

Chapter- 3

Reading with Understanding

Summary

Saalumarada Thimmakka, popularly known as the mother of 400 Banyan trees, is an Indian environmentalist from Karnataka, and popularly recognized for planting and tending to 385 banyan trees. In her forties, she faced ridicule for the inability to bear children.

In her lifetime she planted almost 8000 trees to fill the void that had been left after she realized she could not bear children. She helped to spread awareness about deforestation and promoted afforestation.

Her work has been honoured with Padma Shri and the National Citizens Award of India.

Saalumarada Thimmakka's age is more than 100 years but her passion for nature and the environment is beyond just words. Thimmakka represents the resilience, determination, and perseverance of ordinary women in our country. May her example, and that of each Padma awardee, inspire our India to greater heights.

Important points:

- Saalumarada Thimmakka, popularly known as the mother of 400 Banyan trees, is an Indian environmentalist from Karnataka, and popularly recognized for planting and tending to 385 banyan trees.
- The trees are planted along a four-kilometer highway stretch between Hulikal and Kudoor village near her husband's hometown in Tumakuru district.
- She reportedly wanted to commit suicide in her 40s as she could not conceive, but with the support of her husband, she found solace in planting trees.
- The couple arduously worked in the fields and cared for them.
- From 10 plants in the first year, they kept planting more saplings in the later years. Sometimes also bringing water from over 4 kilometers for their plants.
- She received no formal education and worked as a casual labourer in a nearby quarry. She used her limited resources for planting these trees.
- In total, 384 trees were planted, and their asset value has been assessed at around 1.5 million rupees.
- The management of these trees has now been taken over by the Government of Karnataka. She had met Karnataka CM H D Kumaraswamy and his deputy G Parameshwara at Bengaluru to request them not to chop trees planted by her between Kudur and Hulikal village.
- Fortunately, the Chief Minister responded positively and assured her that Bagepalli-Halaguru road widening project near Bengaluru will go under investigation. He also said that the concerned department will be alerted about the issue and the road alignment will be changed, if necessary, to save the trees.

- Her work has been honoured with the National Citizen's Award of India. In 2019 Thimmakka, earned the title of 'Vriksha Mathe' (Trees Mother) for planting thousands of trees in Karnataka,
- She received the Padma Shri Award from the President of India, Ram Nath Kovind. As the President, 33 years younger than Thimmakka, asked her to look at the camera, the centenarian touched his forehead to bless him.
- Her innocuous move brought a smile to the faces of the President, Prime Minister, and all the guests who burst into rapturous applause for her.
- After receiving her award, she also planted a sapling at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Thimmakka says that though her home is flooded with certificates, cups, and garlands, and fame, she still lives in poverty.
- Thimmakka represents the resilience, determination, and perseverance of ordinary women in our country.

Lesson learnt:

Remember just like human beings, plants/trees also have a life and they need to be cared for and nurtured. We can enhance the quality of our life by connecting with nature.

When you plant a tree, you just not plant a sapling but hope. We have learned the hard way that trees are extremely important for our survival.

Learn new words:

1. Rear: bring up and care for something
2. Jibes: insulting/ mocking remarks
3. Tender: soft/ showing gentleness, kindness
4. Vigil: being alert or awake
5. Quarry: a deep or large pit from which stones or other materials are extracted.
6. Canopy : cover/ shade

Do you know?

Chipko Movement or the hugging movement was started in 1973 where the villagers protected and embraced the trees by literally hugging them. It was primarily a forest conservation movement in India. Gauri Devi gave birth to Chipko Movement and mobilized village women for the movement when company men marched to cut the trees. The movement was sparked off by the government's decision to allot a plot of forest area in the Alaknanda valley to a sports goods company.

Extend your horizon:

The value and purpose of trees is enormous and their existence is vital for our survival. The world will be a different place without trees.

Make a poster on the importance of trees and what can one do to towards conservation of natural resources.

Evaluate yourself:

1. “The couple looked after the saplings because it gave them happiness and satisfaction”. Explain the line with the help of the information given in the text.
2. Find a word from the passage which means “cover”.
3. Why was Thimakka awarded the National Citizens Award and Padma Shri?
4. In your own words write down the importance of trees.
5. What did Thimakka do to ensure the safety of plants?

Maximize your marks

- Read the chapter carefully and attempt all the questions.
- Thimakka is an Indian environmentalist from Karnataka and is popularly recognized for planting and tending 385 banyan trees. Read the passage carefully and write a biographical sketch on Thimakka in about 250-300 words.