



# LEARNING SOCIETIES UNCONFERENCE



Healthy Lifestyles and Healthy Communities

**February 28 – March 4, 2012**

Hideout, Thana, Maharashtra INDIA



Hosted jointly by

Hideout

Shikshantar

Multiversity Network,

EarthCare Designs

Possibilities

Manzil

Swaraj University

CoEvolve

Pune Homeschoolers Association

Registration deadline

**February 15, 2012**



It is our great pleasure to invite you to participate in the 7th Learning Societies Conference on **“Healthy Lifestyles and Healthy Communities,”** organised jointly by Hideout, Shikshantar, Multiversity Network, EarthCare Designs, Possibilities, Manzil, Swaraj University, CoEvolve and Pune Homeschoolers Association.

The conference will take place from February 28 to March 4, 2012 at Hideout’s beautiful learning center in Maharashtra. The conference will take place in Hindi, English and regional languages. Please find attached a background note with more details on the conference, a registration form, and some information about the Hideout venue.

This intergenerational conference will bring together approximately 300 leading “thinker-doers” from around South Asia who are active in challenging the monopoly of factory-schooling and nurturing diverse learning communities, vernacular traditions, intercultural dialogues and swaraj. There will be organic farmers, artists, artisans, activists, designers, filmmakers, healers, alternative educators, entrepreneurs, homeschoolers, unschoolers, barefoot innovators, parents, youth, spiritual seekers, and more. We believe that the agenda of education and learning is far too important to be left to just B.Ed teachers, school principals and NCERT educationists. As with all learning societies events, the conference is open to families and children.



We hope to build upon the reflection, dialogue and co-motion that have been initiated in the Learning Societies network already. There will a lot of space in the conference to explore radical ideas, proposals and projects. This is a fantastic opportunity to really think (and DO!) outside the box. Most importantly, the central purpose of the conference is to build strong friendships and critical connections. Previous unconferences have taken place in Himachal Pradesh, Udaipur, Mumbai, Brazil, Jordan, Pakistan, and Iran.

Several exciting inquiries have emerged over this time, and out of these, many new initiatives:

- How do we understand ‘learning’ from our own experiences?
- How do we bring more contemplation, compassion, creativity and courage into our life and work?
- What kinds of unlearning and uplearning experiments are significant and necessary for the times we live in?
- What is the learning ecology of each of our diverse communities? What challenges is it facing? How can we regenerate it?
- How do we connect learning with healthy food, community media, zero waste, local economy, cultural



creativity, and other essential aspects of harmonious living?

- What harm has factory schooling done to us? How do we heal ourselves from this harm, individually and collectively?
- How do each of our individual learning journeys relate to one another?
- What can we do in our own lives and work to challenge the Education and Development systems which are violent, exploitative and dehumanizing?
- How can we recognize diverse forms of power, resistance, regeneration, and engage and strengthen them?
- What are the ways to deepen and expand intercultural dialogue, trust and gift culture? What kinds of support structures can we create for ourselves and one another to live and learn in healthy ways?

You may like to review the previous five learning societies books (published by Shikshantar) which contain over 60 essays from around the world. If you do not yet have copies, you can download them from the web at [www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/ls\\_discussion.html](http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/ls_discussion.html) or you can write to [shikshantar@yahoo.com](mailto:shikshantar@yahoo.com) for hard copies. You can also see four previous learning societies conference films and photographs on the learning societies facebook page.

This year's conference will seek to delve deeply into the theme of Healthy Communities. There is an old African proverb that it takes a village to raise a child. So what does community really mean in our lives today? How is it important to the work that we want to do? What challenges are you facing? What new models and processes around community living and community learning are we exploring? During the conference we will not only talk about community, but we will also be trying to experiment with different processes of community living and community learning.



