Odisha CM uses banyan tree to tell a tale of resilience

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BHUBANESWAR: Chief minister Naveen Patnaik used a banyan tree, which had been uprooted by Cyclone Fani last year but which was successfully restored, to convey a message of resilience to the people of the state.

"The people of Odisha have faced a lot of calamities and hardship in the past, but with patience, courage and strong will, they have succeeded in bringing back the glory of the land. Courage is one of the most important traits of the Odias. This banyan tree is the symbol of that courage. We will fight and we will win," he tweeted.

Naveen on Sunday tweeted pictures of the old banyan tree located near Stewart School in Unit VIII. The tree was uprooted when Cyclone Fani wreaked havoc on the state in May last year and its chances of survival were slim. However, a social media campaign by a few city-based activists came to the tree's rescue.

Activist Ashok Kumar Baral wrote a message in Odia on behalf of the tree. "I was on my way home and I saw the uprooted banyan tree. I felt that it needed help to be restored. I stood for some moments before the tree, wrote a message and forwarded it to different groups and also the forest department officials," he said.

The message, which was in the first-person voice of the tree, said, "I sacrificed myself to save you from the wrath of the cyclone. I was axed to clear your path. I want to continue the service, but I fell. I need a little help to stand back."

He said the message received a positive response from the then additional chief secretary of the forest and environment

department. On the same day, the tree was restored by local officials. "It took almost 12 hours to restore the giant uprooted banyan tree," he added.

Thousands of trees were uprooted in the city during the cyclone last year. Those which were in a condition to be restored received the attention of local organisations and the government. Nearly one year since the cyclone, the city's green cover has more or less been restored.