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Kanha Shanti Vanam rain forest, a slice of the Western Ghats in Telangana

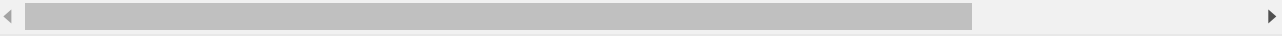
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Hyderabad: This is a slice of the Western Ghats in Telangana. Given the dense plantation and healthy growth of some endangered species, which are endemic to Kerala and Karnataka, this is where one can experience the adventure of trekking in the thick and condensed forests of the Western Ghats, but right here in Telangana.

Far from the Ghats, a rain forest has been developed in the once barren lands of Nandigama mandal in the erstwhile Mahabubnagar district. Apart from rain forests,



In a span of about four to five years, the rain forest, spread over five to six acres at Kanha Shanti Vanam is now home to vulnerable and critically endangered species besides increasing the green cover in the region.

Consider this. There are hardly two dozen of *Syzygium Travincorium* (Kerala Jamun) in the wild and the rain forests at Kanha have now about eight trees, triggering a new hope of propagating the growth of species and saving it from getting extinct.

Similarly, *Saraca Asoca* (Sita Asoka) and *Artocarpus Hirsutus* (wild jackfruit), a red listed species, are growing healthily in the rain forests here. Red sanders, *Rudraksh* and other species, which are alien to Telangana's soil pattern, are not just surviving but thriving in the rain forests.

But how was a rain forest raised in the once barren and porous lands of Chegur, Nandigama mandal, which is about 25 km from Hyderabad.

"It was challenging. Before any plantation, pits of three feet by three feet were dug up and filled with layers of black cotton soil, biochar, farmyard and vermicompost," says Goutham, a volunteer from the plantation section at Kanha.

This was done to maintain the moisture and this apart, PVC percolated pipes filled with sand and charcoal were placed at the tree bottoms to filter the water and ensure it reaches the roots, he explains.

Another key aspect was the plantation of *Agathi* trees, which are leguminous and grow fast. Apart from providing shade to the rain forest, this species fixes nitrogen and aids in growth of other species. Further, the *Vitex trifolia* species was planted between two trees.

After plantation, emphasis was laid on creating a conducive atmosphere for the survival of the species. To this, foggers, rain guns and sprinklers were installed at strategic locations to mimic the natural rain. This was supported with regular supply of liquid nutritional supplements, especially to the roots.

All the hard work, intuition and commitment by Kanha Shanti Vanam volunteers have resulted in achieving an impossible task of raising rain forest in about six acres. The rain forest is not only home to some rare tree species but is turning home to several migratory birds, which take shelter in large numbers, thanks to the fruits nuts and seeds.

Tree Conservation Centre

Raising a rain forest is challenging enough. But sourcing endangered species saplings for plantations is even more challenging.

Apart from sourcing saplings from Kerala, Karnataka, North Eastern States and Andaman and Nicobar islands, Kanha Shanti Vanam has set up a Tree Conservation Centre at the premises.

In addition to the conventional practice of seed propagation, cutting and layering, tissue culture is being taken up extensively at the Tree Conservation Centre.

Besides producing the tissue culture of endangered species like red sanders, *Syzygium Travncocrium* (Kerala Jamun), the Centre is producing teak and other species tissues. About 40,000 saplings of teak would be ready for production and distribution in about 45 days and many red sanders and Kerala Jamun species saplings would be ready for distribution in three to four months, explains a scientist at the Centre.

Before distribution, all the measures are followed at the hardening facility to ensure acclimatization and growth of different species.

Apart from the Tree Conservation Centre, a nursery was set up back five years ago and another nursery is being set up in nine acres. In addition to these, a 100-acre mega nursery is also being developed on the premises.

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