



Ecovillage Design Education

29 July - 26 August 2018



ISSUED BY

GAIA ASHRAM, THAILAND

REPRESENTATIVE

OM SUNISA

GAIASCHOOLASIA@GMAIL.COM

Course Overview

This four weeks certified EDE course held at Gaia Ashram, Thailand. This course is co-organised and supported by NextGENOA and GENOA. Gaia Ashram found in 2013 by a couple who were EDE alumni and inspired to create Gaia Ashram using ecovillage design knowledges to design the Gaia Ashram project. Apart from learning the content from facilitators in the class participants also learn from the Gaia Ashram as a case study. The four weeks course started with Social dimension, followed with worldview dimension, economic and ecology. The program was taught by four main facilitators and six guest teachers. There were 18 participants from 13 countries in which 70% are Asians. The group join daily chore task with Gaia Ashram community to connect and take responsibility for the community together.



Participants

18 participants from 13 countries include Thailand, Myanmar, Singapore, India, Srilanka, Japan, China, South Korea, France, Austria, Germany, UK and Switzerland. There were 10 female and 8 male participants, age range from 19-58 years old.

Schedule



The daily routine start with optional meditation & yoga from 5.45 - 7.30 am. The group were divided into 4 groups where each group rotate to take responsibility for preparing breakfast, managing composts, cleaning the common sala room and pot wash after meal. The group that do breakfast would not join yoga in the morning but start preparing breakfast instead. After breakfast those who are responsible for pot washing

and cleaning the sala would do their tasks which had to be done every after meal. Compost task team did their chore after lunch only.

We have breakfast together as a community at 7.30 am with the food blessing before meal to cultivate gratitude and compassion.

We start the day with morning attunement for mindfulness, check-in to see how everyone is feeling and then morning session (8.30-10.30am). We have tea, fruit and snack break and then the second morning session until lunch at 12.30 pm.

At 1.45pm we have deep relaxation for everyone to meditate, relax and rest. It is essential to pause and let everything sinks down before going into the afternoon session.

After a little energizer activities we would go into the afternoon session (2.30-4.30pm). Then, the sun is going down, we would have outdoor hand-on activities such as making roof from recycle cans, hot shower from biowaste, and so on.

Then we have another evening meditation, dinner and evening session.

Highlights and Challenges

SOCIAL :

- **Community building:** Various activities were guided to create better harmony among the people, and to live together in a group for a month, everyone came to a mutual agreement to minimise and maximise things such as maximising laughs, hugs, acceptance and so on..
- **Personal Empowerment & leadership:** everyone identified their elements - Water, Earth, Fire, Space & Air, sat in groups according to their element and shared about their strengths , strategy and challenges.
- **Rank and Power:** Started the day with the topic of Social justice and brainstormed about what social justice meant for all.
- **Non-Violent Communication:** Empathetic listening and Expressing honestly - starting with the latter there were 4 tools of 1) observation 2) feelings 3)needs and 4)request
- **Decision Making and Sociocracy:** The group had a discussion about government/what they do, and how the government works in their locality/country.

For the design for any ecovillage, the social design is the foundation, the values and governance defines an ecovillage. Community building is a process that ensures everyone feels the togetherness and safe. One common vision is what ties everyone together and helps it grow.

“The feeling of oneness and joy”



WORLDVIEW :

- **Introduction to Worldview, Paradigm Shift:** Some of key realisations for participants were - society, religion, culture, education, our environment we are born in crisis/disaster, relationships and everything in our lives that we are directly/indirectly related to alters or forms our worldview.
- **Transformation of Consciousness:** Our special day with Pracha (facilitator) started with walking meditation, along with some guided meditation. The overall learning was to shift our consciousness from ego-eco centric, shifting from our self/self-centric minds to be more aware of the oneness, to stop the inner fight, believe in the divine, which will give us more freedom to dance with the universe.
- **Personal and Planetary health:** Through the web of life, the interconnected and interdependence was visible to us, when humans tried to remove this diversity in nature, many beings were affected and created a huge imbalance in the ecology. We also discussed how human health is very dependent on the planetary health.
- **Deep Ecology:** To find inspiration for your worldview and take it into action, we can start by “Experience deep connection” which bring up the “Deep Questioning” and become “Deep Commitment”
- **Socially engaged spirituality:** We learn that we generate principle base on the spirituality and principles guide our action for our worldview. We always can learn from all principle and can transform each principle according to our environment positivity and spiritually. By listening to each own principle and positives facts of each design group, we inspire and engage each other.



