



10

YEARS OF SWACCH BHARAT MISSION
A celebration of the Swachhata Champions that ushered India into a new era

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
Government of India

स्वच्छ भारत
एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर



SWACHHATA CHAMPIONS
AS FEATURED ON MANN KI BAAT



“

मेरे प्यारे देशवासियों कभी भी छोटी बात को, छोटी चीज को, छोटी मानने की गलती नहीं करनी चाहिए। छोटे-छोटे प्रयासों से कभी-कभी तो बहुत बड़े-बड़े परिवर्तन आते हैं। और अगर महात्मा गांधी जी के जीवन की तरफ हम देखेंगे तो हम हर पल महसूस करेंगे कि छोटी छोटी बातों की उनके जीवन में कितनी बड़ी अहमियत थी और छोटी-छोटी बातों को लेकर के बड़े-बड़े संकल्पों को कैसे उन्होंने साकार किया था। हमारे आज के नौजवान को यह जरूर जानना चाहिए कि साफ-सफाई के अभियान ने कैसे आज़ादी के आंदोलन को एक निरंतर ऊर्जा दी थी। यह महात्मा गांधी ही तो थे जिन्होंने स्वच्छता को जन आंदोलन बनाने का काम किया था। महात्मा गांधी ने स्वच्छता को स्वाधीनता के सपने के साथ जोड़ दिया था। आज इतने दशकों बाद, स्वच्छता आंदोलन ने एक बार फिर देश को नए भारत के सपने के साथ जोड़ने का काम किया है, और यह हमारी आदतों को बदलने का भी अभियान बन रहा है। और हम यह ना भूलें कि स्वच्छता, यह सिर्फ एक कार्यक्रम है, स्वच्छता ये पीढ़ी दर पीढ़ी, संस्कार संक्रमण की एक ज़िम्मेदारी है। और पीढ़ी दर पीढ़ी जब स्वच्छता का अभियान चलता है तब सम्पूर्ण समाज जीवन में स्वच्छता का स्वभाव बनता है और इसलिए ये साल दो साल, एक सरकार, दूसरी सरकार ऐसा विषय नहीं है, पीढ़ी दर पीढ़ी हमें स्वच्छता के संबंध में सजगता से, अविरत रूप से, बिना थके, बिना रुके, बड़ी श्रद्धा के साथ जुड़े रहना है और स्वच्छता के अभियान को चलाए रखना है। और मैंने तो पहले भी कहा है, कि स्वच्छता पूज्य बापू को इस देश की बहुत बड़ी श्रद्धांजली है, और यह श्रद्धांजली हमें, हर बार देते रहना है, लगातार देते रहना है।

”

**Narendra Modi,
Prime Minister of India**

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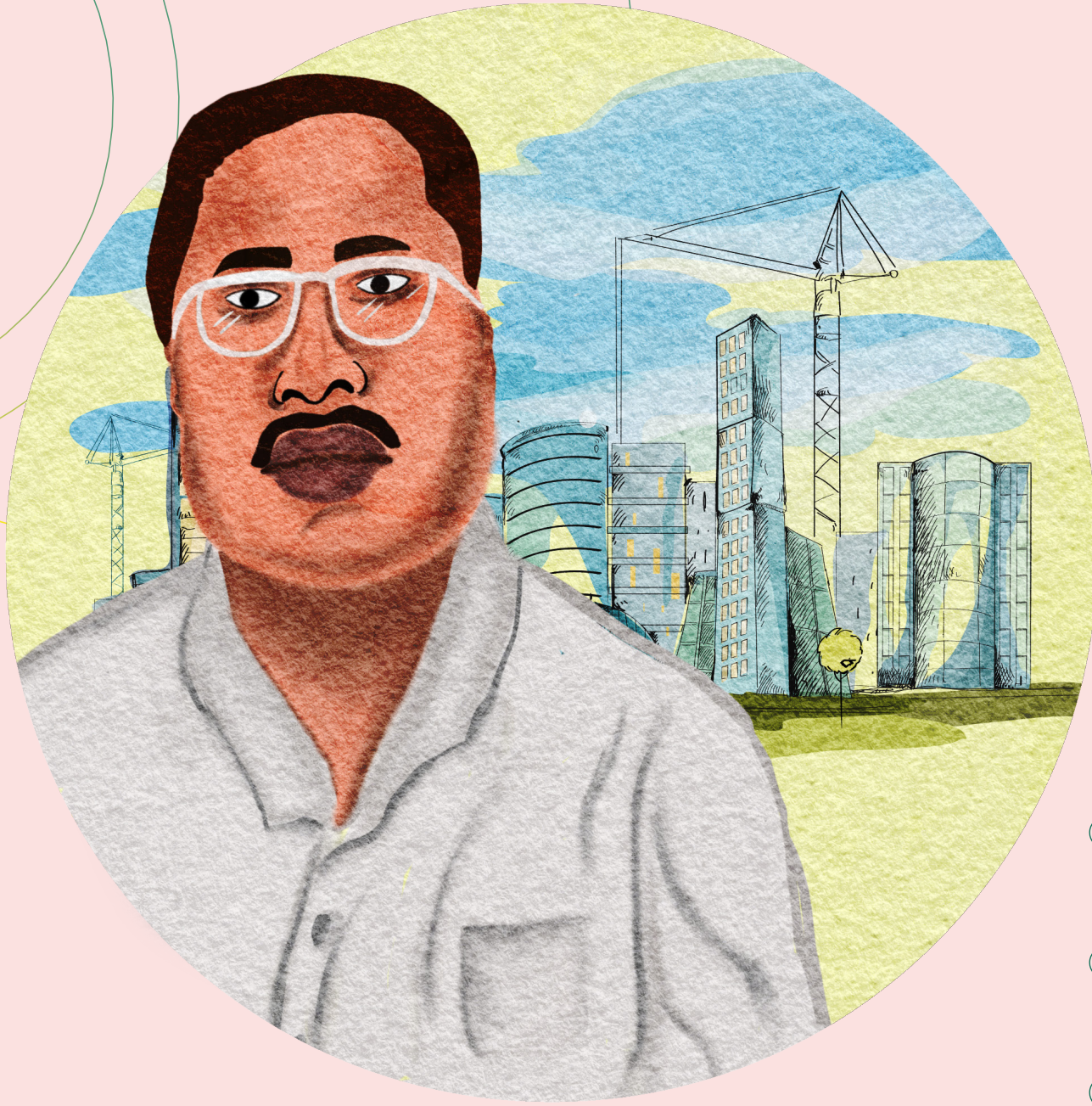
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SHAILESH BHONSLE

AIROLI, MAHARSHTRA

“

With the loan I received, I was able to purchase the SFC 709 suction tanker and start my own sewage drain cleaning business. I want to tell my fellow citizens that young people like me should **step forward and take advantage of the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana**. Just as I benefited from it, others can too.

”

मन
की
बात

“मुंबई में एक शैलेश भोंसले हैं। उन्हें MUDRA योजना से 8.5 लाख का कर्ज मिला। उन्होंने सीवेज ड्रेस और साफ-सफाई का कारोबार शुरू किया। मैंने अपने स्वच्छता अभियान के बारे में बताया था कि इससे नए इंटरप्रेन्योर पैदा होंगे। और शैलेश भोंसले ने इसे साबित कर दिया।”

Episode 14, November 2015



BUILDING A CLEANER FUTURE:

How Entrepreneur Shailesh Bhonsle Answered The Swachh Bharat Call



In the vibrant suburb of Airoli, Mumbai, a remarkable journey began with a vision inspired by the Prime Minister's call for a "Swachh Bharat." Shailesh Bhonsle, a determined local resident, felt a deep desire to **contribute to this noble mission while also creating a sustainable livelihood.** Recognising the pressing sanitation issues in his community, particularly due to rapid urbanisation, he understood that Airoli faced significant challenges

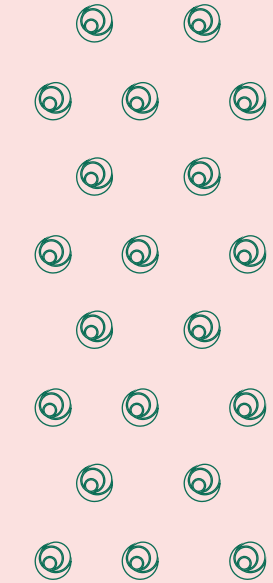
related to waste management. Inadequate sewage treatment, clogged drains, and littering were common problems affecting public health and quality of life. With an **entrepreneurial spirit** and a renewed sense of purpose, he set out to transform his vision into a viable solution for his community's sanitation challenges.

Shailesh learned about the **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)**, an initiative designed to empower small businesses by providing financial support. Under this scheme, businesses can apply for loans categorised as Shishu, Kishore, or Tarun, depending on their stage of growth. With the support of his friends, he approached a financial institution, where he applied for a **loan to purchase a tanker equipped with a suction pump for cleaning sewage drains.** The bank recognised Shailesh's passion and vision, granting him ₹8.57 lakh under the the Tarun scheme, which specifically caters to established businesses seeking to scale up their operations, under the Mudra Yojana.

Shailesh quickly purchased the essential equipment and launched his own sewage drain cleaning and clearing business. The demand for his services soared as residents recognised the importance of maintaining clean and functional drainage systems for a healthy environment. Not only was he making a **significant impact on urban sanitation** by addressing the prevalent issues of clogged drains, but he was also building a **thriving business that contributed to the community's well-being.**

As his venture flourished, Shailesh was proud to learn that his efforts had generated ₹2 lakh in revenue shortly before his story was aired on Mann Ki Baat, inspiring others to follow in his footsteps. His success became a beacon of hope, demonstrating that one person's initiative can spark change and uplift an entire community.

Today, Shailesh Bhosale stands tall as a champion, embodying the spirit of Swachh Bharat. His journey is a celebration of innovation, resilience, and the power of community, proving that with determination and the right support, anyone can become a leader in the mission for a cleaner India.





PRADEEP SANGWAN

KULLU, HIMACHAL PRADESH

“

We are trying to **teach people through ground action.** The idea is that those who participate in a clean-up drive will never litter again.

”

मन
की
बात

“आपने भी अपने जीवन में महसूस किया होगा जब हम समाज के लिए कुछ करते हैं तो बहुत कुछ करने की ऊर्जा हमें खुद ही सामान्य सी लगने वाली परिणामों से बहुत बड़े काम भी हो जाते हैं। ऐसे ही एक युवा श्रीमान प्रदीप सांगवान प्रदीप सांगवान 2016 से Healing Himalayas नाम से अभियान चला रहे। वह अपनी टीम और वॉलेंटर्स के साथ जाते हैं और हिमालय की अलग अलग जगह से प्लास्टिक कचरा जो टूरिस्ट वहां छोड़ जाते हैं, साफ करते हैं। प्रदीप जी अब तक हिमालय की अलग अलग लोकेशन से कई टन प्लास्टिक कचरा साफ कर चुके हैं।”

Episode 19, December 2020



A TREKKER'S LEGACY:

Pradeep Sangwan's Efforts To Preserve The Himalayas

Pradeep Sangwan's journey from a passionate trekker to a dedicated environmentalist began in the serene yet fragile ecosystems of the Himalayas. Pradeep's mission to heal the mountains took root from his love for trekking and his growing concern over the increasing waste left behind by tourists.

His motivation stemmed from witnessing the stark contrast between the traditional, sustainable

lifestyles of the shepherd community and the wasteful habits of modern tourists. Inspired by the shepherds' minimal environmental footprint, Pradeep aimed to **create a harmonious balance between tourism and environmental conservation.**

Trekking, as an individualistic exercise started feeling pointless to him, he wanted to introduce something sustainable that others could follow too.

