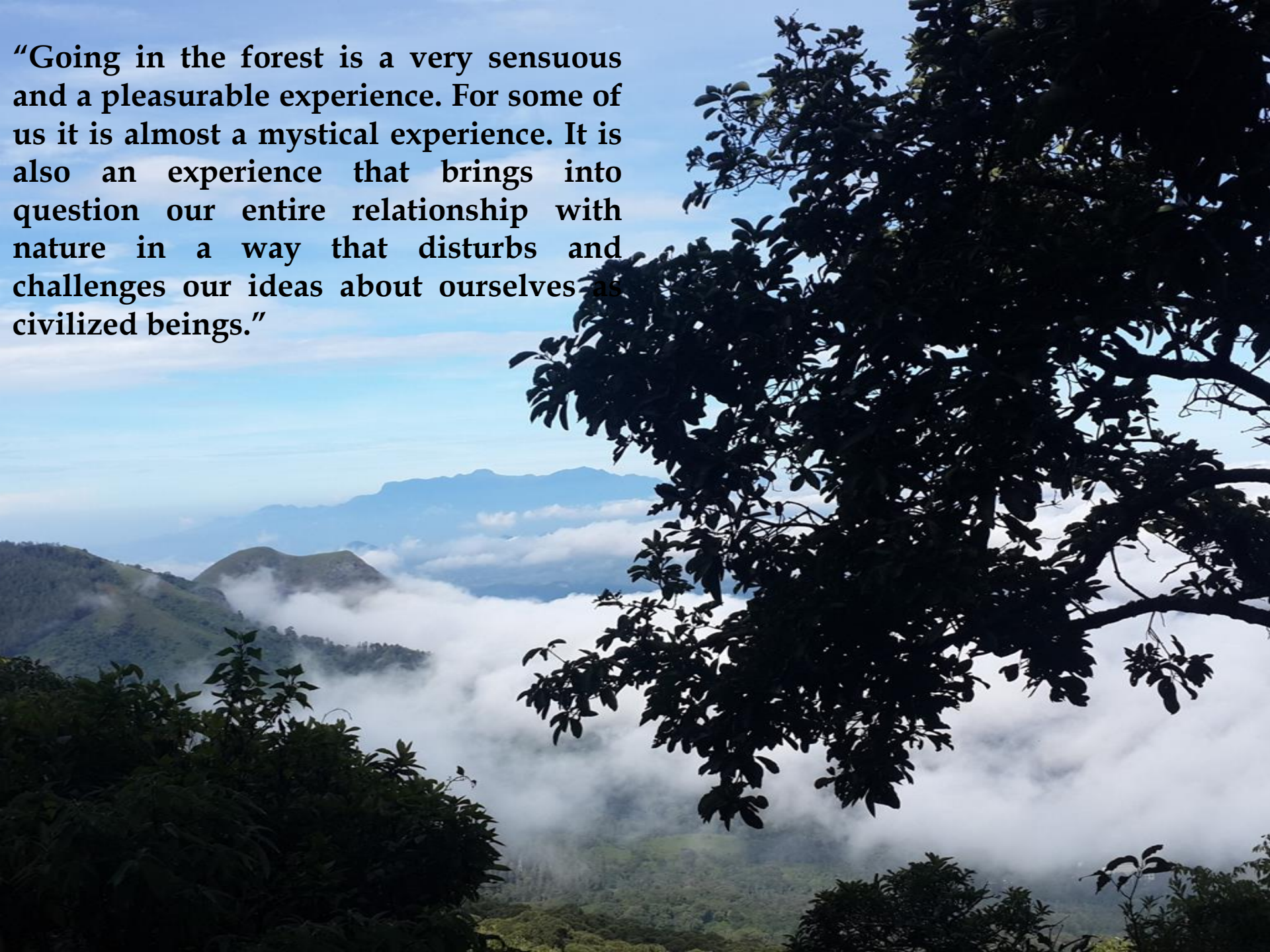




Nilgiri Musafirs (Group 3)

"The journey matters, the people matter; the destination is meaningless without the path and the companions"

"Going in the forest is a very sensuous and a pleasurable experience. For some of us it is almost a mystical experience. It is also an experience that brings into question our entire relationship with nature in a way that disturbs and challenges our ideas about ourselves as civilized beings."



