

This Coimbatore man is planting a revolution to secure the future of our planet

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COIMBATORE: The year was 1985. A school-going teenager was in the middle of a ‘road roko’ protest to prevent the transportation of grown trees. “Back in those days, trees used to be chopped down mercilessly without a second thought,” recalls M Yoganathan, who is now 50 years old, and works as a conductor with the State Transport Corporation in the Coimbatore division.

“Many environmentalists used to protest, but no action was being taken. The logs were taken to Mettupalayam, where they would go into making of furniture. The dried leaves were used to adulterate tea,” says Yoganathan, whose campaign ‘Uyir vazha oru maram’ made him a household name in Coimbatore and surrounding regions.



He is seen with late Dr A P J Abdul Kalam | Ex press

Yoganathan’s journey to the green side began with S Jayachandran of Tamil Nadu Green Movement. It was during that time he started meeting students to sensitise them to the importance of saving

trees. “ Now, it is more than 33 years and I have visited almost 8,800 educational institutions across the State to sensitise students about the issue.” He entered into TNSTC service in 2001 and made sure that his source of bread and butter never becomes an obstacle in the way of his passion.

He continued visiting the educational institutions. Yoganathan’s humanitarian work soon spread to different quarters through word of mouth and earned him the title of ‘eco-warrior’ in 2008. Mohammad Hamid Ansari, the then Vice-President handed over the award to Yoganathan. In 2009, the Tamil Nadu Government conferred on him the title ‘sutru suzal seyal veerar’. Soon, his fame spread across seas. “One Vasudevan from Texas lent me his three and a half acre land at Alandurai to establish a plant nursery.



M Yoganathan receiving an award from the then Vice President

We use that for producing saplings and against the market price I sell them at a minimum price of Rs 30. I also give away the first two saplings for free,” says the nature lover who spends 15 days a month on his job and the remaining time taking his green mission forward. He aims to upgrade the pond at the premises of CODISSIA Industrial Park at Moperipalayam.

Through his ‘Tree Trust’ 27,000 volunteers have come forward for the cause of planting trees. “Whenever I visit an institution, I deliver my address, only if five saplings are planted on the premises.” During the last 19 years of service, Yoganathan was transferred to 40 places in Coimbatore, Tirupur and Nilgiris districts and he used this as an opportunity to spread the word. “In another three years I will take up my aim of green revolution as a full time work,” he says giving an insight into his future plans.

Inspired by Gandhiji

Twice a year, Yoganathan visits the campus of the Coimbatore Market Committee located at Ramanathapuram where Mahatma Gandhi planted black plum (naval maram) tree on February 7, 1934. “I collect the fruits from the naval maram that Gandhiji planted at Ramanathapuram. I plant the seedlings and then as time comes, I distribute the saplings reminiscing the work done by Gandhiji.”

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