Swachhata Champions

Pradeep Sangwan - Kullu, Himachal Pradesh

In 2016, Pradeep founded Healing Himalayas, focusing on **sustainable trekking and waste management.** Starting alone, he gradually built a network of volunteers and garnered community support. His unique approach involved setting up Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) along popular trails, educating trekkers about waste management, and organising numerous cleaning drives.

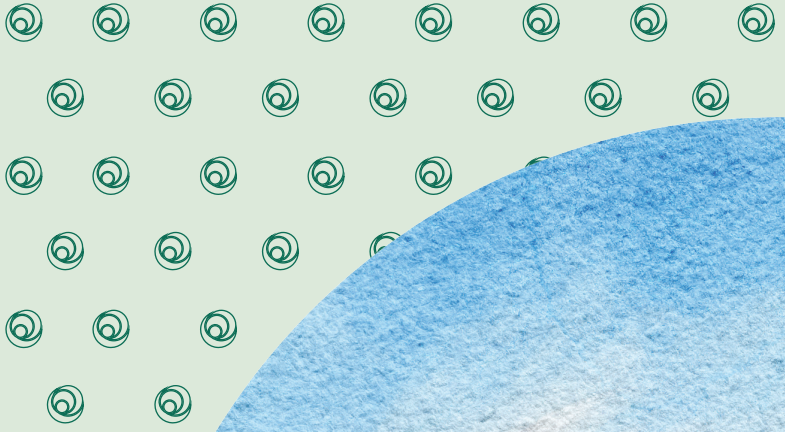
Initially facing resistance and scepticism, Pradeep now operates multiple MRFs, collecting and processing tons of waste. One of his major initiatives has been organising decentralised waste collection, **gathering waste from various trekking routes** in the Kullu district. By collecting 30 tons of waste daily, his team aims to set up a local recycling unit, minimising the logistical footprint and fostering a circular economy. The shift in community attitudes towards cleanliness is evident with villagers now recognising the importance of waste management facilities.

Pradeep recounts a memorable story involving a group of corporate volunteers who joined a cleaning drive with Healing Himalayas. Initially indifferent, their perspectives changed after witnessing the intensive efforts required to clean

the mountains. They returned home with a renewed sense of responsibility, championing waste management practices in their workplaces and communities.

Pradeep faced numerous challenges, from securing volunteers and funding to changing mindsets. Consistency and perseverance were key. Pradeep underpins the importance of consistency; he says that support eventually flows in when people see drive and determination. Over time, a few corporates recognised the urgency of his work and began providing financial support, enabling him to scale his initiatives.

Pradeep Sangwan's transformative journey from a trekker to an environmental changemaker exemplifies **the power of individual action in driving collective change.** His work plays a crucial role in improving the ecological conditions of the Himalayas and inspires others to adopt responsible practices. By fostering a culture of cleanliness and sustainability, Pradeep helps ensure that the mountains remain pristine for future generations.



Swachhata Champions

Anudeep Hegde and Minusha Kanchan - Baiduru, Karnataka

ANUDEEP HEGDE AND MINUSHA KANCHAN

BAINDURU, KARNATAKA

“
Be the change you want to see. **If something bothers you, take initiative.**
”

मन की बात

“अनुदीप और मीनूशा ने तय किया कि सोमेश्वर समुद्र तट पर लोग जो कचरा छोड़कर गए हैं उससे साफ़ करेंगे। दोनों पति-पत्नी ने शादी के बाद ये पहला संकल्प लिया. दोनों ने मिलकर समुद्र तट पर ढेर सारा कूड़ा साफ़ किया। अनुदीप ने अपने संकल्प के बारे में सोशल मीडिया पर भी शेयर किया और उनकी इस शानदार सोच से कई युवा प्रभावित हुए और उनके साथ जुड़ गए। आप जानकर हैरान होंगे की इन लोगों ने मिलकर सोमेश्वर समुद्र तट से ८०० किलो से ज़्यादा कचरा साफ़ किया है।”
Episode 19, December 2020





RIDING THE TIDE OF CHANGE:

Anudeep And Minusha's Journey To Revive A Beach And Inspire A Community



Nestled 450 kilometers away from bustling Bengaluru, Bainduru, a quaint town in Karnataka's Udupi district, sits between the foothills of the Western Ghats and the serene Someshwar Beach. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Anudeep Hedge and Minusha Kanchan moved to Bainduru just days after their marriage from the capital city of Bengaluru as Anudeep calls this tranquil town his childhood home. Their journey towards championing sanitation was not mere happenstance, but **a deliberate choice shaped by their deep-rooted connection with nature.** They saw an opportunity to give back to the community and environment, feeling a responsibility to protect the coastal ecosystem. They were also inspired by India's Swachh Bharat Mission, which reshaped community perceptions and dismantled stigmas around sanitation work, especially among the younger generation.

Anudeep, a marketing professional, with a history of involvement in beach clean-up drives and marine conservation efforts, couldn't turn a blind eye to the post-monsoon plastic waste that marred Someshwar

Beach, a rocky beach on the outskirts of Mangaluru city in coastal Karnataka, where him and his wife, Minusha, spent evenings together. They rolled up their sleeve, strapped on gloves, and began their daily ritual of **cleaning up plastic while simultaneously spreading awareness.** Starting small with just the two of them, they picked up bits of litter and posted their efforts online, which quickly drew attention. Initially mistaken for hired hands, their passion soon attracted the curiosity and support of local youth, gradually growing into a collaborative effort that spanned 18 to 20 days to finish cleaning the beach. What started as a personal effort turned into a community movement, inspiring others to take ownership of the project. Photography served not just as a way to document their efforts but also as a source of motivation for Anudeep and Minusha, fueling their **dream of seeing turtles lay eggs on their beach again.** The couple envisions Someshwar Beach becoming a safe haven for endangered species, with plans to engage with marine biologists and conservationists to ensure the beach remains eco-friendly.

Swachhata Champions

Anudeep Hegde and Minusha Kanchan - Bainduru, Karnataka

The last day of the beach clean-up saw an overwhelming 600 community members, especially school students joining efforts. In total, they removed 600 kilos of waste from the Someshwar Beach. Their efforts didn't go unnoticed; their dedication to environmental stewardship earned them national recognition and the steadfast support of local leaders, including the MLA, who continues this practice to this day. This recognition brought attention to the fragile state of India's coastal regions, sparking further initiatives across other beaches in Karnataka.

Despite their successes, Anudeep remains acutely aware of the challenges that plague effective sanitation practices at the grassroots level and emphasises the importance of grassroot government accountability recounting instances where **irregular garbage collection led to haphazard disposal, endangering local livestock.** He highlights that true change requires not just clean-ups but systemic changes, ensuring that waste management infrastructure is robust and consistent.

Concerned about cultural shifts, Anudeep reflects on how values of reuse and cleanliness, integral to his upbringing, have gradually eroded over generations. Looking ahead, he advocates for systemic changes in

waste management, stressing the importance of prevention over recycling and the need for innovative solutions to curb single-use plastics. He suggests community-led initiatives, where individuals bring their own reusable containers to markets, as a way to reduce single-use plastics at the source. He sees **waste disposal post-collection as the biggest challenge in today's waste management ecosystem.** Anudeep and Minusha also envision using organic waste to create community composting programmes, turning waste into a resource for local agriculture.

Bainduru evolves from a quiet town into a powerful symbol of hope and inspiration showing that even the smallest towns and its communities can lead the way towards a sustainable future with impactful and transformative actions. Their work has inspired nearby towns to follow suit, creating a ripple effect of community-driven environmentalism.

Together they envision a future where community accountability and environmental consciousness are paramount. Their story from Bainduru transcends mere activism; it symbolises the **transformative power of individual action and collective responsibility in nurturing cleaner, more aware societies.**





CHANDRAKANT KULKARNI

PIMPRI CHINCHWAD, MAHARASHTRA

“

Like for many, prayer is part of their daily routine life, why not cleanliness can also be made part of daily life. Let us all follow in the saying that **‘Cleanliness is next to Godliness.’** We all can do it if we make up our minds.

”



मन की बात

“जिस देश का एक सरकारी मुलाजिम निवृत्ति के बाद सिर्फ १६ हजार के पेंशन में से ५ हजार रुपया स्वच्छता के अभियान के लिए दे देता हो, इस देश में कर चोरी करने का हमें हक नहीं बनता है। चन्द्रकान्त कुलकर्णी से बड़ा कोई हमारी प्रेरणा का कारण नहीं हो सकता है। और स्वच्छता अभियान से जुड़े हुए लोगों के लिए भी चन्द्रकान्त कुलकर्णी से बड़ा उत्तम उदाहरण नहीं हो सकता है।”

Episode 21 , June 2016



THE LIFELONG MISSION OF CLEANLINESS:

Chandrakant Kulkarni's Journey From Classroom To Countrywide Advocacy



Chandrakant Radhabai Damodar Kulkarni, a retired teacher from Pune's St. Joseph Boys School, embodies a **lifelong commitment to cleanliness instilled during his childhood**. His journey began in 1972 under the guidance of a principal who instilled in him the

daily ritual of cleaning benches and classrooms - an early lesson that would shape Kulkarni's dedication to cleanliness, or "Swachhta" for decades to come.

Swachhata Champions

In his retirement, Kulkarni has emerged as a passionate advocate for sanitation across India, having travelled over 1,00,000 kilometres in the past decade alone to witness the Swachhta Abhiyan. His mission transcends mere advocacy; Kulkarni **allocates a significant portion of his monthly pension towards enhancing public hygiene**. With a monthly pension of ₹16,000, he has given 52 post-dated cheques of ₹5,000 each to the Swachh Bharat corpus. When asked about his altruistic gesture, it is humbly explained that he is fortunate to enjoy good health and has modest financial needs; he adds that giving back a portion of his pension for the betterment of the country brings him immense satisfaction.

Throughout his travels, Kulkarni has witnessed firsthand the **environmental degradation caused by untreated sewage being discharged into rivers**. This pollution not only endangers aquatic ecosystems but also poses severe risks to public health, including the spread of waterborne diseases and contamination of drinking water sources. He is a strong proponent of on-site treatment of septic waste, believing it is a **crucial approach for safeguarding both public health and the environment**, ensuring a cleaner, safer future for communities across India.

Chandrakant Kulkarni - Pimpri Chinchwad, Maharashtra

Kulkarni's advocacy efforts extend far beyond rhetoric and financial contributions. He actively engages with communities, urging them to adopt cleanliness practices and advocate for sustainable waste management solutions. His message resonates deeply, inspiring individuals and communities to **take ownership of their surroundings and strive for a cleaner, healthier environment**.

Despite his advancing years, Kulkarni's zeal for sanitation remains undiminished. His ongoing advocacy work continues to influence communities across India, fostering a collective effort toward achieving cleaner villages, towns, and cities. Kulkarni's story shows how **personal commitment and good hygiene habits can greatly improve a nation's sanitation**.





