



At Vanavasa, meals are cooked on wooden fires and served on banana leaves, the villas are sparse with no electricity, and days are spent in solitude, without gadgets and in close proximity to nature.

# A Silent Melody

Move over wellness holidays, welcome to the world of digital detox getaways. **BY MALA BARUA**

**AS I HANDED OVER** my laptop and my phone at SwaSwara, my heart was beating with excitement and curiosity. I was just about to go into a ‘self-imposed exile’ in CGH’s new property VanaVasa. ‘Shanti with VanaVasa’ is a yoga programme with 7 nights at SwaSwara followed by 3 nights at VanaVasa, set in the midst of the forests. After landing at the Goa Dabolim Airport, I was transported 170 kilometres away. It took an hours’ boat ride through the beautiful backwaters of Karnataka to arrive at a small fishing village. From there, a short drive ensured I finally reach VanaVasa.

My accommodation was an independent village-style house. The property has no electricity, so neither did my villa—I could forget about a ceiling fan, hot water, and reading lights at night. At the start of the journey itself, I had made a resolve to sail through my stay here and curb

my desires. So here I was left smiling to myself.

Intertwining the concepts of ‘Pratyahar’ (withdrawal of the senses) and ‘rewilding’ (conserving and restoring natural processes and core wilderness), VanaVasa has nothing but your mind to distract you.

The essence of this experience is being in the open space of silent awareness where there are no pre-defined activities, rituals, required beliefs, or assigned practices. Resident Manager Jack is himself on the path of self discovery and combines several forms of energy work with Vipassana. Often he serves as a mentor and guide giving individual attention to those who want it and helps create a retreat that best fits their needs.

My villa overlooked the verdant green paddy fields with the backdrop of the Western Ghats. For three days I silently devoured books—*Rewilding the Heart*, *The Paths of Pravritti* and

*Nivritti* and a book on Rumi, *Forty Rules of Love*.

Gulabi and Srimati from the local village were assigned to cook meals. They made a variety of rice pancakes and local delicacies on a wooden fire and served them on banana leaves. The cackling of the Malabar Grey Hornbills, the stealthy Malabar Giant Squirrel that occasionally distracted me from the paddy fields, the touch-me-not plants shutting down for the night—the silence and stillness of the place had begun to engulf me. I became one with the inner and outer stillness. That morning I could have sat on my cushion for an unlimited period of time going deep into my ‘chidakasha’. I had nothing to do and nowhere to go. [cghearth.com](http://cghearth.com) 📍