

SayTrees is making Bangalore Smile by giving it a new green cover

Author - Milaap, Published on - 4.12.2015



Say Trees, Bangalore

The temperature in Bangalore steadily rose, making its residents work up a sweat. With its temperature noticeably hotter than average, Bangalore is fast losing its coolness factor – quite literally so. This is not just Bangalore's story. Climate change has made its effects felt globally, with unprecedented spikes in temperatures, frigid winters, and extremely high levels of rain. And we haven't been able to cope with the effects. However, it is never too late to combat the effects of climate change. SayTrees is showing us exactly how to do so.



Tree Plantation in the City

A seed of an idea:

SayTrees

was founded by Kapil Sharma, a software engineer by day. He was concerned over the chopping down of century old trees in the name of infrastructural development. Instead of complaining of the loss of greenery, and the expansion of the concrete jungle in the city, he decided to do something about it. Says Kapil, "I moved to Bangalore in 2001. By 2007, I could see a visible change in the city's climate, and the loss of green cover. This is when I thought of doing something." Kapil started visiting the BBMP office in Bangalore, to try to find out how to restore the city's greenery. After many years of meeting with BBMP officers, he started getting places to plant saplings in the city. He then started taking help from friends, and soon, moved on to approaching corporate organisations to fund tree plantation under their corporate social responsibility budget.

Juggling a corporate job during the week, he started planting saplings over the weekends. He was soon joined by Sumant Parmar, Durgesh Agrahari, and Avineet Prakash, amongst others. In 2013, after expanding their activities to include volunteers, SayTrees was registered as an NGO. One of its main activities is continuing planting saplings across Bangalore and other places in Karnataka. From 2007 to 2013, SayTrees planted 8000 saplings; and in 2015 alone, it planted more than 13000 saplings. Its other activities include research, education, and advocacy of planting trees and environment conservation.

Getting their hands dirty:



Say Trees Volunteers

SayTrees' plantations are all volunteer-driven. "When we started, our main aim was to involve people in planting saplings", says Kapil, "We wanted to highlight the importance of trees for our survival." They started spreading word of SayTrees' activities through Facebook and other social media platforms, detailing each of their plantations. After word spread of SayTrees, people started joining in to help in the plantations. One can find volunteers across ages, occupations, and backgrounds with SayTrees – from children to senior citizens, anyone with a passion for the environment can volunteer. The organisation also promotes its activities across schools, colleges, and corporate organisations.

While restoring Bangalore's green cover and reiterating its status of Garden City may seem intimidating to some, SayTrees was undeterred. Starting with plantations along Outer Ring Road, they then moved on to plantations at lakes, beginning with Madiwala Lake. The type of plants are native saplings and are chosen according to the location – for lakes, plants that would help the ecosystem are chosen, while for schools, fruit plantations are chosen.

SayTrees has helped Bangalore reclaim some of its natural beauty by planting saplings in around 14 lakes, and several other locations. From last year till now, SayTrees has planted thousands of saplings across Whitefield and Koramangala in Bangalore. Today, SayTrees has gained so much popularity that it has extended its activities in cities like Hyderabad, New Delhi, Chennai, and Belgaum.

Helping farmers earn a sustainable income:



Tree Plantation in Villages

With its activities in cities in full swing, SayTrees is now embarking on helping farmers in villages. Says Kapil, “We are already involved in planting saplings in villages, to promote greenery. We also invest in plantations that would help farmer earn a sustainable income. We want to make sure the villages don’t face the problem cities are facing.”

Moved by the plight of farmers affected by the agrarian crises across India, Kapil and his colleagues decided to step up their current activities in rural areas.

“Because of unpredictable seasonal changes, these farmers’ crops are affected. Now these are all environment issues. And its a full circle. the more trees you have, the more water soil will retain, proper rains will be there as there will be evaporation. And proper rains mean trees can grow well.”

SayTrees has chosen fruit plantations that would help these farmers earn a sustainable source of income. The plantations will also ensure a positive impact on the environment with sustainable use of the land, prevention of soil erosion, increasing the quality of the soil, amongst other such benefits.

SayTrees has started its pilot project in Anantpur district, Andhra Pradesh, by planting mango saplings, as this is best suited for the region’s conditions. Around 1500 saplings have already been planted, to benefit 3 farmers – the goal is to plant 8500 more.

With just an idea, Kapil has shown us how we can make a difference, and make an impact on our environment, and those around us. And you can make a difference too – with your contribution on [Milaap](#), SayTrees can continue expanding its activities across India – and continue its crusade for the environment.

First published by **The Alternative**