Team Members



A Team forever

- Money Jain (Group Leader)
- Navdeep Singh (AGL)



A Team forever

- Kokila Jayram (Treasurer)



- Vijay Kumar (Doctor)



A Team forever

- Amit Renu



- Anuj Singh



A Team forever

- Abhishek Tharwal



- Ravinder Kumar



A Team forever

- Anitha



- Alok Yadav



A Team forever

- Aakash



- Balram Choudhary



A Team forever

- Gunjan Verma



- Pushpendra Singh



A Team forever

- Rinki Gupta

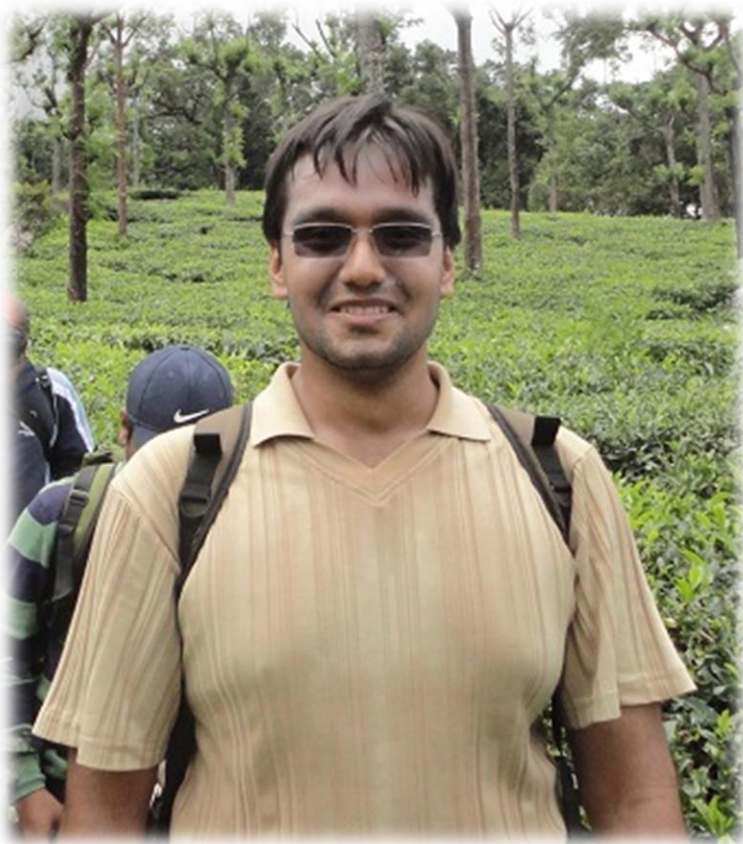


- Roma Chaudhary



A Team forever

- Rahul Singh



- Snehal Karle



A Team forever

- Sunita Choudhary



A Team forever

- Our STF friends

(Vivek, Sarvanan, Anand and Mahesh)