AFROZ SHAH

MUMBAI, MAHARASHTRA

“ This problem of pollution is created by us... If this huge ocean is in a problem, we'll have to rise up in huge numbers. I feel the need to do something for my planet, so this will continue for life. This is a mindset change. But this must reach every human being. What is happening with climate change, plastic pollution, climate injustice is going to hit all of us. **We have 7 billion people. If each one could start – this journey could become marvelous. Can we do it together?** ”

मन
की
बात

“अफ़रोज़ शाह अक्टूबर २०१५ से स्वच्छता के कार्य में जुट गए और धीरे धीरे यह कारवां बढ़ता गया, जान आंदोलन में बदल गया और इस कार्य के लिए उन्हें UNEP का चैंपियंस ऑफ़ एअर्थ का अवार्ड मिला | मैं अफ़रोज़ शाह जी और उनकी पूरी टीम को मुंबई के वसोवा बीच की सफ़ाई के लिए उनके प्रयासों के लिए दिल से बधाई देता हूँ।”

Episode 32, May 2017

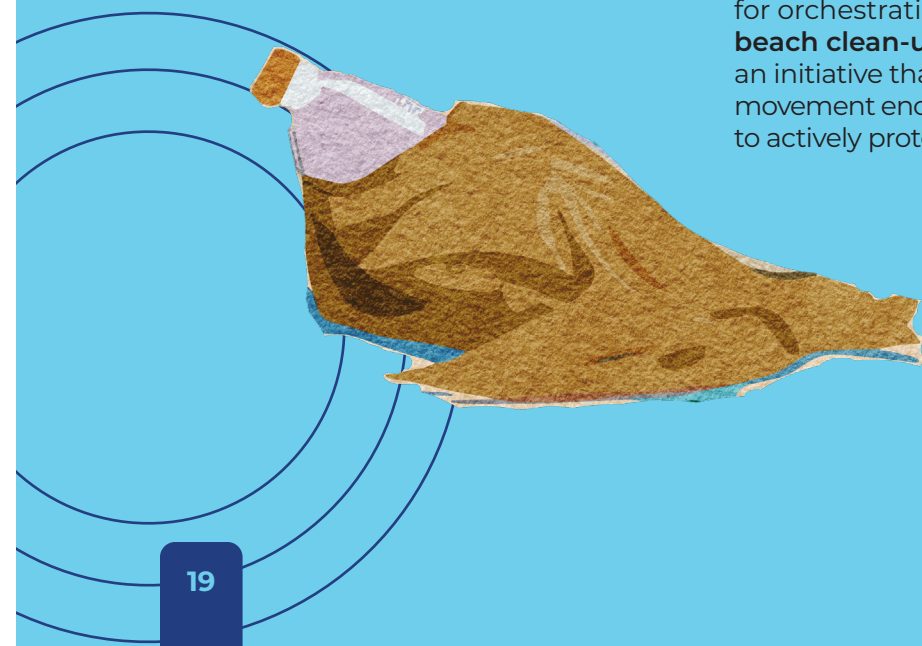


WAVES OF CHANGE:

Afroz Shah's Journey to Cleaner Coastlines

Afroz Shah, an environmental activist and lawyer from Mumbai, has emerged as a global icon in the fight against pollution, especially through his unprecedented beach clean-up efforts. He is best known for orchestrating the **world's largest beach clean-up** at Versova Beach, an initiative that sparked a worldwide movement encouraging communities to actively protect their environments.

Shah's journey began in October 2015, driven by frustration at the overwhelming amount of waste choking Versova Beach. Alongside his then 84-year-old neighbor, late Harbansh Mathur, Shah initiated the clean-up, picking up trash bit by bit. What started as a small, local effort soon evolved into a large-scale movement, with Shah galvanising volunteers from all walks of life - residents, students, and even Bollywood stars - every weekend - for what he calls "a date with the ocean".



Swachhata Champions

Afroz Shah - Mumbai Maharashtra

Shah's strategy includes door-to-door awareness campaigns, **raising consciousness about the environmental hazards of marine litter.** The community's efforts have borne fruit, with a noticeable decrease in waste accumulation on Versova Beach, further boosting the cause of marine litter awareness. This collective effort has led to the removal of over 4,000 tons of debris from the 2.5-kilometer stretch of Versova Beach.

In 2016, the United Nations recognised Shah as a Champion of the Earth for his pivotal role in **restoring Mumbai's Versova Beach.** Collaborating with the Dawoodi Bohra community's 'Turning the Tide' campaign, he also worked to remove plastic waste from the Mithi River and Dana Pani Beach. His inspiring efforts led the United Nations Environment Program to launch the 'Clean Seas' campaign, aiming to combat marine pollution globally. In 2019, he was also honored with the CNN Heroes of the Year award for his continued commitment to this cause.

Shah remains committed to **fighting for cleaner coastlines**, emphasising that **real change will only occur when people and governments alter how they produce, use, and dispose of plastic and other pollutants.** His vision extends beyond cleaning the beach; he aims to prevent waste from entering the creeks and restore the mangrove forests along the coast, which serve as natural barriers against storms. In his ongoing mission, Shah aspires to **inspire similar clean-up movements across India and the world.**





मन की बात

मैं १८ साल के बिलाल डार को बधाई देता हूँ, जिन्हें श्रीनगर नगर निगम ने ब्रांड एंबेसडर बनाया है। एक अनुमान है कि उसने हर साल १२ हजार किलो कचरा साफ़ किया है।

Episode 37, September 2017

Swachhata Champions

Bilal Dar - Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir

BILAL DAR

SRINAGAR, JAMMU & KASHMIR

“
By throwing plastic in them, we are not
killing water but ourselves. So, please! I
request you avoid doing it at any cost.

”





A RIPPLE OF CHANGE: Bilal Dar's Journey To Revive Wular Lake

Bilal Dar, an 18-year-old environmental activist from Laharwarpora, north Kashmir, has become **a beacon of hope in the fight against pollution**, particularly in **restoring the health of Wular Lake**, one of Asia's largest freshwater lakes.

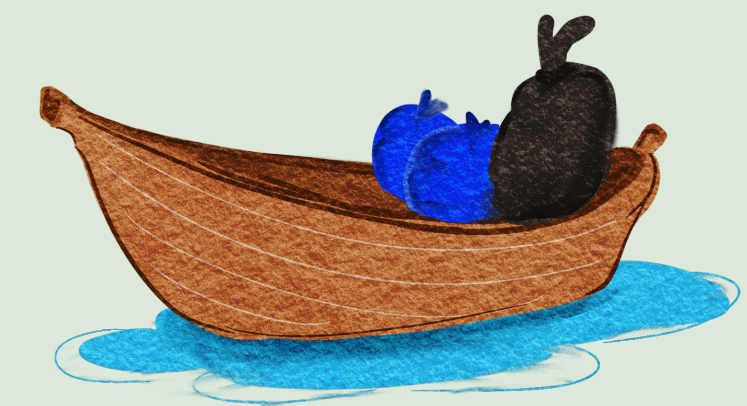
Bilal's journey is deeply rooted in personal responsibility. After losing his father to cancer in 2003, Bilal took on the responsibility of supporting his family. Armed with a small boat and unwavering resolve, he ventured out into the waters, often alone, to **collect trash that littered the surface and banks of the lake**. He focused on plastic bottles, polythene bags, and other non-biodegradable materials that

not only **marred the lake's beauty but also posed a significant threat to its wildlife**. Each piece of waste he retrieved represented a step towards restoring the natural splendor of Wular Lake. He turned the collected waste into a source of income by selling it for recycling, and earning around ₹150-200 per day. His dedication to cleaning Wular Lake is no small feat: media reports estimate that he removes more than 12,000 kilograms of waste each year, contributing to the environmental well-being of his community and the lake itself, which has been plagued by pollution.

Bilal's efforts were not just about cleaning; they were a call to action for those around him. He aimed to raise awareness about the importance of environmental stewardship, encouraging locals to recognise their role in **preserving this vital ecosystem**. Recognising his contributions, the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) provided Bilal with a vehicle and uniform to facilitate his **outreach efforts and promote cleanliness across local communities**.

In July 2017, Bilal was appointed as the Brand Ambassador of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC). Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted Bilal's contributions in his Mann Ki Baat address, praising the young activist as an inspiration for the nation. Modi remarked that while brand ambassadors are typically celebrities, Bilal's grassroots work since the age of 12 distinguishes him as a true hero of the people. Bilal's work in removing plastic, polythene, and other waste from the lake has significantly contributed to preserving Wular's natural beauty. The Prime Minister also praised the Srinagar Municipal Corporation for their innovative and heartfelt decision to appoint Bilal as their brand ambassador.

Bilal's story has also been immortalised in the documentary "Saving the Saviour," which won acclaim at the 6th National Science Film Festival in Mumbai. His work has not only earned him recognition but has also positioned him as a role model for environmental activism across the country. His appointment as Brand Ambassador symbolises the growing importance of grassroots efforts in combating pollution and creating sustainable communities. Despite his humble beginnings, Bilal has proven that **one person's dedication can indeed make a profound difference, creating a ripple and inspiring a wave of environmental consciousness in others**.





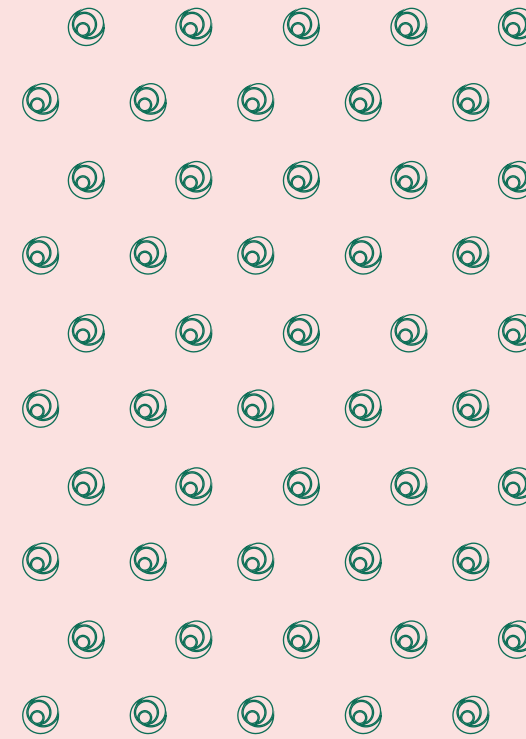
YOGESH SAINI

DELHI, NCR

“

Our efforts have always been to include community members. Be it children, women, or even incarcerated people... they become a part of our creative process and they also end up having real skin in the game.

”



मन की बात

"हाल ही में मैंने मीडिया में योगेश सैनी और उनकी टीम द्वारा किए गए प्रयासों को देखा | पेशे से इंजीनियर सैनी ने अमेरिका में नौकरी छोड़ दी और देश सेवा में लगे हुए हैं | कुछ समय पहले उन्होंने दिल्ली को न केवल स्वच्छ बनाने का काम किया, बल्कि इसका सौंदर्यीकरण भी किया | कूड़ा हटाकर, स्कूलों की बिल्डिंग और ओवरब्रिज को सजा-संवारकर उन्होंने लोधी गार्डन को लोधी आर्ट डिस्ट्रिक्ट में बदल दिया | लोगों ने भी उसके प्रयासों को नोट किया और उसकी सराहना की |"

Episode 59, July 2019



A LEGACY IN COLOR: Yogesh Saini and the Transformation of Urban Landscapes



We mourn the loss of Yogesh Saini, a visionary who transformed urban spaces with his artistic touch and deep commitment to cleanliness and community well-being. His work transcended beautification - it became a call to action, inspiring people to take pride in their environment. His legacy will continue to inspire us to see the potential in every corner, turning neglected spaces into vibrant symbols of culture, creativity, and care for our surroundings. His contributions will remain a lasting testament to the power of art in fostering a cleaner, more united community.