The format is of an unConference. This means that we will co-create the agenda together. We believe each participant is a resource person. There will be a lot of open space in the conference for participants to self-organize around questions, experiences, experiments, workshops, play, music, food, treks, etc., with each other in the spirit of deep dialogue and friendship. We have also decided not to require any submission of formal academic papers. Instead, we are asking that you actively participate in the pre-conference online interactions in the coming month. We feel that this process will help us to better self-organize ourselves into a vibrant learning community when we all meet. We will be using yahoo groups and facebook for this, **SO PLEASE REGISTER.**

The conference fees will operate on the principle of gift culture (this is one experiment of building healthy community). Our request is 'pay what you can plus a little more to take care of someone else' towards the costs of food, accommodation and materials (fyi, the rough cost for food and accommodation is coming to



about Rs.2800 per person). There are some limited resources available to help cover travel scholarships within India. Please write to us if you will require some assistance for your expenses – funds should not stop you from attending. You are also welcome to support Hideout learning center.

Your insights and experiences will greatly enhance the discussion on learning societies in South Asia. Kindly send your registration form before February 15, 2012 to the following email address [LSUnconference@gmail.com](mailto:LSUnconference@gmail.com). Please note that we have limited space available. Priority will be given to those involved in co-creating innovative learning experiments and learning spaces. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We look forward to welcoming you at Hideout!

Yours sincerely,

*Hemant and Sangeeta Chhabra, Hideout*

*Manish and Vidhi Jain, Shikshantar*

*Nitin Paranjape, EarthCare Designs*

*Claude Alvares, Multiversity*

*Ravi Gulati, Manzil*

*Aspi and Yasmin Shroff, Possibilities*

*Reva Dandage, Swaraj University*

*Kiran Gulrajani and Rohit S, CoEvolve*

*Urmila Samson and Hema Bharadwaj, Pune Homeschoolers Association*



LETTER FROM HIDEOUT

Dear friends,

We are Sangeeta and Hemant Chhabra, a couple who believes firmly in the principles of loving, giving, sharing and caring. We are the founder-owners of Hideout, which we started with the intention of creating a space where we could feel close to nature and at one with ourselves.

At first, over ten years ago, we began inviting children over for camps since we had young ones of our own who home birthed, home schooled, lived a healthy life eating natural foods, without vaccination, medication, and wished them to interact with other children their age. These camps grew to be very successful and we were encouraged to hold them on a regular basis. We then decided to construct rooms to accommodate people who wanted to visit the farm all year round and stay for a few days. Run by the local tribals and overseen by us, that's how Hideout was born.

The Hideout now is our international healing temple where we offer visitors a chance to relax, rejuvenate and reach into their inner selves for healing, wellness and oneness with nature. We promote a simple, healthy lifestyle which is based on correct nutrition, adequate rest and curative therapies such as yoga, massage and meditation. We endorse organic farming and agro-tourism along with other activities such as natural birthing, recycling urban waste and vermi-composting. For the first 12 years we practised ahimsa farming at Hideout allowing the land to flower and flow according to its own will. Today, we practice organic farming, use natural pesticides and homemade fertilisers and build our own soil. We believe in restoring the respect to farmers and have set up a training facility for them.

There is a nearby tribal hamlet with a blacksmith, potter, rice mill and Wednesday weekly market, where barter system still prevails. There are also bird watching/nature trails, fruit and salad picking on the farm itself, and waterfalls, streams and lakes in which to enjoy a swim or just splash around.

We have a small request and invitation for you in the spirit of wellness and community living. It would greatly enhance your experience at Hideout if you could refrain from smoking, drinking, eating packaged junk food or non-vegetarian food, playing loud music or video games and littering while at our place. Alcohol, cigarettes, drugs and chewing tobacco are banned from Hideout for your safety and well-being. We also try to use as little plastic as is possible and we dispose of it conscientiously.

We are really looking forward to sharing the magic of Hideout with you.

Love,

*Hemant and Sangeeta*





## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HIDEOUT

### *What kind of accommodation is available for the conference?*

There will be 5 kinds of options available – rooms at Hideout, camping tents at Hideout, group guest houses in the village, dormitory in the village, homestay with village families, homestay (without w/c) with tribal families. The rooms at Hideout will be reserved for elderly participants, disabled participants and hosting team. The village stay options are all about 10-15 minute walk from the Hideout conference venue. There will also be shuttle buses available in the morning and evening to bring participants to/from the venue. Please indicate in the Registration Form your first and second preference for stay and we will try to provide you the appropriate arrangements.

