

Staying rooted

Seemingly drastic changes to lifestyle may sometimes be the most natural course of action. In Bangalore, we found a bright example in the 47-year-old Vallari Shah.

Vallari was an IT professional in a multinational consulting company. Four years ago, she gave up her lucrative career to pursue what makes her happy. Her life now is summarized simply, in three words: gardening, dancing and meditation.



We visited her beautiful home in Whitefield to have a conversation about her realizations and motivations in choosing to live a low-impact life.

Vallari and her husband Rajesh, moved back to India from America seven years ago, largely because they wanted their two boys to grow up closer to their culture and roots.



Growing up as Jains, the couple had the basic tenets of *ahinsa* or non-violence, *aparigraha* or restrained consumption and *anekantavada* or multiple-viewpoints entrenched in them. However, they wanted to be able to practice the teachings beyond the rituals and the prayers in a responsible way. In that effort, they were inspired hugely by Satish Kumar's philosophy of 'Soil, Soul and Society' which outlines the significance of a harmonious existence with the world. From pulling out of the stock market and only investing in ethical, socially responsible companies to saying no to plastics and food that isn't local produce; Vallari and Rajesh have made thoughtful changes to each area of their lives.



In Bangalore, they adapted their home into becoming more energy-efficient and less wasteful. Vallari, who is an avid community gardener, began farming an array of fruits and vegetables on her terrace as well as on an empty plot next to her. Not before long, her neighbours got involved too. Today, she produces a majority of the food that her family consumed, out of her garden, completely chemical-free.



From using solar-power to reworking the entire plumbing system in their house to reuse water, they have managed to create an eco-friendly living space. These improvements supplement their lifestyle, which follows the refuse-reduce-reuse-repair-recycle mantra. In combination, these create a life that is more energy-efficient and less wasteful.



When asked if such a life is difficult or challenging, Vallari makes the natural strength of their decisions clear. “Things are only challenging when you don’t want to do them,” she explained.

With a strong drive to live by the core principles of Jainism, the Shahs preserve and practice the Jain ideals through their own life and work.

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Text, photographs and video: Gayatri Ganju