The key highlight was about landfill visit. It was very emotional and helped us realized the impact of our trash on the environment. We also have 5 rhythm dance which allows us to connect deeper to ourselves and the song.

The main challenge was to balance yin energy (meditation, soft & calm) with yang energy (moving, sharp, strong) in all the activities, and also the engagement in each group work.

ECONOMIC :

- **Star power game** was a very interesting activity for participants, where each one of us was given money and we exchanged, traded and made policies, we observed in the bigger group how money effected our decisions in the society.
- There was an insightful question while explaining right livelihood - *“what would we do if we had all the money in the world, how would we spend it?”*
- We also saw a documentary **“Economics of happiness”** to understand the effect of globalisation on the local economy. We did an activity of creating a social enterprise.
- We went back to our **best childhood memory** and found out what we are passionate about, this helped us to create a social entrepreneur idea, it was an inspiring and challenging because of the time limitations.
- In groups of 4 or 5, we also took an idea/ product, where we learnt how to design it according to circular economy design.
- We also made some **eco-bricks**, inspiring projects about solutions.
- **Key learning this week:** We started the week with learning about what is the economy and where the word comes from, types of the economy like gift and other forms, the current system, globalisation
 - how GDP is about scaling up and the new world economy we want to create is about scaling out like localisation. Livelihood is the economy of sufficiency.
 - Social enterprise is the tool and action to achieve right livelihood and GNH is the indicator for wellbeing and right livelihood in a community or country.
 - Conscious and mindful consumption was introduced to us by discussions and videos and few activities deepen our understanding.
 - The last day of week was about 8 forms of capital - what are they and how to gain them and analysed what we lack and what individually felt was our strength and observed the connection and how the forms of capitals are related to each other.
 - We also looked at solutions for change, “we” the community and how to put our ideas into action for change to happen/ manifest.



- **Group observations:** while linking economy to the other dimensions, helped the group to see the holistic relationship.
 - The blips game/ star power game - brought out many strong emotions in people, some felt very intense while the others were playful and relaxed. The next two days we concentrated on theory and real-world examples, the energy was more in the mind, we did some hands-on - 3 projects to balance the energy (hands).
 - Watching many videos, helped us to visualise our learning and also was very inspiring - helped us increase our energy through the day. While making eco-bricks, our energy was bonding and shared how we felt about consumerism and our usage.
 - Saturday's presentations were again very energetic, interactive, thoughtful and help us all to summarise our learning, we celebrated the evening with a Party! we cooked, danced and celebrated around the fire and concluded the week with warmth and joy.

ECOLOGICAL :

- We had a lot of **hands on projects** such as Bio Char, Water Filter and compose hot water. We also learned the values and the principles of permaculture by going around Gaia Ashram and pointing out the principles that is happening in the Ashram. The facilitators did a lot of presentations about Biophilic Design, numerous composting toilets design and Natural building styles.
- **Permaculture design system:** play or act as the fruit tree and the legume tree which can absorb nitrogen and provide to fruit tree and when there are fungi on the root, it create habitat for bacteria and protozoa which improve soil quality.
- **Whole systems design** to integrate 12 sectors which are well being, food, trade, energy, climate, biosphere, water, habitat, wealth, governance, community and world view. We had the activity to discovered the wisdom and the challenges of our grandparents' generation about how they live their life relate to ecology, where their food, water and house come from.
- At the end of the week, we had the special wrap up section by drawing and filling in all the knowledge that we have learned to integrate the four dimensions of EDE together.
- **Key Learning:** Ecology week start with the carbon footprint and ecological footprint. When we want to count our carbon footprint,



we need to consider the background facts of how the products were produced which has the same structure of “Story of Stuff”.

- If we, human are the problem of today, we also can be solution for today. Soil is alive and soil can be built with numerous mineral such as silt, sand, clay and organic matter. Soil is alive and it can give feedback to us. Soil is a web of complex relationship. Water is life for all organisms.
- The principle of water is ; Slow - Store - Sink and we can store water with plants. We learn about the fact that agroforestry can change the climate and apply the system that existed in the nature to create the analog forestry.
- **Group observation/ energy:** When we talk about what is happening in the world right now according to ecology, our energy was down because there are a lot of environmental problems concern with water and soil. But when facilitator give numerous examples of how people are trying to solve the problems through various angles, the group energy become higher because of motivation and inspiration. Since we did some practical hands on work, we encounter with a lot of interest things and questions about how they can work. This week is special week for us because it is last week and we played Giant - Migyet Gift game. At the end of the day, design presenting day, we had long presentation time because we are presenting the whole design which inspire each other. The EDE course started with love and finished with love.