### *How do I get there?*

Sangeeta & Hemant's Farm - Hideout  
Jhadpoli village, Thappar pada, Vikramgarh Taluka, District Thana,  
the closest known big village is Vikramgarh, Wada (town)



#### **On Western Railway**

Nearest station is Palghar 50 km - taxi approx Rs 1400; Dahanu 55 km - taxi approx Rs 1500; Vapi 135 km - taxi Rs 2300. August Kranti train stops.

#### **On Central Railway**

Nasik road 120 km - taxi approx Rs 2300. State transport buses to Jawhar, Dahanu change buses for Vikramgarh then sharing jeep/tuk tuk to Jhadpoli.

Kalyan station 80 km - taxi approx Rs 1800. State transport buses to Jawhar, Dahanu.

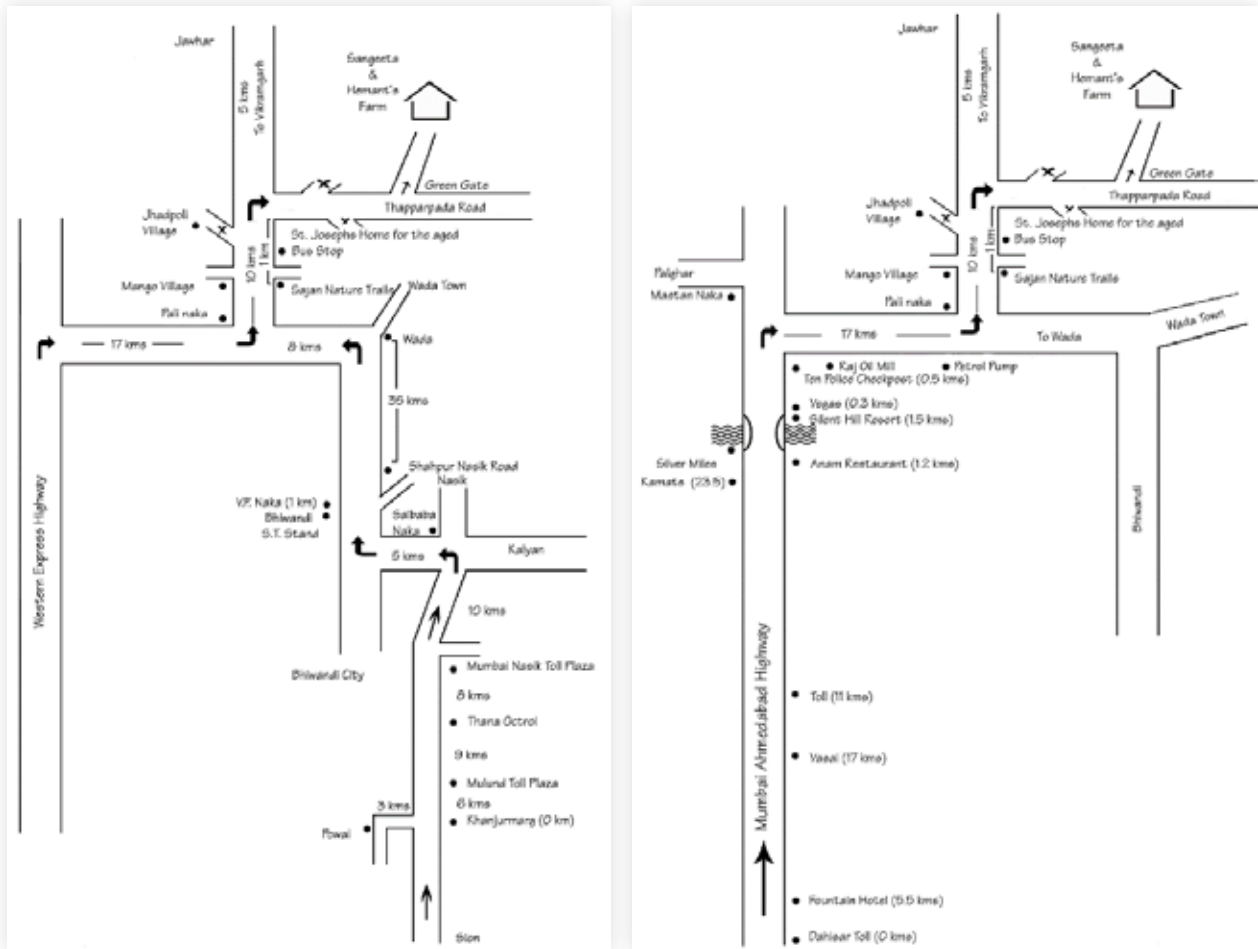
#### **From Bombay**

Road maps available on [www.hideout.co.in](http://www.hideout.co.in), follow kms instructions without asking any one – you are bound to reach safely. Car pools will be going on 28th morning from Dadar East, Pritam hotel; Andheri East Regency restaurant, opp Bisleri water factory; Borivli East opp. Sanjay Gandhi park. Full jeep costs approx @Rs 2500.

