not as beneficiaries but as partners in creating change. The conversations with sahyatris were equally meaningful; their stories, questions and perspectives became an important part of my learning.

- JANARDAN MALI
Yatra of Alivelihoods



singing to fellow Sahyatris



SUPPORTER THOUGHTS

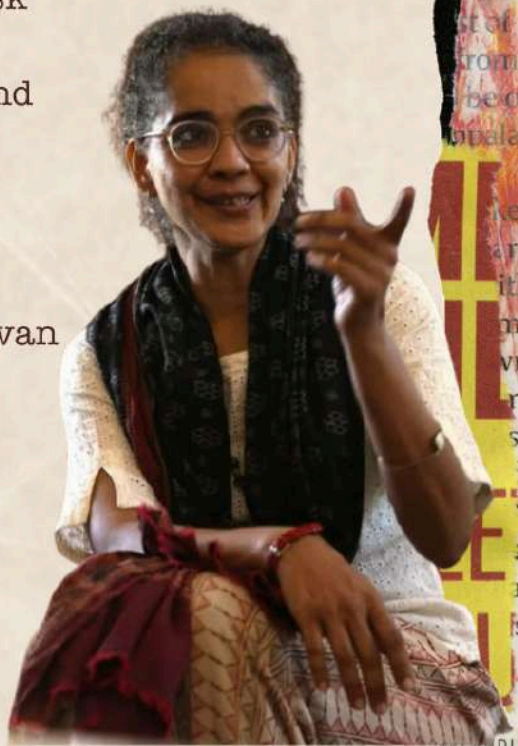
My connection to TU began through my friend Ashwini, whose dedication to the organisation's mission is contagious. Hearing stories of how TU supports people from diverse backgrounds as they pursue their dreams deeply inspired me. Following your passion is rarely easy, but TU provides the runway to make it possible. I support TU because I believe in giving back to society, empowering individuals while driving positive social impact. That is one bit that meant meaningful to me supporting others' passion through my friend's passion to DO GOOD.

- Reetika



We already knew the intent and people behind Travellers' University... and the Yatra of Alivelihoods, the alignment in values felt immediate. As an individual, I relate deeply to the search for meaning your fellows are on. At a time when there is ecological destruction and injustice all around, the question of how to balance a career with being useful to society is one I have wrestled with myself. Forest Post is my own attempt at an answer, still a work in progress. If the yatra helps more young people ask these questions honestly and find their own path, we are glad to walk alongside.

- Manju Vasudevan
Founder
Forest Post



REGISTER FOR UPCOMING WORKSHOP

ALIVELIHOODS & ALTERNATIVES IN A WORLD OF CRISES
November 20-22
Bhoomi Organic Gurukul,
Gumlapuram

www.travellersuniversity.org/aaiawoc



DIFFERENT WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT

If you like what we do, here are different ways in which you can support us:

Direct Funding
https://rzp.io/rzp/supportTU

Find your organisation on Benevity to contribute to us



Connect us to individual and institutional funders



Connect us to educational institutions



Offer spaces for hosting workshops



Share about our work with people



Show interest in our new ideas

At Travellers' University,
we believe in the transformative power of
youth leadership to create meaningful social change.
Our unique approach uses Travel as a Pedagogy,
designing immersive, experiential journeys that weaves
together grassroots engagement, hands-on learning
and deep inner reflection.
Our programmes are not just about travel—they are
transformative experiences that inspire new ways of
thinking, being, and shaping our collective future.

Join us as we *reimagine what's possible.*



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