Facilitators



Sunisa Jamwiset Deiters: Co-Founder of NexGENOA network, Co-Founder of Gaia Ashram, long time involvement in the Global Ecovillage Network of Oceania & Asia(GENOA) as part of the team. Ecovillage Design Education trainer and applying the knowledge in creating the Gaia Ashram project.



Tom Deiters : Co-Founder of NextGENOA network, Co-Founder of Gaia Ashram, Ecovillage Design Education trainer & facilitator for Deep Ecology & nature connection.



Trudy Juriansz : The Global Ecovillage of Oceania & Asia (GENOA)'s coordinator and board member of GEN (the Global Ecovillage Network), former manager at Belipola, a reforestation demonstration site and learning center, EDE trainer, Analog forestry trainer.



Sion Zivetz : EDE trainer, social entrepreneur, Analog forestry trainer, former manager at Bellipola reforestation demonstration site and learning center.

Guest Teachers



Praha Hutanuwattra : Buddhist scholar, Founder of Ecovillage Transition Asia (ETA) and Right Livelihood Foundation, Director of Awakening Leadership Training (ALT) program. Former director of Wongsanit Ashram and International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), long time experience in facilitating & organizing EDE programs both in Asia and other regions.



Hans and Wallapa van Willenswaard : Founders of Towards Organic Asia & the School of Wellbeing, social entrepreneurs and trainers of social entrepreneurship. Directors of Asian young organic farmers program.



Lars Blume: A renewable energy expert for Geen Innovation and Development Center (GeenID), a leading Vietnamese think tank in sustainable energy development. Lars carries out policy research and build up technical capacity in renewable energy and energy efficiency in order to accelerate for a social just energy transition in Vietnam and South East Asia. A co – Founder of

<http://www.flowful.org> a platform to accompany people on their journey towards sustainability.



Ben Murray

Ben is an Ecological designer, consultant and teacher with a background in organic and biodynamic gardening / agriculture, natural building, horticulture & landscape architecture. Ben is the founder of Holistic Regeneration, has 20 years experience in the realm of Horticulture and has been consulting, practicing and teaching permaculture, organic gardening and natural building for almost 10 years in England, Malaysia, Thailand, China, Kenya and India and is currently working as an itinerant trainer of transformational and empowering workshops and courses

Financial Summary

Revenues	(THB)
18 Participants	580,030
Expenses	
Salary	191000
Travel expense	8960
Teaching materials	3500
Food	49360
Accommodation	45180
Certification fee	4260
Car rental	7000
<u>Total Expenses</u>	309260
<u>Net Income</u>	<u>270,770</u>

Evaluation & Participants' Quotes

“

The knowledge from this EDE really useful for me to design my life more holistically. Although I don't know if I will ever start an ecovillage, but it is still very useful at personal level



NON

EDE Participant, Thailand

“

A few years back I had a realisation about the great turning point, and how we humans needed to change the way we live, think and act. I was curious to know how can we design this change, this alternative life? As a design student, I observed how the world we live in now was not an accident but created by us. I was not less than a dream to be able to attend EDE, but the key learning for me was the balance, ecovillage is a process and not an end result.



SOMDUTTA

EDE participant, India

“

The most inspire sentence from this course is “if human are the problem of today, we also can be the solution”. My understand of that sentence is that problem can be a system that nature give feed back and we can develop that problem into creative solution. My way of thinking begin broad because I use to have negative energy when I encounter with problems and blame on that but now, I started to think how I can response creatively to the problem. This is the huge though that I receive from EDE course.



JOY

EDE Participant, Myanmar

“

Gaia is not an hidden lazy spot, it's a tiny bit risky and challenging! You may fail, make mistakes at different levels, and you will not be stoned for that. You start the next day “brand new” and the whole story seems fresh. There is always a smile at the corner waiting for you that says: “it's okay, we love you the way you are”. It's a human experience before everything else, it breaks shells, armors, bondages, preconceived ideas and concepts. It takes courage, it takes guts, patience... you learn a lot about kindness, tolerance, humbleness. You rejoice for the successes of others and feel compassionate for, forgive your own errors. To make it short: GAIA IS ENCOURAGING. It caresses the doors of your heart more than it knocks.



JEAN-PIERRE

EDE participant, France