State transport buses are available frequently, outside Thane station (West) buses to Jawhar, Dahanu, These two buses bring you directly to Jhadpoli. Buses to Wada, get off at Wada Naka and use a jeep/tuk tuk to Vikramgarh, get off at Jhadpoli. There is one bus from Borivli ST Stand (East) at 6AM to Jawhar. Bus fare will work out less than RS 100.

#### **Airport domestic**

Km 110 - taxi @ 2500 plus parking charge



**International Airport**

Kms 110 – taxi @ 2500 plus parking charge

There are overnight Luxury buses from Rajasthan, Gujarat. Get off at Manor Naka around 6 a.m. 27 km away. Get a sharing jeep/tuk tuk to Vikramgarh, about half hour drive.

We recommend using our village jeeps, as they are more reliable and bring you in with out hassles at a fair price.

After 5 pm, most of these place will be a challenge to get a bus. If you need our village vehicles, you need to have an advanced confirmation. Call Nitin Paranjape (09422702353) if you are stranded.

*What should I bring with me?*

Warm clothes for the night, towel, toiletries, water bottle (avoid plastic), sheet or sleeping bag, yoga mat, walking shoes, slippers, swimming costume, mosquito repellent, torch, shawl, sweater in case there's an extended winter. There are mosquitoes at sunrise and sunset as it is a fruit forest. There is no malaria. We burn Mhau oil cake which is quite effective.