Yogesh Saini, the visionary founder of Delhi Street Art (DSA), dedicated his life to transforming the urban landscape of the National Capital. After leaving a successful engineering career in the United States, he returned to India in 2013 with a mission: to **not only clean up Delhi but to make it a vibrant canvas filled with art and culture.**

Yogesh's journey began with a simple yet impactful project at Lodhi Garden, where he and his team initiated the beautification of garbage bins. His work helped reduce waste in public spaces by encouraging people to **dispose of trash more responsibly, aligning art with sanitation goals.**

This was just the start of a much larger campaign that would see murals and street art flourish throughout the city. From overpasses to school walls, he **empowered local artists to express their creativity**, garnering overwhelming public support along the way. The movement quickly gained momentum, attracting the attention of both the local community and international media. His **artwork became a catalyst for sparking public awareness about cleanliness, waste management, and the importance of maintaining urban hygiene.**

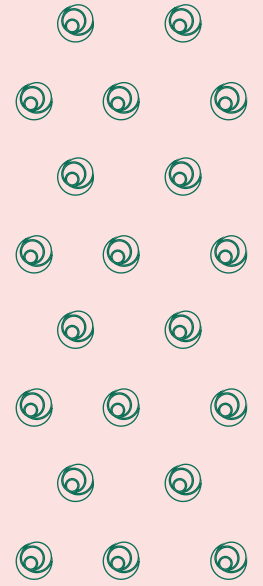
His vision echoed the transformation witnessed during the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad, where vibrant street paintings left an indelible mark. Yogesh's mantra was clear: **"We must turn waste into wealth"** which he embodied in every project. Under his guidance, DSA became a beacon of

hope, demonstrating that art can indeed transform environments and attitudes toward cleanliness.

Throughout his career, Yogesh collaborated with various embassies and organisations, turning walls into expressions of cultural unity. Notably, he worked alongside Delhi Tourism to create stunning murals in preparation for the G20 Summit, showcasing India's artistic heritage to the world. His work included collaborations with artists from different countries, further enhancing the **cross-cultural dialogue.**

Yogesh's impact extended beyond public spaces; he mentored aspiring artists, providing them with opportunities to showcase their talents in schools and even prisons. His work garnered recognition, solidifying his role as a key figure in the cultural renaissance of Delhi. Many of his mentees have gone on to become successful artists in their own right, continuing his legacy.

Tragically, Yogesh passed away on February 19, 2023, from a sudden cardiac arrest while undergoing a routine check-up. His son, Surya Saini, recalls the shock of losing such a vibrant force in their lives. Though Yogesh is gone, **his work continues to inspire a cleaner, more beautiful India**, where art and sanitation efforts merge to create more liveable urban spaces. Yogesh's legacy lives on in the colorful murals that adorn Delhi's streets, a testament to his belief in the power of art to inspire and uplift.





BIJAYASHANTI TONGBRAM

THANGA VILLAGE - BISHNUPUR, MANIPUR

“
Turning lotus waste into valuable products
has proven that **with passion and innovation,**
we can transform waste into wealth. By
harnessing creativity and community spirit,
we can drive sustainable change and
empower our local economies.
”

मन
की
बात

“मणिपुर की रहने वाली विजय शांति एक नए इनोवेशन के चलते खुब चर्चा में हैं। उन्होंने कमल की नाल से धागा बनाने का स्टार्ट अप शुरू किया हैं। आज उनके इनोवेशन के चलते कमल की खेती और टेक्सटाइल में एक नया ही रास्ता बन गया हैं।”

Episode 69, September 2020



STEMS OF OPPORTUNITY:

Bijayashanti's journey in transforming lotus waste into sustainable products



In the serene village near Loktak Lake in Manipur, where lotus blooms are abundant, Bijiyashanti Devi has transformed **local vegetation by-products into sustainable products**. As the visionary founder of Sanajing Sana Thambal, she has pioneered the conversion of lotus waste into valuable products, **creating alternative livelihoods for women in her community**.

Born and raised in Thanga Tongbram village, surrounded by the largest freshwater lake in Northeast India, Bijiyashanti's passion for botany and the natural world was nurtured from a young age. Graduating with honours in botany from GP Women's College, Imphal in 2014, she was determined to benefit her community with her knowledge.

Swachhata Champions

Bijayashanti Tongbram - Bishnupur, Manipur

The idea of making fabric from lotus stems took root after hearing stories of similar textiles woven in Cambodia and Myanmar. Inspired by these tales, Bijiyashanti began experimenting. By May 2019, she and a handful of local women were spinning yarn from lotus stems and weaving neckties, mufflers, and other items. Her enterprise, Sanajing Sana Thambal, now **employs 40 women and has been selected for Start-Up Manipur**.

Sanajing Sana Thambal focuses on transforming lotus waste into lotus tea and fabric. While lotus tea, popular in Vietnam and Cambodia, was a novel introduction to India, lotus fabric offers a sustainable alternative to synthetic fibres. **The eco-friendly fabric decomposes naturally, reducing pollution caused by synthetic textiles.**

Introducing a new product like lotus fabric brought its challenges. Early doubts about its strength and market appeal were prevalent. However, Bijiyashanti overcame these hurdles by educating potential customers and showcasing the fabric's unique benefits. Despite the lengthy extraction and weaving process that limits production capacity, the quality and eco-friendliness of the fabric have garnered international interest.

The exposure of her work through the Prime Minister's 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast, along with accolades such as the Rising India Real Heroes Award and the Dalmia Young Achiever Award, highlighted her **contributions to sustainability and community development**.

Looking ahead, Bijiyashanti aims to establish an industry dedicated to lotus fabric production, **increasing employment opportunities for local women and expanding her business globally**. She envisions collaborations with European countries to further market her products.

Bijiyashanti encourages young people to pursue their passions and remain dedicated to their goals. Her journey from a passionate botany graduate to an acclaimed entrepreneur, exemplifies the power of ingenuity and community engagement.





Swachhata Champions

Dr. Nirmala Padmanabhan - Ernakulam, Kerala

DR. NIRMALA PADMANABHAN

ERNAKULAM, KERALA

“

Don't produce what you don't need.
The first step towards sustainability is
found in its very first R: Reduce.

”

मन
की
बात

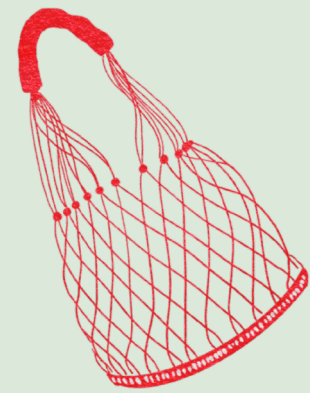
“सत टेरेसा कॉलेज की विद्यार्थी reusable टॉयज बना रहे है वह भी बहुत क्रिएटिव तरीके से। यह स्टूडेंट्स पुराने कपडे, बैग, बॉक्सेस, लकड़ी की टुकड़ो से टॉयज बना रहे हैं। यहाँ इस बात का विशेष ध्यान दिया जाता है कि खिलौने सेफ होने केसाथ चाइल्ड फ्रेंडली भी हो और इस पूरे प्रयास की एक अच्छी बात यह भी है कि खिलौने आंगनवाड़ी बच्चों को खेलने के लिए दिए जाते हैं जब भारत खिलौनों की मैन्युफैक्चरिंग में बढ़ रहा है तो ऐसे वास्ते टू वैल्यू की प्रयास बहुत मायने रखते है।”
Episode 75, March 2021





TRANSFORMING WASTE INTO OPPORTUNITY:

Where Sustainability Meets Creativity Under Dr. Nirmala Padmanabhan



Dr. Nirmala Padmanabhan, the Dean of Extension and Incubation at St. Teresa's College in Ernakulam, Kerala, has dedicated over a decade to transforming waste management practices. At 59, her relentless drive has **ignited profound changes within her community and far beyond.**

Her transformative journey began in 2010 with the founding of the Bhoomitra Sena Club under the Department of Environment and Climate Change, Government of Kerala. Initially, the club addressed various environmental issues, but a 2015 World Bank funded study shifted their focus to waste management. The study revealed the grim reality of plastic waste in rural Kerala, where

much of it was either **incinerated or dumped into backwaters**, threatening both environmental and public health.

Compelled by this urgent issue, Dr. Padmanabhan launched the Society of Terrarians for Environment Protection at St. Teresa's College. Her mission was clear: tackle environmental problems while addressing gender-specific needs through social entrepreneurship. Partnering with local women's self-help groups, she pioneered the **creation of eco-friendly alternatives to plastic bags by repurposing fabric scraps.** This initiative not only curtailed plastic usage but also provided sustainable livelihoods for women.

Swachhata Champions

Dr. Nirmala Padmanabhan - Ernakulam, Kerala

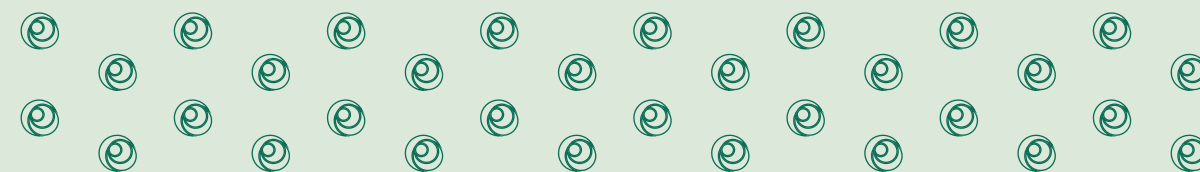
Under her leadership, the college adopted a groundbreaking "green protocol" that **banned single-use plastics and championed reusable cutlery.** This model quickly spread to other educational institutions, driven by her team's vigorous outreach and training efforts. The "You Can Heal" project, a collaboration with 22 institutions, succeeded in eliminating approximately 49,000 single-use plastic items in just one year. Initiatives like the "Bring Your Own Cup" challenge further showcased their commitment to sustainability.

Dr. Padmanabhan's team also addressed the challenge of small fabric scraps by upcycling them into soft toys, creating jobs for 15 women through the Bhoomi Women's Collective. The collective is now progressing towards commercial at-scale production with specialised machinery. Her nature club initiatives in Kerala have been praised and recognised as finalists for the Green Gown Awards International by the UN Environment Programme and Allianz Global Investors.



Dr. Padmanabhan's perseverance was crucial in overcoming obstacles such as community scepticism. A pivotal moment came during a waste audit in a village where initial disbelief about waste issues was dispelled by evidence of **35 tons of waste generated weekly.** Additionally, involving young students in anti-plastic campaigns highlighted the powerful impact of educating the next generation.

Dr. Padmanabhan also recognised the need for a business model approach in decentralised waste management to ensure long-term sustainability. Dr. Nirmala Padmanabhan's story is a compelling testament to how education, research, and community engagement can drive sustainable change. Her work in Kerala exemplifies the powerful intersection of policy and grassroots action, proving how **one determined individual can have a profound environmental impact.**





RAMVEER TANWAR

GAUTAMBUDDHA NAGAR,
UTTAR PRADESH

“
As our ancestors handed down to
us a beautiful source of water, **it's
our responsibility to ensure we
pass it on to the next generation.**
”

मन
की
बात

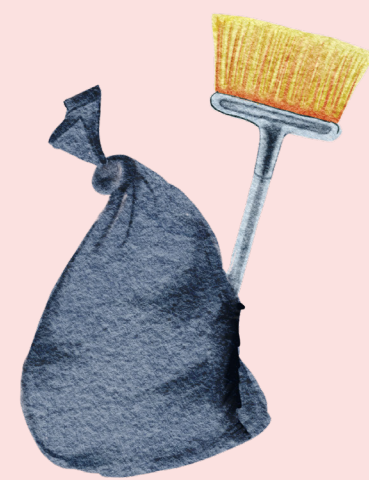
"रामवीर मैकेनिकल इंजीनियरिंग पूरी करने के बाद नौकरी कर रहे थे। हालांकि, उनके मन में स्वच्छता के प्रति समर्पण की ऐसी भावना जगी कि उन्होंने नौकरी छोड़ दी और तालाबों की सफाई शुरू कर दी।"

Episode 82, October 2021



FROM ENGINEER TO ENVIRONMENTAL WARRIOR:

The Story Of Ramveer Tanwar, India's Pond Man



Ramveer Tanwar's journey of becoming Pond Man is a **story of passion and perseverance**. Hailing from GautamBuddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, Ramveer grew up swimming and playing in the local canal. As he watched it **transform into a sewer over time**, he recognised that though the devastating change may not be reversed, such negative development can be stopped where possible and water bodies can be saved. Ramveer's life-long interest moved him to take action.

