

One with nature

Kovai bus conductor leaves a green footprint

M Rafi Ahmed | ENS
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M Yoganathan is in his elements on Route No 92. The conductor ushers people to their seats on his bus between Marudamalai and Cheran Mahanagar. Professional chore done, passion takes over. The eco activist in him surfaces and tries to bring passengers closer to appreciating nature. His affable nature gets him passengers' ears, eyes and hearts.

Having lived and tasted nature's bounty, Yoganathan was pained to see cutting of trees at Kotagiri in the Nilgiris. He resolved to protect and preserve nature.

He presented his maiden slide show

on environment protection for students of Kotagiri St Antony's Middle School in 1987. Encouraging response motivated him to continue with his mission after his job as a conductor with the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation Ltd (TNSTC) brought him to the plains.

Route No 92, which he was allotted, was a blessing in disguise for the environmental activist as it had commuters who were mostly students and staff of four universities and nine colleges.

Yoganathan made his passengers see slide shows on environmental protection. In his two-and-a-half decade service as an eco activist, he has planted more than 50,000 trees. Slide shows,



ECO-WARRIOR: M Yoganathan lives, breathes and sleeps plants

tree planting functions at schools, colleges, NSS camps and with voluntary organisations are a regular feature of his effort to give back to nature.

Yoganathan has received numerous awards for his work. He was conferred with the 'Eco Warrior' award instituted by Earth Matters Foundation. Vice President Mohammad Hamid Ansari presented the award to him on World Environment Day.

Yoganathan also creates awareness of the hazards of using plastic.

Yoganathan has now come up with a script for a documentary titled *Thaagam* with Aravind as cinematographer.

He plans to set up a tree garden at Marudamalai on August 8.