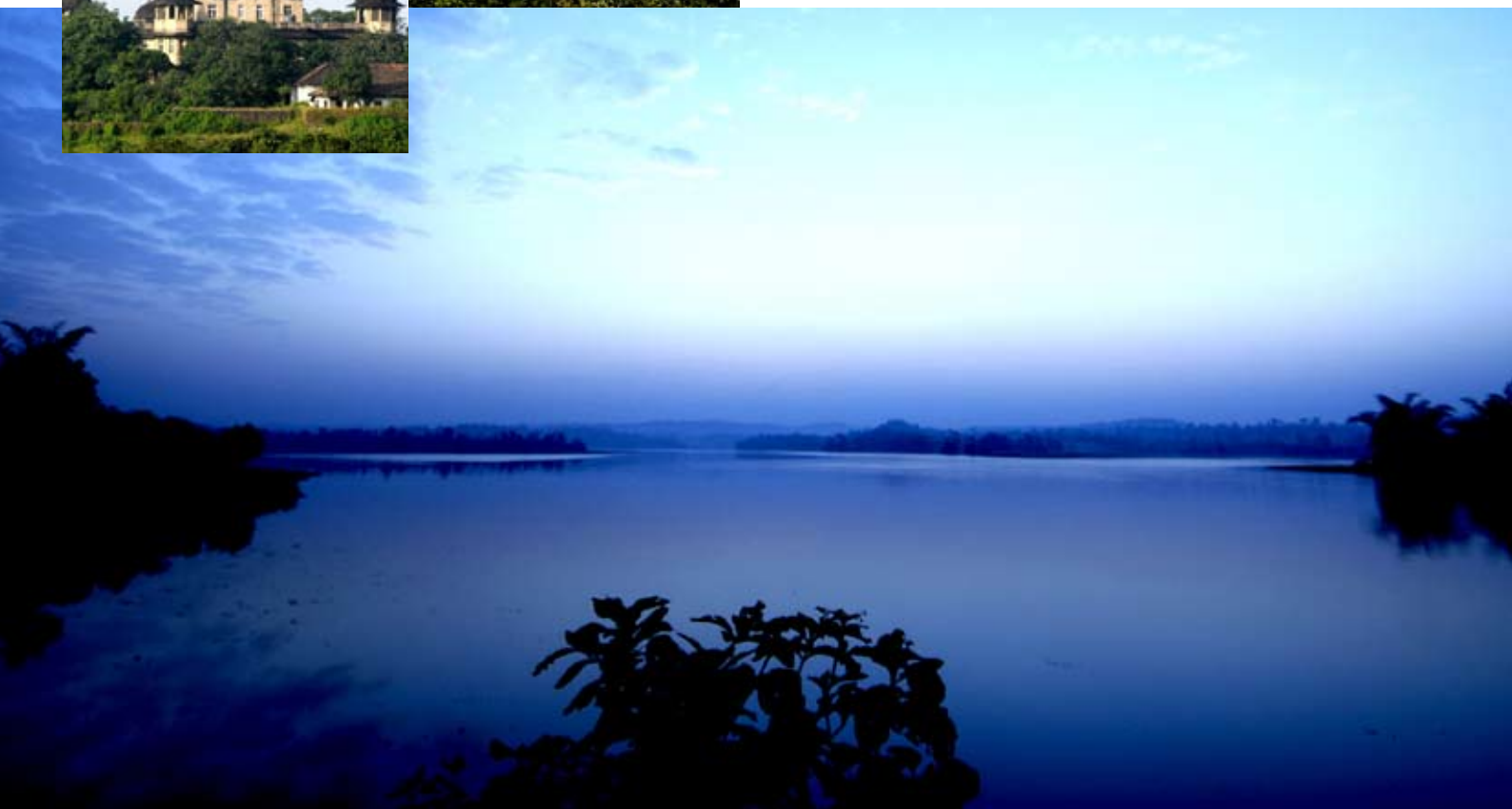
We invite you to come to Hideout with bare necessities and to leave with a sense of plenty and abundance. At Hideout, we don't say "Back to nature" but instead we think of it as "Moving forward" to nature.

### *What other sightseeing opportunities are there nearby?*

Nearby sightseeing spots are: Jawhar Fort 30kms, Mahalaxmi Temple 40kms, Dahanu Beach 55kms, Hot Springs 40kms.

### *How can I volunteer while I am at Hideout?*

Farming, sharing your expertise with different age group of locals, helping in the community kitchen, keeping the place neat and clean (plastic-free), making sure all are comfortable. We need a few volunteers 3-4 days before the start of the conference to help with setup and logistics. Write to [manish@swaraj.org](mailto:manish@swaraj.org) if you are interested in volunteering beforehand.





REGISTRATION FORM

Kindly send your registration form to us (a separate one for each person attending) before **February 15, 2012**. Registration form can be filled in English or Hindi.

Here is the link to the online registration form for the learning societies unconference: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dGNzRIN3LVV5ZnNnd3hqLU5Xa3dGbWc6MQ>. You can either fill in the form here or send us your form to [LSunconference@gmail.com](mailto:LSunconference@gmail.com). (*If you have received this invitation by email then you would also have received the registration form as a word document*).

You will receive an email confirming your participation in the conference.

Name :  
Organization :  
Address :  
Telephone number :  
Skype Name :  
Email :  
Website :  
Facebook Name :

**Would you prefer to stay in (please circle/highlight and indicate 1st and 2nd Choice):**

- Group Guest House                       Tent
- Shared-Room Dormitory                       Village House with Family
- Village House with Tribal Family (no w/c)

**Any dietary restrictions/allergies/medical issues/special needs?**

**PERSONAL DETAILS**

*(Please take time to answer these in detail)*

1. Please describe yourself and your own learning/unlearning journey in a short personal note (up to 750 words) which can be shared with the larger group.
2. What kind of learning communities and learning experiments have you been trying co-create?
3. What questions, topics, workshops, proposals, projects, invitations, etc. related to unfolding learning societies would you like to contribute and further explore in this unconference?
4. Anything else you would like to share with the group?