While working in an MNC as an engineer, Ramveer used to volunteer as a tutor for children in the village and would conduct **awareness rallies for environmental causes**. He expanded education about water to other villages and began volunteering with different NGOs. His growing concern over the state of his village's ponds led him to choose his passion over his job, which he left in 2018. After two years of freelancing,

he founded Say Earth NGO. Say Earth primarily focuses on **cleaning and rejuvenating water bodies**. The team has restored over 100 ponds across six states by removing waste and implementing sustainable practices to keep them clean.

Second, the NGO **transforms old landfill sites into urban forests**. By partnering with municipal corporations to empty landfills, they use silt from sewage treatment plants to create fertile layers of soil for new green spaces, enhancing the urban environment.

Third, Say Earth runs **educational programs in schools and colleges**, teaching students about solid waste management, water conservation, and environmental awareness. The water awareness initiative, named Jal Chaupal, covers various aspects about the importance of preserving water bodies.

Swachhata Champions

Starting with minimal resources, no team, no experience, and no support, Ramveer faced significant challenges in the beginning. Over time, as the results of his initiatives became evident, **community support and funding grew**, shrinking the obstacles. The current challenge for Ramveer is to make water bodies self-sustaining without them reverting to becoming dumping grounds. Though sometimes disheartened when he sees waste being dumped in ponds and lakes, Ramveer recognises that changing habits is a long-term process. Though old habits die hard, Ramveer believes that people can also get used to seeing clean water around them and develop new habits.

The way-forward plan includes increasing awareness campaigns, getting local government bodies involved, and activities such as creating more dustbins. Since water bodies are public owned, it is important to have administrative support and machinery for their conservation. The Swachh Bharat Mission has enabled this support to be extended more freely.

In the long term, Ramveer hopes that other clone organisations crop up to continue the momentum. There is lots of work to be done, and to encourage it, Say Earth visits schools and colleges to encourage the youth to replicate their work. By garnering interest from villagers, the NGO

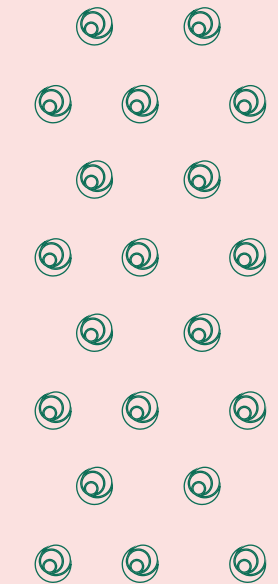


Ramveer Tanwar - GautamBuddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh

motivates them by giving them 'Pond Man' certificates. They have also come up with the innovative #SelfieWithPond campaign. This initiative helps youngsters connect with memories from their or their parents' childhood. With 10,000+ selfies submitted so far, this social media roster is creating a community of like-minded people. It also helps the NGO locate more ponds to scale up efforts. Recognition from national leaders and international media has been a milestone for Ramveer, encouraging his efforts further. Over 10 countries' media has covered the NGO's story and it has garnered many awards.

Ramveer calls for enhanced government support, including collaboration with NGOs and **creating opportunities for passionate individuals**. He emphasises the need for systemic changes to mainstream environmental work, with suggestions such as funding passionate youngsters so that environmental occupations become as common as engineering.

Working hard on the daily, Ramveer Tanwar's journey from a corporate career to leading Say Earth showcases how dedication and commitment can drive meaningful environmental change. His efforts are restoring water bodies, transforming landscapes, and inspiring a broader movement for conservation.





CHANDRAKISHORE PATIL

NASHIK, MAHARASHTRA

“

Turning a simple whistle into a symbol of change has shown me that even **the smallest actions can ignite a movement.** By engaging with our communities and educating the next generation, we can restore our rivers and create a cleaner, more responsible world together.

”

मन की बात

“चंद्रकिशोर जी का स्वच्छता को लेकर संकल्प बहुत गहरा है | वो गोदावरी नदी के पास खड़े रहते हैं, और लोगों को लगातार नदी में कूड़ा-कचरा न फेंकने के लिए प्रेरित करते हैं | इस काम में चंद्रकिशोर जी अपना काफी समय खर्च करते हैं | चंद्रकिशोर जी का यह प्रयास, जागरूकता भी बढ़ाता है, और, प्रेरणा भी देता है।”

Episode 87, March 2022



WHISTLES OF CHANGE:

Chandrakishore Patil's Quest To Restore The Godavari



Growing up beside the Godavari River in Nashik, Chandrakishore Patil, now 50, has witnessed the river's transformation from a source of clean drinking water to a polluted stream marred by heaps of plastic and food waste. His childhood memories of the pristine Godavari were overshadowed by the **river's deteriorating condition** as he grew older.

Driven by a **deep-rooted desire to restore the river to its former glory**, Chandrakishore took it upon himself to tackle the growing problem. Initially, he began his mission by standing guard at a bridge over the Godavari, aiming to deter locals from dumping waste. His efforts were met with hostility - people questioned his authority, hurled abuse, and even threatened him with violence. Despite these challenges, **Chandrakishore's resolve remains unshaken.**

To address the persistent issue, Chandrakishore later introduced a simple yet innovative solution: a small whistle. This tool was used to **subtly alert people, making them pause and reconsider their actions.** The whistle's presence proved effective, and Chandrakishore seized the opportunity to collect the waste from them, personally ensuring it was handed over to the Nashik Municipal Corporation's waste collection vehicles. His dedication extended to Sundays when he would spend the entire day at the bridge, relentlessly working to transform public behaviour, instil a sense of responsibility towards waste management, and restore the sanctity of the Godavari River.

Chandrakishore's perseverance eventually **garnered the attention of the city's municipal corporation**, which responded by introducing a specialised "**ghanta-gaadi**" (waste collection vehicle) to address food waste from local eateries. A pivotal moment in his journey occurred in 2020 when IFS Officer Ms. Shwetha Boddu witnessed his determination during Dussehra. Her tweet highlighting his efforts brought his work to national attention, with recognition from both the Maharashtra Government and the Central Government of India.



Today, Chandrakishore works with 10-12 organisations to promote waste management and cleanliness. He is a **passionate advocate for educating the younger generation**, frequently visiting schools to share his journey and inspire students to uphold cleanliness in their communities. His commitment has resonated widely, with 100-150 volunteers joining him every Sunday at various hot spots across Nashik to prevent littering and encourage responsible waste disposal.





Swachhata Champions

Rahul Maharana - Puri, Odisha

RAHUL MAHARANA

PURI, ODISHA

“

I saw how plastic waste was harming both our environment and our health. By showing people the real impact of their actions, I hoped to inspire them to take responsibility. **Every small effort counts, and together, we can make a significant difference.**

”

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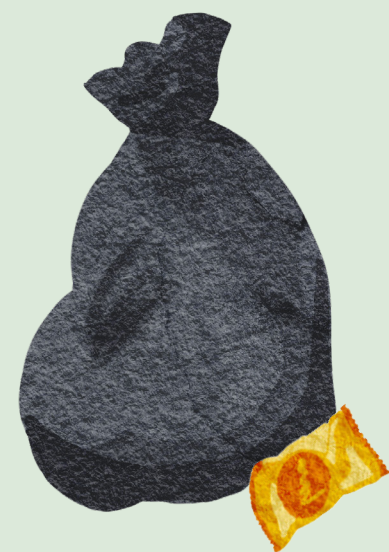
“स्वच्छाग्रही है ओडिशा में पुरी के राहुल महाराणा हर रविवार को सुबह सुबह पुरी में तीर्थ स्थलों के पास जाते हैं और वहां प्लास्टिक कचरा साफ़ करते हैं अब तक सैकड़ों किलो प्लास्टिक कचरा और गंदगी भी साफ कर चुके।”

Episode 87, March 2022



FROM LOCAL HERO TO NATIONAL INSPIRATION:

Rahul Maharana's Battle Against Plastic Pollution



Hailing from the modest village Ambadiha in Puri, Odisha, Rahul Maharana always aspired to create a safe, clean, and healthy environment for his family. However, his coastal community faced challenges, with beaches, mangroves, and pilgrimage sites frequently impacted by persistent plastic waste. Rahul understood how this pollution affected both his family's well-being and the surrounding marine life and mangroves. Driven by this goal, Rahul took proactive steps to achieve his aspiration.

Equipped with a simple gunny bag, he began his mission to tackle the **plastic waste littering his community**. Every Sunday morning, Rahul would visit pilgrimage sites in Puri, gathering plastic waste scattered around. Despite working as a security guard, being the sole breadwinner for his family, and facing limited support from those around him, Rahul's commitment to cleaning his city never wavered. Since 2022, he has been diligently collecting plastic and cloth waste from temple areas.

Swachhata Champions



Realising that waste collection alone wouldn't solve the problem, Rahul shifted his focus to **raising awareness about the dangers of plastic pollution**. He noticed that the residents near the Devi estuary were dumping their domestic waste directly into the water body, which flows into the Bay of Bengal.

Witnessing this, Rahul was struck by the irony: the very water they polluted was the source of fish they consumed, which posed risks to their health and the marine life they depended on.

Determined to make a difference, Rahul began engaging with the community, explaining how their actions were harming both the environment and their own well-being. He shared vivid examples of how the pollution could end up in their food chain, creating a powerful realisation among the residents. Despite facing resistance and numerous challenges, his **relentless efforts eventually convinced the community to change their habits**, significantly reducing pollution in the estuary.

Rahul Maharana - Puri, Odisha

After being featured in the "Mann Ki Baat" broadcast hosted by the Prime Minister, Rahul received national recognition that not only validated his dedication but also inspired others to join his cause. Since then, 8-10 volunteers have joined him in his Sunday clean-up drives. Starting with pilgrimage sites, Rahul has expanded his efforts to include mangrove areas, beaches, and Olive Ridley turtle nesting sites.

Today, Rahul works as an electrician. Despite facing personal and financial challenges, he continues to lead clean-up drives and organise awareness camps across Puri. Rahul's fight against plastic pollution is inspiring and emphasises the need for **collective action, aiming to spark a nationwide movement for waste management** and encourage everyone in India to maintain clean communities.



ROHAN ASHOK KALE

MUMBAI, MAHARASHTRA

“

Let's join hands to preserve Maharashtra's invaluable stepwells. If all stepwells are revived, it will be a **huge source of water conservation** and we can look forward to a drought-free Maharashtra.

”

मन
की
बात

“साथियों हमारे देश में जल संरक्षणजल स्रोतों की सुरक्षा सदियों से समाजके स्वभाव का हिस्सा रहा है | रोहन काले महाराष्ट्र के एक एचआर पेशेवर हैं। वह महाराष्ट्र में पुरानी step wells के संरक्षण के लिए अभियान चला रहे हैं।”

Episode 87, March 2022



REVIVING MAHARASHTRA'S STEPWELLS:

Rohan Kale's Journey Of Restoration And Resilience



In the heartlands of Maharashtra, where the echoes of ancient architectural marvels are fading, a resurgence is quietly underway. Rohan Kale, a 38-year-old HR professional from Mumbai, is spearheading a mission transcending mere preservation - it's about **rekindling a legacy and forging a sustainable future** by restoring the state's neglected stepwells. His deep connection to water conservation was sparked by childhood memories of local wells in his village, which served as lifelines during the dry seasons. This personal connection has fueled his determination to bring these structures back to life.