Miscellaneous Achievements

Before



After



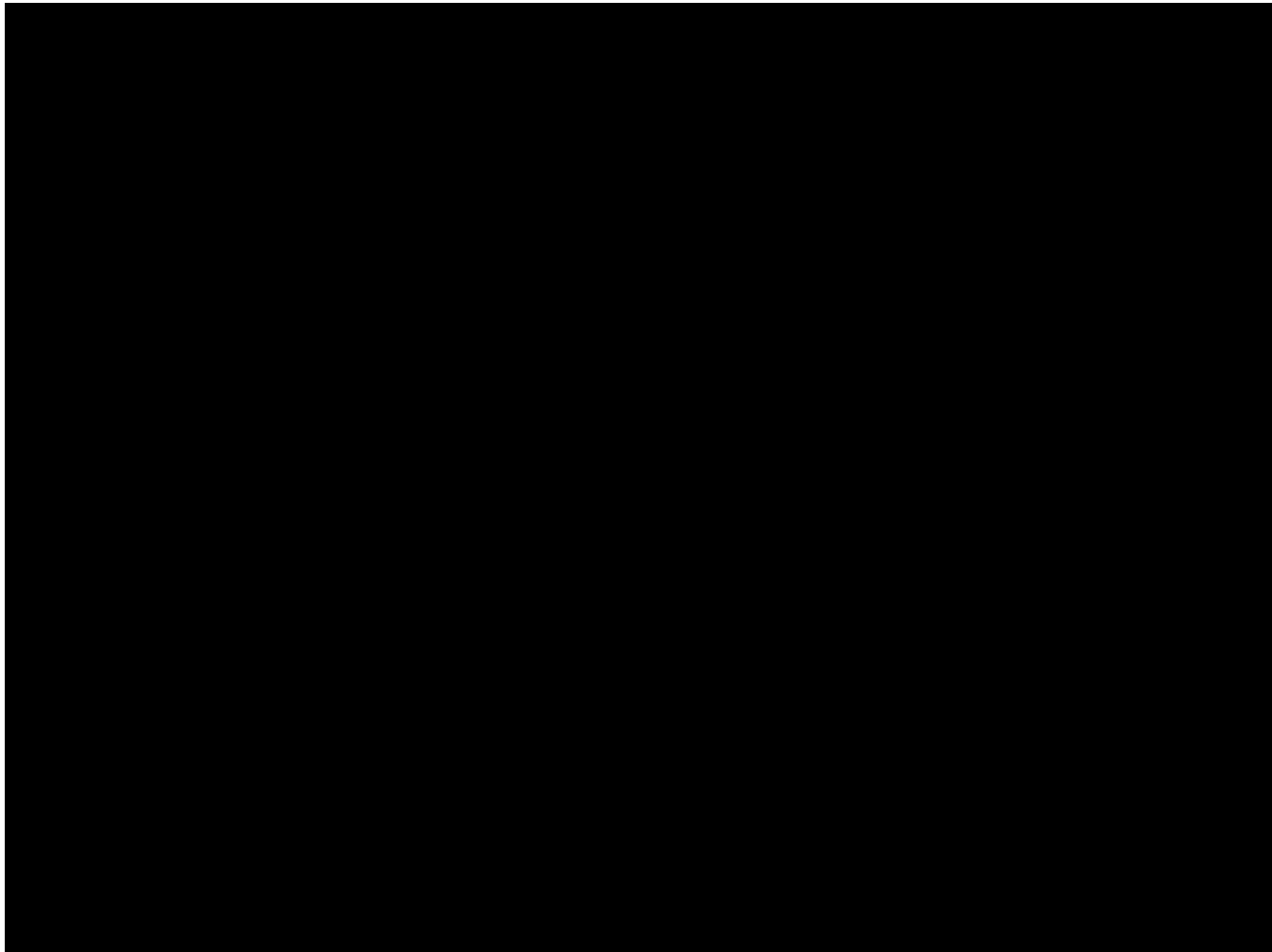
Pre-Trek Apprehensions

- **Luggage – accommodating & optimizing bare necessities**
- **Group Coordination**
- **Doda Betta Climb - Non-essential luggage returned**
- **Communication facility**
- **Security**
- **Accommodation & Food**
- **Physical Ability**
- **Weight loss**
- **Sun tan**
- **Leech bites**

Pre-Trek Expectations

- Fun
- New life experience – curiosity of nature, wildlife, local populace
- Meet & make new friends
- Develop Physical Endurance
- Learn to adjust to difficult conditions

Itinerary



Base Camp Basics

■ Pandyar

- Naduvattam Range of Nilgiris North Forest Division
- Marudhu Pandyar brothers 1st to proclaim independence from British
- Famous for tea, pine trees, Pandiyar fort with waterfall

■ Naduvattam (Centre of Circle)

- Panchayat town on NH 67 at 1,953 m elevation
- British jailed & settled Chinese convicts in 19th century who married local women

