

River of sorrow

The Kosi tragedy in Bihar

The new 'get well' getaway

Medical tourism in India

How green is my valley

Sustainable development in Kashmir

In Conversation

Dr Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw

IN THE NAME OF GOD

Time to chant a green mantra



THE CONDUCTOR WITH THE DRIVE

By N Kalyani



avail myself of free travel by bus, across the state,' says Yoganathan.

Beginning with tree planting programmes in schools, he went on to conducting them in colleges and other institutions, associations, and clubs. 'My programme is usually choc-a-bloc. I conduct the tree planting programme wherever scheduled on Monday, my weekly off day, and return for duty on Tuesday morning,' explains Yoganathan, the '92-bus-route conductor'. He first began planting trees as a 13-year-old. 'I was convinced that it is the youth and the student community that need to be educated about the environment and its conservation,' he points out.

His forays into the forest also brought him into contact with the scientists and researchers from the local forest college. 'I would go and assist them around, and they would teach me a lot about the trees and the forest and its myriad inhabitants.'

And that is the knowledge Yoganathan, educated formally up to class XII, brings to the lectures that are a part of his programmes, which start with a slide show followed by a tree planting session. Over the years, his programmes have become professional. An automatic projector replaced the manual one and he has been procuring photographs from professional wildlife photographers, besides photographs that he himself clicks.

Yoganathan points out that it is local Indian trees that he plants. 'The Tamil Nadu forest department and other organizations provide me saplings free of cost,' he says.

The conservationist says it is heart warming when 'children and students who attend his programmes get in touch with him on their birthday asking for a sapling they want to plant. And he willingly provides it. Students also let him know how they, for example, eschewed the use of plastic and chemical-ridden lipstick and nail polish.' Yoganathan, who has conducted his programmes in 1687 schools, colleges, and other institutions so far, recently received the Eco Warrior award, instituted by the Earth Matters Foundation. ■

When deforestation and destruction of green cover is the problem confronting us, there are those, very few albeit, who are planting trees of their own volition, and with a verve that is enviable. Part of those few is M Yoganathan. A bus conductor by profession he has

planted 38 000 trees over the past 25 years. The 42-year-old humble Coimbatore resident has been pursuing his passion across his home state of Tamil Nadu. But just how has he managed to do it? Thanks to my job as a conductor with the TNTC (Tamil Nadu Transport Corporation), I can