

Arid land now a lush green mini-forest

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Nagpur: A lush green patch of bamboo mini-forest in a small village near Kalmeshwar, about 30km from Nagpur, bears testimony to the resilience of the plant and also innovative thinking of a young sarpanch.

In 2015, this two-acre patch of land was barren due to heavy murum presence on the ground, but now it is abuzz with life and hosts tall bamboo plantation. It all started with Khapri-Ubagi village's sarpanch Ritesh Pawarkar, who is in his late 30s, viewing his role as not only as an administrator but also an environmentalist.

"You can't grow any crop there," said Pawarkar, while talking about the ground's fertility and composition. "It's hard rock and has a lot of murum. One girl from our village was studying MSc and was connected with Neeri. Hence, I asked her to see what can be done about this degraded land," he said.

Near the end of 2015, a meeting between Neeri officials and Pawarkar was fixed which led to a team from Nagpur visiting the village for a spot study. "They took sample from the ground and analyzed it in their lab. The result was that only 10% of it was soil and the rest hard rock. Yet, Neeri took up the challenge and chose a two-acre stretch for the experiment," said Pawarkar.

The project started three years ago and now, Khapri-Ubgai has become an example for other places with degraded land. "It's impossible to imagine what kind of place it was before we planted bamboo with Neeri's help. Nothing would grow here. Even weed managed to stay on the ground only for two months of monsoon after which it was left barren again. But now, it's green with bamboo shooting off to 50 feet-high," said Pawarkar.

The young turk is now planning to take this forward by setting up a cottage industry for women. "There are so many bamboo products that can be made and women self-help groups can be set up to take it forward," he added.

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/proper-alliance-can-make-bamboo-nomics-work/articleshow/71191506.cms>