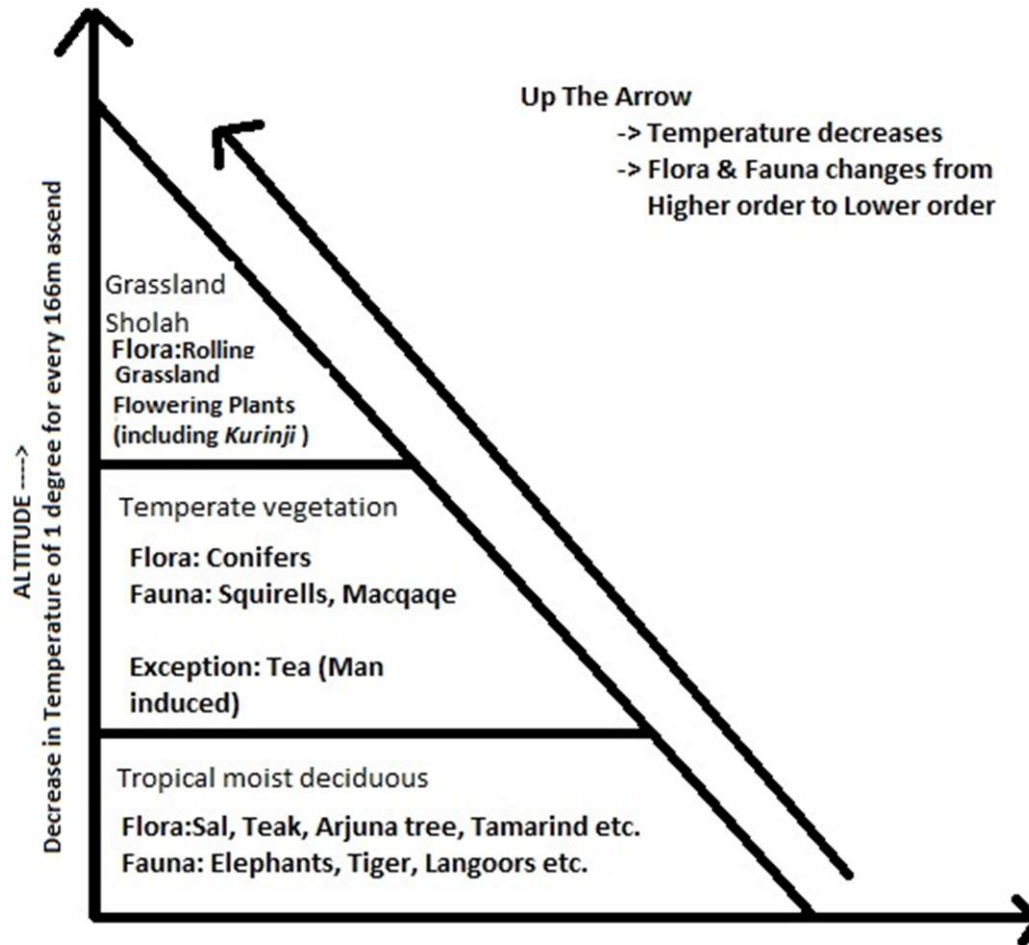
■ Kargudi (Forest Temple)

- Located within Mudumalai sanctuary, shares land with Kerala, Karnataka
- Meeting point of Eastern & Western Ghats; covers 330 km², started in 1940
- Hill Banana and cactus fruit – both edible

Base Camp Basics

- **Vazhaithottam (Banana Orchard)**
 - Part of Sholur Panchayat and the largest hamlet in the region with 200 families
- **Sholur (Village in Forest)**
 - Sholur panchayat comprises six hamlets within 5,000 km² Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve
 - Home to largest number of Asiatic elephants
- **Parson's Valley**
 - Built by British engineer Parson in 1862; Pykara dam & reservoir
 - Habited by tribals – Todas, Karumas, Irulas, Badugars – employed by TN govt. in local tea estates
- **Avalanche**
 - Named by British after severe landslide in 1823
 - Famous for beautiful lake surrounded by thick shola forests

Flora and Fauna – Generic Variations



Dry Deciduous



**The Tasty
Tamarind**

Dry Deciduous



Terminalia arjuna

- **Has a buttressed trunk**
- **Traditionally used in ayurveda for treatment of heart disease, wounds, hemorrhages and ulcers**
- **Moths feed on its leaves and produce Tasser Silk**

Conifers



- Tall, Mighty and Evergreen
- Found at higher altitudes above the tropical moist deciduous vegetation
- Has impact on soil structure---Localized patches of podzolic soil

The Sholas-Grassland Mosaic



Sholas patches are stunted forest interspersed with grasslands.