Rohan's fascination with stepwells began on his frequent work trips to Gujarat, where these ancient structures - known locally as baori, vav, or jal mandir - are not just remnants of history but revered cultural landmarks. Built between the 7th and 19th centuries, these

wells, ponds, or cisterns, with their intricate staircases descending to the water table, were **integral to water conservation and management, especially during the dry seasons.**

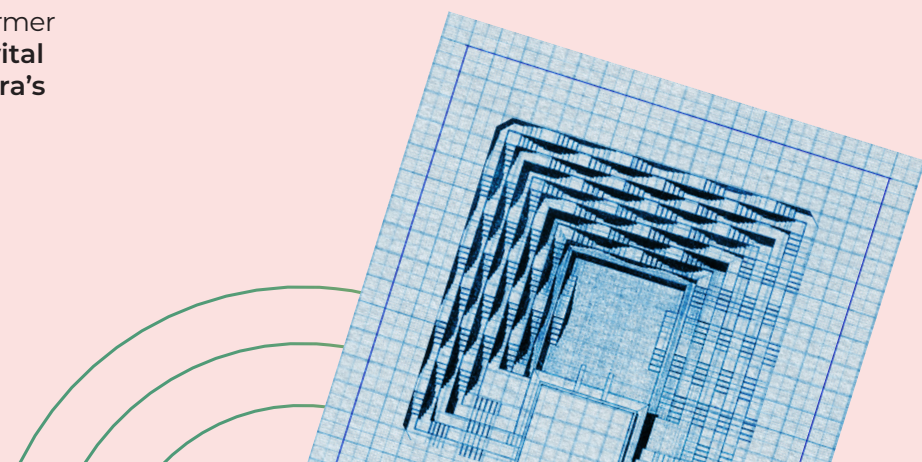
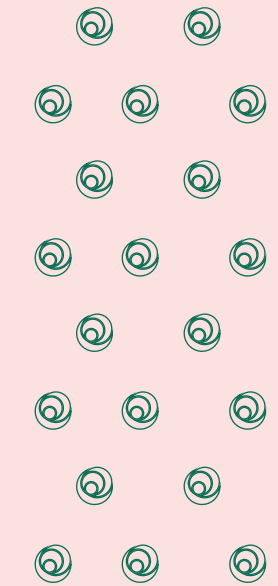
Inspired by the reverence and utility these stepwells still hold in Gujarat, Rohan turned his gaze towards Maharashtra. However, what he discovered was disheartening: approximately 80% of the state's stepwells lay in disrepair, their significance eroded by time and neglect. One such stepwell in Ahmednagar, once a community gathering space, was now abandoned and filled with debris, emblematic of the widespread neglect. This stark reality ignited a resolve in Rohan - to restore these stepwells to their former glory and transform them into **vital sources of water for Maharashtra's drought-prone regions.**

In November 2020, Rohan launched the Maharashtra Stepwells Campaign, a grassroots movement fueled by his passion and commitment. Armed with little more than determination and a motorcycle, he traversed the state, documenting and mapping nearly 1,700 stepwells - many of which had long been forgotten. At first, he worked alone, but soon local youth groups and heritage enthusiasts began volunteering to help document these ancient structures. By May 2022, the campaign had successfully mapped over 1,650 stepwells across 20 districts.

As Rohan's efforts gained traction, they also attracted national attention, leading to collaborations with government agencies and heritage organisations. The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) lent its support by featuring the locations of these stepwells on its website, turning them into points of interest for tourists and locals alike. The growing interest from architecture students has even led to academic projects focused on redesigning surrounding spaces for community use.

Rohan's vision, however, extends beyond mere restoration. Despite the formidable challenges of securing funding and navigating the labour-intensive process of restoring these ancient wells, he remains steadfast. Through crowdfunding initiatives and small grants from local heritage organisations, his campaign has raised enough to restore the first dozen wells, with more in the pipeline. His journey is a powerful testament to the impact **one individual can have - not just in preserving history, but in catalysing sustainable change.**

Rohan hopes that these stepwells will once again become **community hubs**, much like they were centuries ago, offering both a **practical and cultural solution to water scarcity.** His story is a vivid reminder that passion and determination can breathe new life into even the most forgotten corners of history, creating a lasting impact on both the environment and the community.





Swachhata Champions

Arun Krishnamurthy - Mudichur, Tamil Nadu

ARUN KRISHNAMURTHY

MUDICHUR, TAMIL NADU

“
What we need to conquer in the positive way is India's environment - in her own way, in her own plan. **Change the mindset that we are here to protect the planet.** If you and I need to live, continue to live a comfortable, happy, loving life we cannot do it without this planet. Come volunteer for India in her environment there's no better conquering than that. Jai Hind!
”

मन
की
बात

“अरुण कृष्णमूर्ति जी अपने इलाके में तालाबों और झीलोंको साफ़ करने का अभियान चला रहे हैं। उन्होंने 50 से ज्यादा तालाबों झीलों की साफ़ सफाई की जिम्मेदारी उठाई और उसे सफलता के साथपूरा किया है।”

Episode 87, March 2022



TURNING THE TIDE: Arun's Quest To Revive India's Water Bodies

Arun Krishnamurthy grew up in Mudichur, a village in Tamil Nadu surrounded by lush greenery and ponds. His journey towards conserving water bodies began when he saw and was inspired by his village's panchayat head encouraging people to clean up the local pond.

Though the seed of inspiration was sown, Arun didn't directly begin his career working for the environment. After studying microbiology at university, he worked at Google for

three years. However, with ingrained **ideas of living in harmony with nature** that he had inculcated during his schooling in a natural surrounding, Arun went on to dedicate his life to environmental protection and founded an NGO, the Environmentalist Foundation of India (EFI) in 2011.

Swachhata Champions

Arun Krishnamurthy - Mudichur, Tamil Nadu

EFI's central focus is on the scientific restoration and cleaning of lakes across India to nurture biodiversity. Starting from one pond in Chennai, the organisation has impacted over **167 water bodies across 16 states in India**. The initial days were filled with challenges. Arun believed that the key to unlocking environmental sustainability lay in integrating advanced technology with practical solutions, but convincing investors about the viability of environmentally-focused technology and securing funding was no easy feat. However, Arun's passion and determination were unwavering.

One of EFI's groundbreaking projects was **the development of a water purification system that utilised nanotechnology**. This system could filter pollutants from water sources with unprecedented efficiency, making **clean water accessible to communities suffering from contamination**. The impact was immediate and profound: clean water returned to the village. The success story of this project spread rapidly, earning EFI accolades and attracting attention from global environmental organisations.

This remarkable success is led by Arun's commitment to a sustainable future and his love for wildlife. With this, the three "Ws" of EFI shaped up to be **Water, Wildlife, and Waste**, capturing the mission of the organisation.

As EFI grows, Arun remains involved in every aspect of the company. He nurtures a culture of **innovation and collaboration**, encouraging his team to push the boundaries of what was possible. He has become a prominent advocate for environmental awareness, speaking at international conferences and working with policymakers to drive meaningful change. For Arun, the true reward lay not in the accolades but in the **positive impact EFI had on the world and the hope it inspired for future generations**.



Swachhata Champions

Manoj Bainjwal - Kedarnath, Uttarakhand

MANOJ BAINJWAL

KEDARNATH, UTTARAKHAND

“

Engaging with school-going children and adolescents is pivotal for instigating community change. These **young minds are the architects of our future, driven by a passion for creating equitable and sustainable societies.** Educating them often teaches entire communities.

”

मन
की
बात

“हमारे यहाँ तीर्थ यात्रा की साथ तीर्थ सेवा का भी महत्ता भी बताया गया है। रुद्रप्रयाग के रहने वाले श्रीमान मनोज बैनिज्वाल से भी आपको बहुत प्रेरणा मिलेगी। मनोज जी ने पिछले 25 वर्षों से पर्यावरण की देख रेख का बेडा उठा रखा है। वह स्वच्छता की मुहिम चलाने के साथ ही पवित्रस्थलों को प्लास्टिक मुक्त करने में जुटे हैं।”

Episode 89, May 2022



REVIVING THE GANGES: Manoj Bainjwal's Commitment To Waste Management And Environmental Preservation

Manoj Bainjwal's **unwavering dedication to environmental conservation and waste management** over the past 25 years has transformed Kedarnath in Uttarakhand. As Project In-Charge for PRAWAH (Participatory Rejuvenation, Afforestation & Waste-management Along Himalayan-springs) Uttarakhand at Sewa International, he has spearheaded initiatives to **manage waste and preserve the Ganges**, demonstrating his profound commitment to his community and the environment.

Hailing from the picturesque region around the Kedarnath Temple, Bainjwal began his journey in 1997, engaging local communities and students in environmental protection.

Early on, he initiated **Ganga Aarti programs at sites previously used for waste dumping**, significantly reducing pollution and raising awareness about the importance of keeping the Ganges clean.

In 2019, Bainjwal embarked on his journey with the PRAWAH initiative, which focuses on participatory waste management and segregation in high footfall areas like Kedarnath. With over 17 lakh tourists and devotees visiting Kedarnath annually, the area faces significant waste challenges that impact the holy rivers, largely due to infrastructural limitations.

Despite these obstacles, Bainjwal has been pivotal in advancing local waste management practices and driving positive environmental change.

Bainjwal's work involves segregating waste, implementing collection systems, and finding solutions for recycling and proper disposal. His team has organised numerous clean-up drives and plantation activities, enhancing environmental sustainability. Establishing community chapters in villages has led to the collection of **15 tons of segregated waste for recycling, fostering awareness and participation in sustainable practices**. He actively combats open defecation near riverbanks, preventing further pollution of the rivers.

Recognised by the Uttarakhand State Government as Kedarnath's brand ambassador for waste management, Bainjwal collaborates with companies and local governments to tackle waste issues associated with high tourist traffic.

Despite facing challenges like **inadequate infrastructure and community reluctance**, Bainjwal remains resolute. He addresses these issues through persistent education, advocacy, and collaboration with stakeholders, including international organisations and local authorities. His efforts have earned him various awards and recognitions.

Bainjwal aims to expand the PRAWAH project, focusing on enhancing waste management systems and involving more communities in sustainable practices. He envisions a comprehensive waste management model that can be replicated in other high-traffic areas.

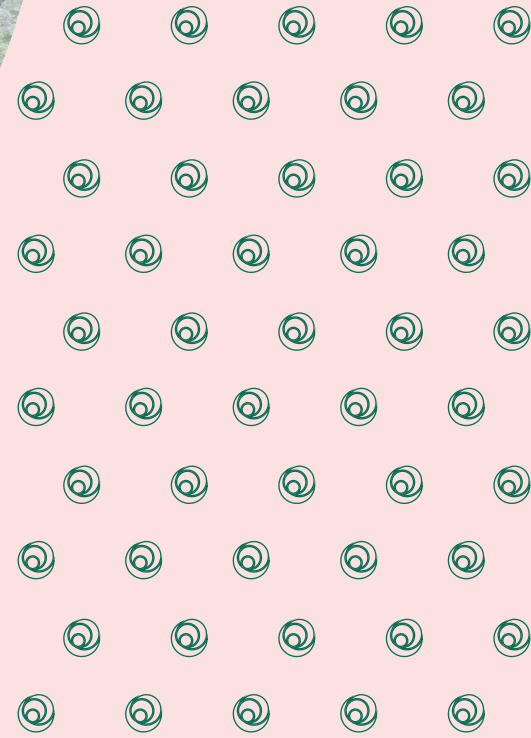
Driven by a deep connection to the Ganges and a commitment to environmental preservation, Bainjwal encourages the youth to actively engage in conservation and waste management. He believes that with **passion, perseverance, and innovative thinking**, young people can drive meaningful change and contribute to a sustainable future.



