Botanical Garden Made with Rescued Trees in Telangana

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At a time when felling trees to make way for roads and real estate projects has become the norm, 52-year-old Raja Ramdev – a Hyderabad based businessman – has come forward to protect India's green cover.

He is setting up a private botanical garden, the first of its kind in the country, on an 100 acre plot of land at Proddatur village in Ranga Reddy district – about 40 km. from Hyderabad. "The master plan for the botanical garden is getting ready. We will start the work in another six months," Ramdev said.

Whenever Ramdev hears of large trees being felled, he sends his team to the spot. "We request the developers to not cut trees, and instead allow us to translocate them to our garden," he said.

So far, Ramdev has collected nearly 12,000 trees and big plants for his garden. "The total cost of the project is around Rs. 100 crore, of which I have already spent Rs. 50 crore. Translocating trees from various parts of the country to this place is a very expensive proposition. Secondly, I will also be importing many exotic varieties of trees from various parts of the world at a huge price," he said.

The businessman has already procured a number of rare plants from countries like Spain, Mexico, Madagascar, Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand and China.

Recently, Ramdev prevented a huge 1,500-year-old baobab tree at Mansanpalli village from being felled for a real estate venture. "We spent nearly Rs. 10 lakh to carefully uproot the tree, treat its roots and branches, and transport it to the garden with the help of cranes and trucks specially brought from Mumbai," he said.

Ramdev also saved hundreds of trees – some of them 500 to 1,000 years old – from being felled as part of the Hyderabad Mumbai national highway expansion plan in 2006-07.

The tree-lover does not expect to make any money out of the garden. "However, we do need funds to maintain the trees and plants. So, we are creating recreation facilities, such as cottages and a swimming pool, in the garden," he said.

B Vijay Prasad, deputy director of horticulture in Telangana Government, said it was a commendable venture: "Translocating a tree that's hundreds of years old is much better than spending lots of money on planting saplings. Ramesh is not only saving trees, he is also exhibiting them in his garden for future generations.'"