Encountered on the way from Vazhaithottam to Parson's valley

Scotland of India

Tea Garden



Tea Plantation

- Once planted stays productive for 25 years
- 5 harvests per year
- Silver Fir planted in tea garden for shade
- Means of livelihood for locals
- Not Natural but implanted by British
- India largest producer of Tea

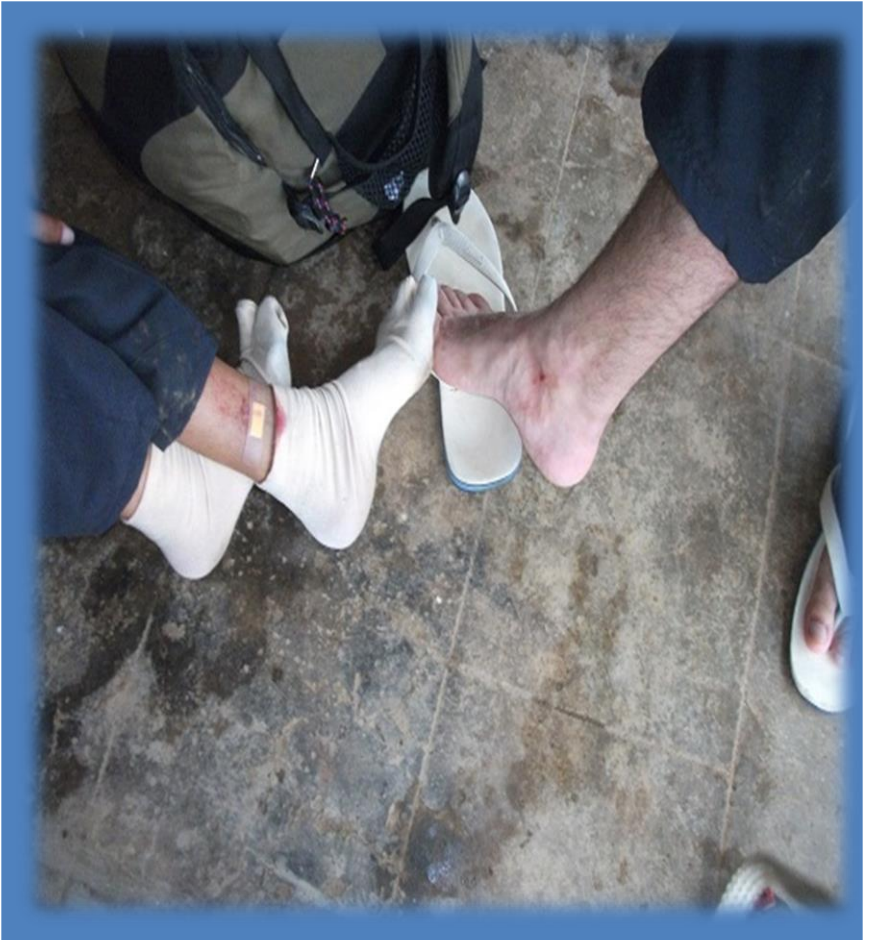
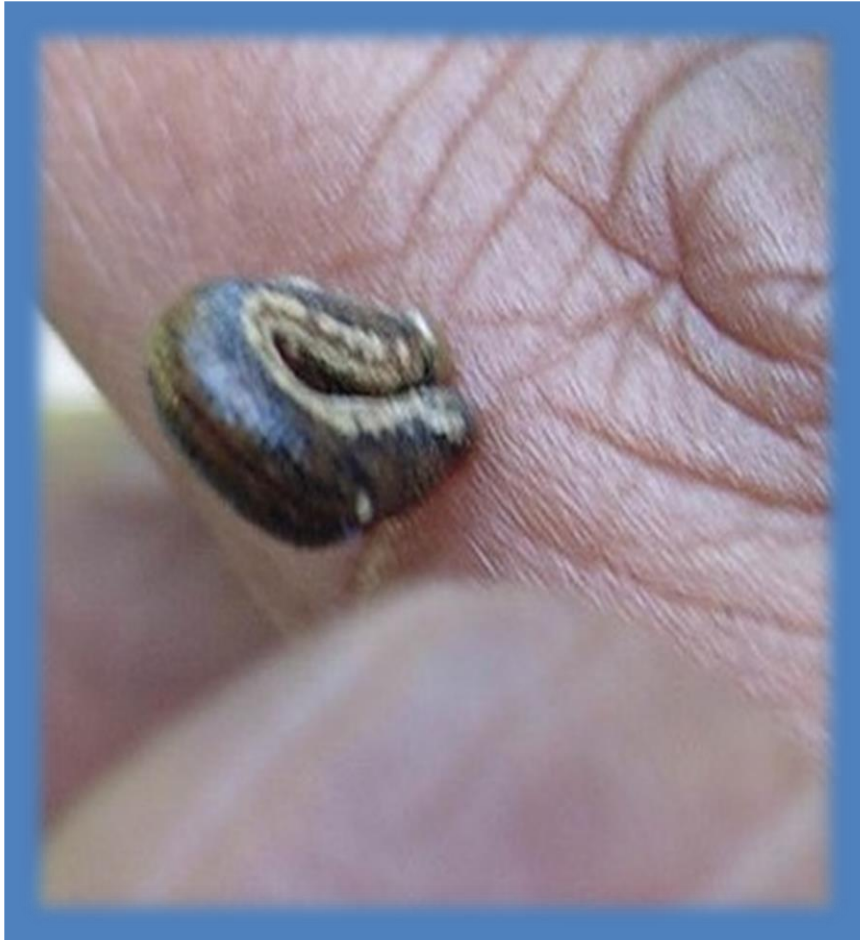
Variety of Flowers