मन की बात

“गुप्तकाशी में रहने वाले सुरेंद्र भगवाड़ी जी ने स्वच्छता को अपना जीवन मंत्र बना लिया है। वे गुप्तकाशी में नियमित रूप से स्वच्छता कार्यक्रम चलाते हैं और उन्होंने इसे “मन की बात” का नाम भी दिया है।”

Episode 89, May 2022



SURENDRA BAGWADI

GUPTKASHI, UTTARAKHAND

“
Together, we can embody the spirit of cleanliness championed by our leaders, transforming Guptkashi into a beacon of hope and inspiration for the sacred journey to Kedarnath.
”



A CLEANER PATH TO KEDARNATH:

Surendra Bagwadi's Swachh Mission



A prominent spiritual travel route to Kedarnath is Guptkashi, nestled in the heart of Uttarakhand. Surendra Bagwadi, a dedicated resident of Guptkashi, has become a **beacon of cleanliness**, leading a four-year mission to drive the success of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. His dedication has transformed his surroundings and inspired his entire community to **embrace cleanliness as a way of life**.

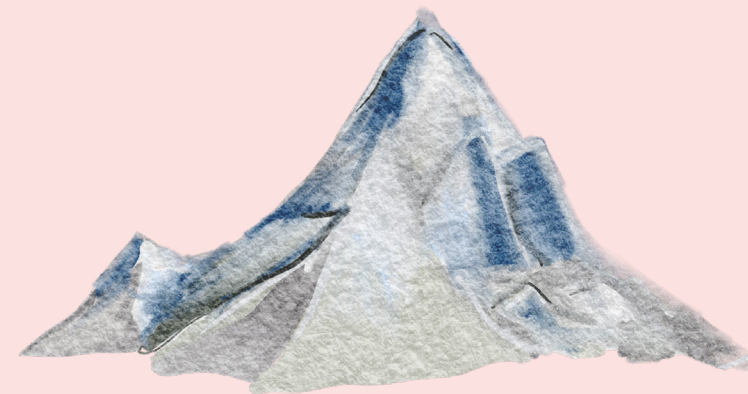
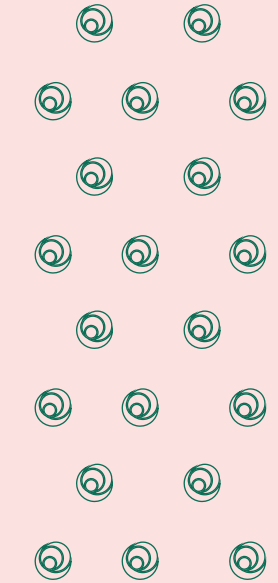
The picturesque town of Guptkashi has faced significant **challenges related to cleanliness and waste management**, particularly due to the influx of pilgrims and tourists, resulting in littering and inadequate waste disposal. Recognising these pressing issues, Surendra was inspired to take action, leading him to embark on a mission to transform his community.

Surendra's typical day begins early, conducting cleaning drives across key areas in Guptkashi. From the serene Vidyadham to the bustling streets around Devbhoomi Hotel to Khankra Band, his efforts have turned these once litter-strewn areas into shining examples of what a cleaner environment can look like. His consistency and leadership have encouraged others to join his mission, as community members now regularly contribute to these cleaning drives.

Understanding that accessibility is critical to sustained cleanliness, Surendra took the innovative step of **installing dustbins in 400 homes** across Guptkashi. These strategically placed dustbins have made it **easier for households to manage their waste and have fostered a heightened sense of responsibility towards keeping their environment clean**. Each dustbin serves as a symbol of shared community accountability, fostering a culture where everyone feels involved in maintaining cleanliness.

Surendra's unwavering commitment and his community-led initiatives did not go unnoticed. The Prime Minister himself acknowledged Surendra's tireless efforts, praising him as a model of dedication for the nation. This national recognition has only strengthened Surendra's resolve. While grateful for the spotlight, he believes this is a responsibility that everyone shares, stressing that community action is key to long-term success.

Through his relentless dedication, Surendra Bagwadi stands as a true champion of sanitation. He embodies the belief that **individual efforts can spark collective change**, transforming not only physical spaces but also the mindsets of those around him. Surendra's work serves as a beacon, proving that one person's passion can ignite a movement, leading to a cleaner, healthier future for all.





P. VIJAYAN

SABARIMALA, KERALA

“ Every place or worship should be modest and think about the cleanliness plus promotion and conservation of nature that is water and air. We believe that we come from nothing and go from nothing. Our body is 70% water, remaining 20% is air we are breathing and rest 10% is food we are eating. **So if you don't preserve these three things our body and mind will be contaminated.** That is the biggest problem. I am convinced that we should all spend a portion of our time - promoting cleanliness and conservation.

मन
की
बात

“एक पुलिस अधिकारी पी. विजयन ने पुण्यम पूंक्कवनम नामक कार्यक्रम शुरू किया और सफ़ाई के प्रति जागरूकता पैदा करने का एक स्वेच्छिक अभियान चलाया। और, उन्होंने एक परंपरा शुरू की, कि श्रद्धालुओं की यात्रा तब तक अधूरी रहेगी जब तक वे सफ़ाई कार्यक्रम में कुछ न कुछ शारीरिक श्रम करके अपना योगदान न दें। इस अभियान में कोई बड़ा या छोटा नहीं है। हर यात्री भगवन की पूजा है ही भाग समझकर स्वच्छता में कुछ न काम करता है।”

Episode 97, January 2023



INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP IN POLICING:

How P. Vijayan Transformed Sabarimala's Cleanliness

P. Vijayan began his distinguished career in the Indian Police Service (IPS) in October 2001. His initial posting as Assistant Police Superintendent in Kanhangad, Kasaragod District marked the start of a career of innovative leadership. Over the years, Vijayan has held pivotal roles, including District Police Chief in several districts. Notably, he was the first to serve as Commissioner of Police in all four

major Commissionerates in Kerala: Thiruvananthapuram, Kozhikode, Thrissur, and Kochi.

Throughout his career, Vijayan has been **a trailblazer in various fields**, from anti-terrorism to youth engagement. His innovative approach was evident when he introduced several groundbreaking initiatives aimed at **improving community welfare**.

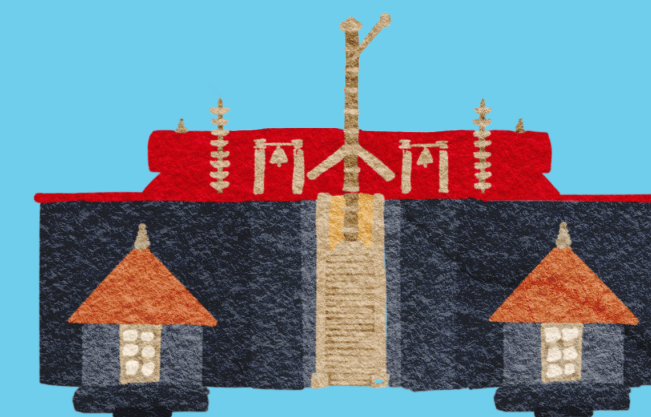
Swachhata Champions

P. Vijayan - Sabrimala, Kerala

One of Vijayan's most impactful projects is the "Punyam Poonkavanam" initiative, launched in 2003. The project was born out of his concern for **the cleanliness of Sabarimala, a major pilgrimage site in Kerala**. Witnessing the challenges posed by the influx of thousands of devotees, Vijayan sought to address the **issues of waste and hygiene at the sacred site**.

Under his leadership, "Punyam Poonkavanam" began as a mission to promote waste management and cleanliness at Sabarimala. The initiative involved engaging not just the staff but also visitors and devotees in maintaining the site's cleanliness. The project has evolved into a daily cleaning drive that has garnered widespread support and turned into **a sustainable model for waste management and environmental care**.

P. Vijayan's journey reflects a deep commitment to public service, with a particular focus on **environmental sustainability and community welfare**. His leadership in the "Punyam Poonkavanam" initiative exemplifies his dedication to creating a cleaner, more sustainable environment, leaving a lasting impact on both the Sabarimala pilgrimage site and broader community practices.





KAMALA MOHARANA

KHAIRABAD, ODISHA

“ Plastic, polythene and other waste items cause huge damage. I collect polythene, plastic packets and other waste items from garbage dumps and recycle them appropriately. **Earlier, villagers used to think that I was a kabadiwalla. But people started appreciating my work after the prime minister mentioned me in his Mann Ki Baat.** ”

मन की बात

“ओडिशा के केंद्रपाड़ा जिले की एक बहन कमला मोहराना एक स्वयं सहायता समूह चलाती हैं। इस समूह की महिलाएं दूध की थैली और दूसरी प्लास्टिक पैकिंग से टोकरी और मोबाइल स्टैंड जैसी कई चीजें बनाती हैं। ये इनके लिए स्वच्छता के साथ ही आमदनी का भी एक अच्छा जरिया बन रहा है।”

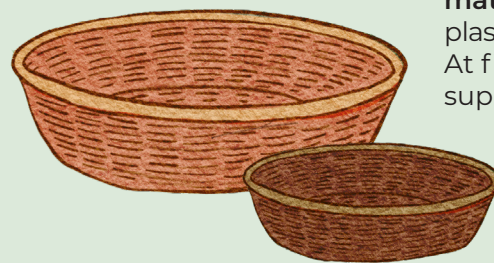
Episode 98, February 2023



EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH WASTE-TO-WEALTH:

Kamala Moharana's Journey As A Self-Help Group Champion

Kamala Moharana, a 66 year old homemaker, began her journey in the backdrop of Khairabad Village. Before embarking on her sanitation mission, Kamala led a homemaker's life in the small village located in the Kendrapada district of Odisha. Her involvement in sanitation and waste management began as a **personal endeavour to make use of discarded materials**, bringing home scraps of plastic, food packets, waste paper, etc. At first, her family was not very supportive of her and would often



mock, tease and criticise her for this practice. However, soon she began her journey and enterprising endeavour of converting scrapes into saleable items through mastering the concept of waste to wealth. Kamala's unwavering passion and vision drove her to **transform this perceived oddity into an opportunity**. She founded her enterprising endeavour of converting scrapes into saleable items by comprehending the concept of waste to wealth.

Soon, multiple women joined her and in 2016, Ama Dakhyata was born. Under Kamala's leadership, this Self-Help Group undertook the challenge of waste management with a unique approach. They collected plastic waste from their village and neighbouring areas, cleaned and dried it, and then **crafted it into a variety of products**, such as baskets, pen stands, flower pots, hand fans, and wall hangings, their creations are both **functional and beautifully crafted**. This initiative not only addressed waste management issues but also empowered the local women economically, fostering a sense of financial independence among these women.

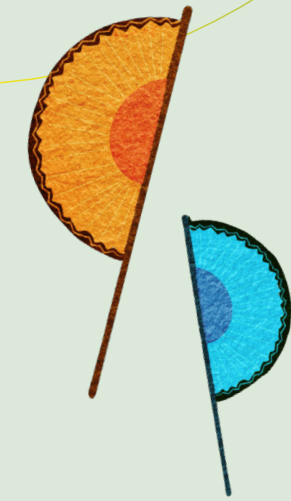
Currently housing 28 women, the group coordinates and teaches one another. Adopting innovative methods such as replacing glue with jute strips to hold the pieces together. They eventually sell these items at a nearby market, thus fostering an alternative source of income. Her drive is fueled by the belief that waste can be repurposed into valuable items, benefiting both the environment and the lives of those involved in the process.