And the Fauna



And a special one...

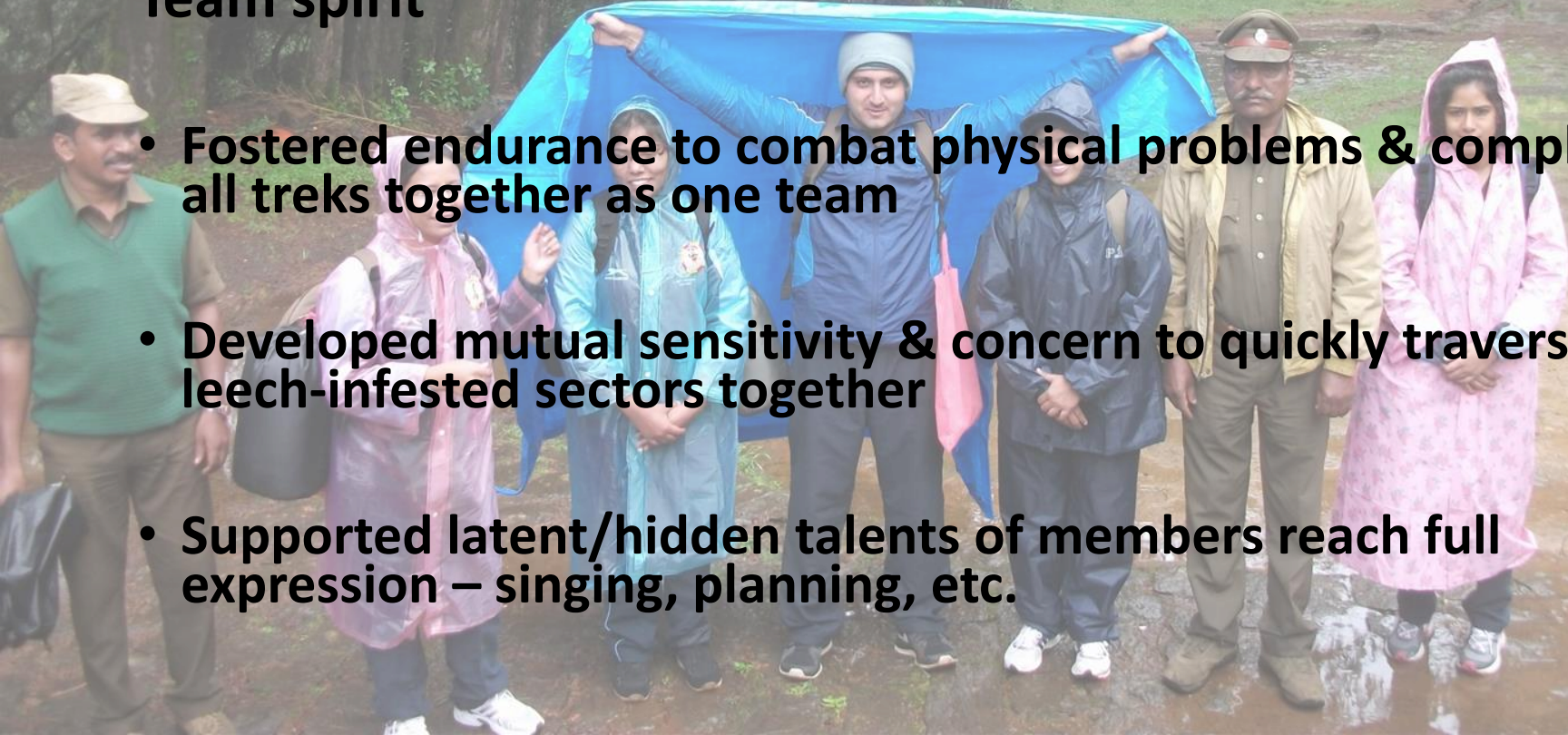


Learning as Group & Individuals

- Coordination within team & with guides and STF boosted with ADG advice & intervention

Team spirit

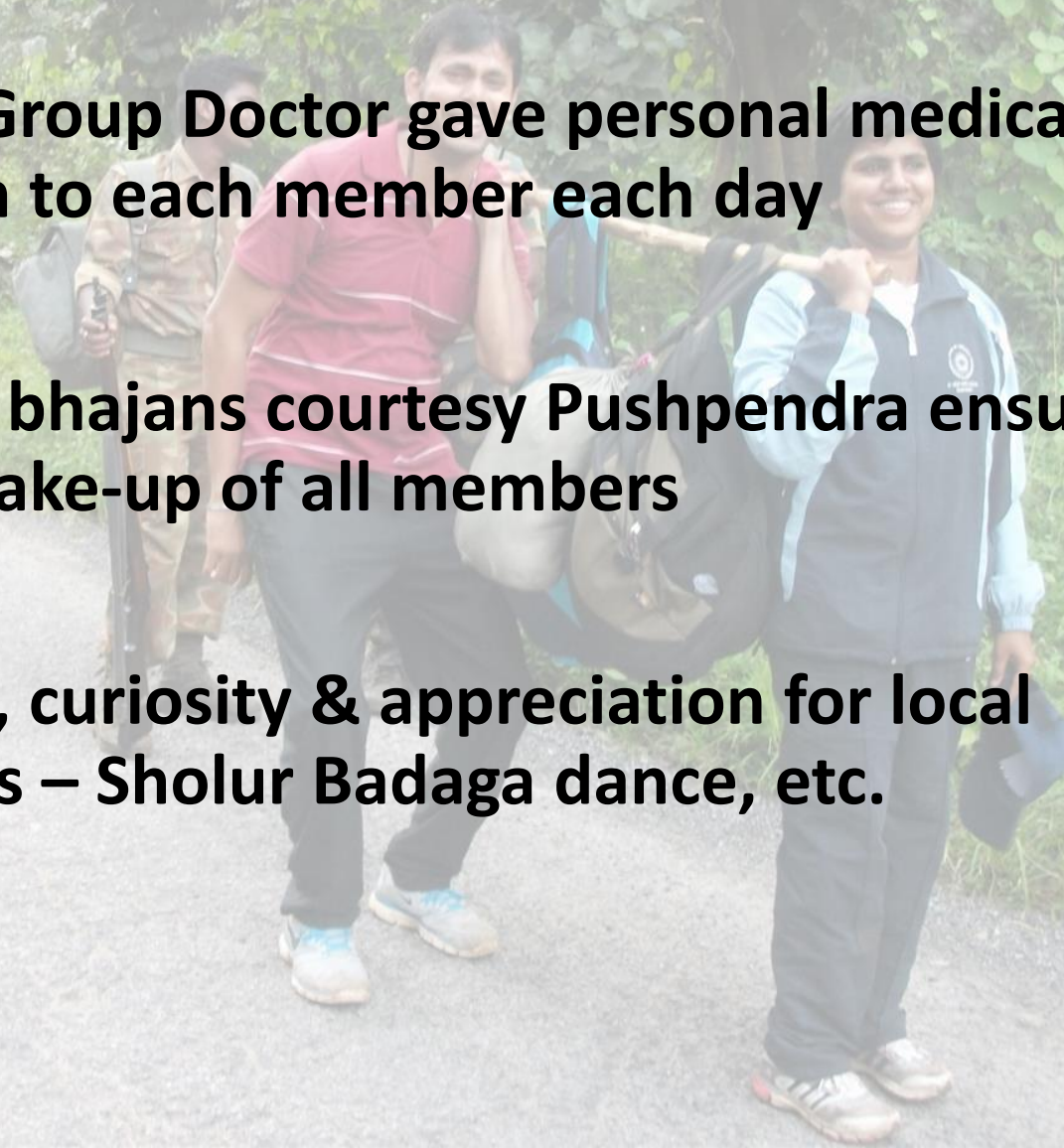
- Fostered endurance to combat physical problems & complete all treks together as one team
- Developed mutual sensitivity & concern to quickly traverse leech-infested sectors together
- Supported latent/hidden talents of members reach full expression – singing, planning, etc.





Learning as Group & Individuals

- Selfless Group Doctor gave personal medical attention to each member each day
- Morning bhajans courtesy Pushpendra ensured timely wake-up of all members
- Courtesy, curiosity & appreciation for local traditions – Sholur Badaga dance, etc.





Learning as Group & Individuals

- **Very good stress buster:** fresh air, pure water, away from mobiles/computers resets the biological cycle
- **Learnt about limits:** aware about potential to endure stress and pain; mental strength is the key
- **The Best things in life are free:** landscapes, rising sun, waterfalls, grazing sheep, grasslands...no wealth can buy this pleasure

Socioeconomic & Cultural Observations

- Trek Guides facilitated interaction with locals
- Todas
 - Cattle rearing, tea plantation, silver jewellery, shawls
 - Favourable sex ratio of 1,042 women per 1,000 men
 - Nature worshippers – sun, moon, bison, flower
 - Toda temple enroute Parson's valley
 - Unique, curved huts
 - Formed forum in July 2014 to get civic amenities from Gol
- Witnessed Navaratri celebrations in temple enroute Vazhaithottam
- Learnt *badaga* dance from native children at Sholur

Socioeconomic & Cultural Observations



Hardships during Trek

■ Accommodation Constraints

- Warm, clean bathing water
- Far-off washrooms
- Electricity & plug points
- Cellphone signal
- Sleeping bags

■ Trekking Constraints

- Leech bites
- Drinking water rationing
- Slippery terrain of tea gardens, especially during descent



Feedback

- **PT & short trek at APPA useful for physical conditioning**
- **Trek briefing at Ooty Circuit House useful for mental conditioning**
- **Food, water & packed rations provided despite difficult terrain & operating conditions**
- **Kargudi food was especially delicious**
- **STF & Forest personnel maintained discipline, safety & security**

Suggestions

- **Sleeping bags not suitable for heights 6 ft & above**
- **Trekking bags not suitable in size & support**
- **Calculated trek distances need more accuracy**
- **More floor mats for Pandyar as some members had to sleep in cold corridor**
- **Better information of anti-leech techniques**
- **Emergency lights be provided for camps without electricity**

We Thank -

- MCR HRD Institute
- Tamil Nadu Government
- Special Task Force
- Local staff and citizenry



Questions...?