Kamala's dedication to transforming waste into valuable products has bought her and her self-help group significant recognition and respect. The impact of this initiative extended

far beyond her village. Her innovative approach and dedication garnered national attention when Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised her work during the 98th episode of his Mann Ki Baat program. This recognition brought Kamala's efforts into the limelight and served as a catalyst for broader **adoption of similar practices**.

These efforts have brought Kamala and her SHG into the national spotlight. Recently, she was invited to the oath-taking ceremony of the Chief Minister of Odisha and was honoured by the Prime Minister. As a symbol of her commitment, Kamala sent the Prime Minister a rakhi made from recycled materials, highlighting her dedication to transforming waste into wealth. Her inspiring actions not only drew national attention but also exemplified the power of innovation in driving positive change.

Kamala Moharana's story is one of **resilience and empowerment, driven by a commitment to environmental sustainability and women's economic independence**. Her ideology is straightforward, a profound belief that waste could be repurposed into valuable products. Her entrepreneurial drive underscores the profound impact that **individual dedication and visionary thinking** can have on both local communities and broader societal issues.





REMYA K

MAHE, PUDUCHERRY

“ I feel incredibly happy and fulfilled working with young minds; **their thoughts and ideas inspire me to strive for more every day.** ”



मन
का
बात

“स्वच्छता को लेकर पुडुचेरी के समुद्र तट पर भी जबरदस्त मुहिम चलाई जा रही है। यहां रम्या जी नाम की महिला, माहे municipality और इसके आसपास के क्षेत्र के युवाओं की एक टीम का नेतृत्व कर रही है। इस टीम के लोग अपने प्रयासों से माहे area और खासकर वहाँ के Beaches को पूरी तरह साफ-सुथरा बना रहे हैं।”

Episode 114, September 2024

Swachhata Champions

Remya - Mahe, Puducherry



CHAMPIONING CHANGE: How Remya is Mobilising Youth for a Cleaner Future

Born and raised in the picturesque town of Palakkad, Kerala, Remya has always felt a deep sense of duty towards her community. After completing her graduation and post-graduation in Kerala, Remya's passion for social development drew her to work with young people. In 2019, she took on the role of District Youth Officer for the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) in Mahe, Puducherry. This role, under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, gave her the platform to **empower local youth and inspire meaningful change.**

Her journey took a transformative turn in 2024, when she spearheaded a series of mega clean-up drives, starting on 17th September, as part of the national Swachhta Hi Seva campaign. Her **vision of mobilising the community, especially the youth, for environmental sustainability** found strong support through partnerships with the Mahe Administration, Mahe Municipality, My Bharat, Youth Clubs, National Service Scheme (NSS), and Aapta Mitra. Over 1,000 volunteers came forward to clean the picturesque Mahe beach, collecting over 500

kilograms of waste in a single day. The initiative, while focusing on environmental cleanliness, also serves as a platform for community-building and social cohesion, drawing on the energy and passion of the younger generation. This was not just an act of service; it was a **powerful demonstration of what community action could achieve.**

However, her journey was not without its challenges. One of the most difficult aspects was building trust within the community and mobilising the youth. Many were initially reluctant, unsure of how their efforts could truly contribute to change. Additionally, coordinating between various local bodies and volunteer groups presented logistical challenges. But Remya's determination never wavered. She personally reached out to youth clubs, held meetings with local officials, and designed a clean-up strategy that **addressed both the waste problem and the need for long-term behavioural change.**

What made Remya's approach unique was her ability to foster ownership among the youth. Rather than treating

them as mere participants in the clean-up, she encouraged them to be leaders and champions of change. She instilled in them a shared vision of sustainability, turning them into champions of change. By establishing direct relationships with over 150 young individuals, Remya created a ripple effect, with each of them taking the message of environmental stewardship to their families, schools, and communities.

Through her unwavering commitment and innovative approach, Remya has become a shining example of how **empowered youth can drive remarkable social transformation.** Her efforts, particularly in mobilising youth to protect Mahe's fragile ecosystem, demonstrate the power of collective action for a sustainable future. Her story is a powerful testament to the belief that when the youth are equipped with the right resources and guidance, they can create lasting, impactful change. Remya's journey reminds us all that a cleaner, brighter future is not only possible but is within reach when communities unite for a common cause.



Swachhata Champions

Subrahmanian - Kozhikode



SUBRAHMANIAN

KOZHIKODE



“यह स्वच्छ भारत मिशन की ही सफलता है कि वेस्ट टू वेल्थ का मंत्र लोगों में लोकप्रिय हो रहा है लोग रिज्यूस रीयूज और रिसाइकल पर बात करने लगे हैं, उसके उदाहरण देने लगे हैं। अब जैसे मुझे केरला में कोजीकोड में एक शानदार प्रयास के बारे में पता चला। यहां ७४ ईयर के सुब्रमण्यम जी २३००० से अधिक कुर्सियों की मरम्मत करके उन्हें दोबारा काम लायक बना चुके हैं। लोग तो उन्हें रिज्यूस रीयूज और रिसाइकल यानी ट्रिपल आर चैंपियन भी कहते हैं। उनके इन अनूठे प्रयासों को कोजीकोड सिविल स्टेशन, पीडब्ल्यूडी और एलआईसी के दफ्तरों में देखा जा सकता है। साथियों स्वच्छता को लेकर जारी अभियान से हमें ज्यादा से ज्यादा लोगों को जोड़ना है और यह अभियान किसी एक दिन का एक साल का नहीं होता है ,यह युगों युगों तक निरंतर करने वाला काम है।”

Episode 114, September 2024

A LEGACY OF REUSE:

Subrahmanian - The Chair Weaver from Thondilakkadavu

At 74, Subrahmanian from Kozhikode, is more than just a master chair weaver; he's a symbol of sustainability. For the past 58 years, he has repaired and restored over 23,000 chairs for government offices and private institutions, teaching his community the value of reuse in a world that increasingly leans toward the disposable.

He began weaving chairs at 16 at the Standard Cane Furniture Shop in Kozhikode and, after the shop's closure, became a freelance craftsman, weaving a livelihood from his hands. Today, despite age slowing him down, Subrahmanian

works 200 days a year, spreading the message that reuse is vital. Locals know him as "the chair weaver" from Thondilakkadavu, Kozhikode.

The chairs he has worked on have served everyone, from senior officials to bus drivers, each piece crafted with pride. His legacy is passed down to his son, and his craftsmanship is still visible in Kozhikode's Civil Station, PWD, and LIC offices. As disposability becomes the norm, Subrahmanian's work serves as a powerful reminder of the value in resilience, adaptability, and keeping tradition alive.



मन की वात

More changemakers in action spotlighted
by the Honorable Prime Minister.

“ मुझे मध्य प्रदेश के हरदा जिले में सरकारी अधिकारियों की पूरी टीम द्वारा शुरू किए गए एक बहुत ही प्रेरक कार्य के बारे में पता चला है। अधिकारियों के इस झुंड ने अपनी पूरी टीम के साथ एक 'ऑपरेशन मल्युद्ध' शुरू किया है। इस ऑपरेशन का मुख्य फोकस स्वच्छ भारत अभियान को एक नई दिशा देना है। वे 'ब्रदर नंबर वन' ऑपरेशन पर काम कर रहे हैं जिसमें सबसे अच्छे भाई को अपनी बहन को एक शौचालय उपहार में देना होता है। रक्षा बंधन के अवसर पर वे सभी भाइयों को अपनी बहनों को शौचालय उपहार में देने के लिए प्रेरित कर रहे हैं। ”

Episode 10, July 2015

“ मेघालय के राज्यपाल श्री षण्मगंथन ने मुझे एक पत्र लिखा और मेघालय के एक गांव के बारे में बात की, मावल्यान्ग गांव स्वच्छता के लिए एक मिशन पर निकल पड़ा है और कुछ साल पहले उन्हें एशिया के 'सबसे स्वच्छ गांव' का पुरस्कार भी मिला था। अब स्वच्छता गांव की आदत और संस्कृति बन गई है। ”

Episode 13, October 2015

“ मध्य प्रदेश के सीहोर जिले के भोजपुरा गाँव के दिलीप सिंह मालविया, ने तय किया कि गाँव में अगर कोई material provide करता है तो शौचालय बनाने की जो मजदूरी लगेगी, वो नहीं लेंगे और मुफ्त में meson के नाते काम करते हुए शौचालय बना देंगे। भोजपुरा गाँव में उन्होंने अपने परिश्रम से, मजदूरी लिये बिना, इसे एक पवित्र काम मान कर अब तक 100 शौचालयों का निर्माण किया है। ”

Episode 15, December 2015

“ ऐसे ही बहुत Innovative तरीके से लद्दाख के उरगेन फुत्सौग भी काम कर रहे हैं | उरगेन जी इतनी ऊंचाई पर Organic तरीके से खेती करके करीब 20 फसलें उगा रहे हैं वो भी cyclic तरीके से, यानी वो, एक फसल के waste को, दूसरी फसल में, खाद के तौर पर, इस्तेमाल कर लेते हैं | है न कमाल की बात?

”

Episode 74, February 2021

“ आंध्र प्रदेश के विजयवाड़ा में एक प्रोफेसर श्रीनिवास जी बहुत ही रोचक कार्य कर रहे हैं। उन्होंने ऑटोमोबाइल सब्सक्राइब को उनके द्वारा बनाए गए विश्व कप तक सार्वजनिक पार्क में लगाया है, और लोग उन्हें उत्साह से देख रहे हैं। इलेक्ट्रॉनिक और ऑटोमोबाइल सब्सक्राइब एक अभिनव प्रयोग है। मैं विजयवाड़ा के प्रयासों की सराहना करता हूँ और उम्मीद करता हूँ कि लोग भी ऐसे प्रयास करेंगे।

”

Episode 75, March, 2021

“ एक तो फसल के कचरे का इस्तेमाल शुरू हो गया, वहीं दूसरी तरफ गांव में रहने वाली हमारी बहन-बेटियों को मिल गया कि बनाना फाइबर के इस काम से एक स्थानीय महिला को 40 से 60 रुपये प्रतिदिन की कमाई हो जाती है। लखीमपुर खीरी में सैकड़ों एकड़ जमीन पर केले की खेती होती है। केले की फसल के आम तौर पर किसानों को इसके तने को निपटाने के लिए अलग से खर्च करना पड़ता था, अब उनके पैसे भी बच रहे हैं।

”

Episode 79, July 2021

“ उनका मोटो बिल्कुल क्लियर है: "स्टॉप कंप्लेनिंग, स्टार्ट एक्टिंग।" इस टीम ने अब तक शहर भर की 370 से ज्यादा जगहों का सौंदर्यकरण किया है। हर स्थान पर "युद्ध पर परिवर्तन" के अभियान ने 100 से 150 नागरिकों को जोड़ा है। प्रत्येक रविवार को यह कार्यक्रम सुबह शुरू होता है और दोपहर तक चलता है। इस कार्य में कचरा तो हटाया ही जाता है, दीवारों पर पेंटिंग और आर्टिस्टिक कृतियाँ बनाने का काम भी होता है। कई जगह पर तो आप प्रसिद्ध व्यक्तियों के स्केच और उनके इंस्पिरेशनल कोट भी देख सकते हैं।

”

Episode 93, September 2022