

THE DN WISDOM TREE GLOBAL SCHOOL

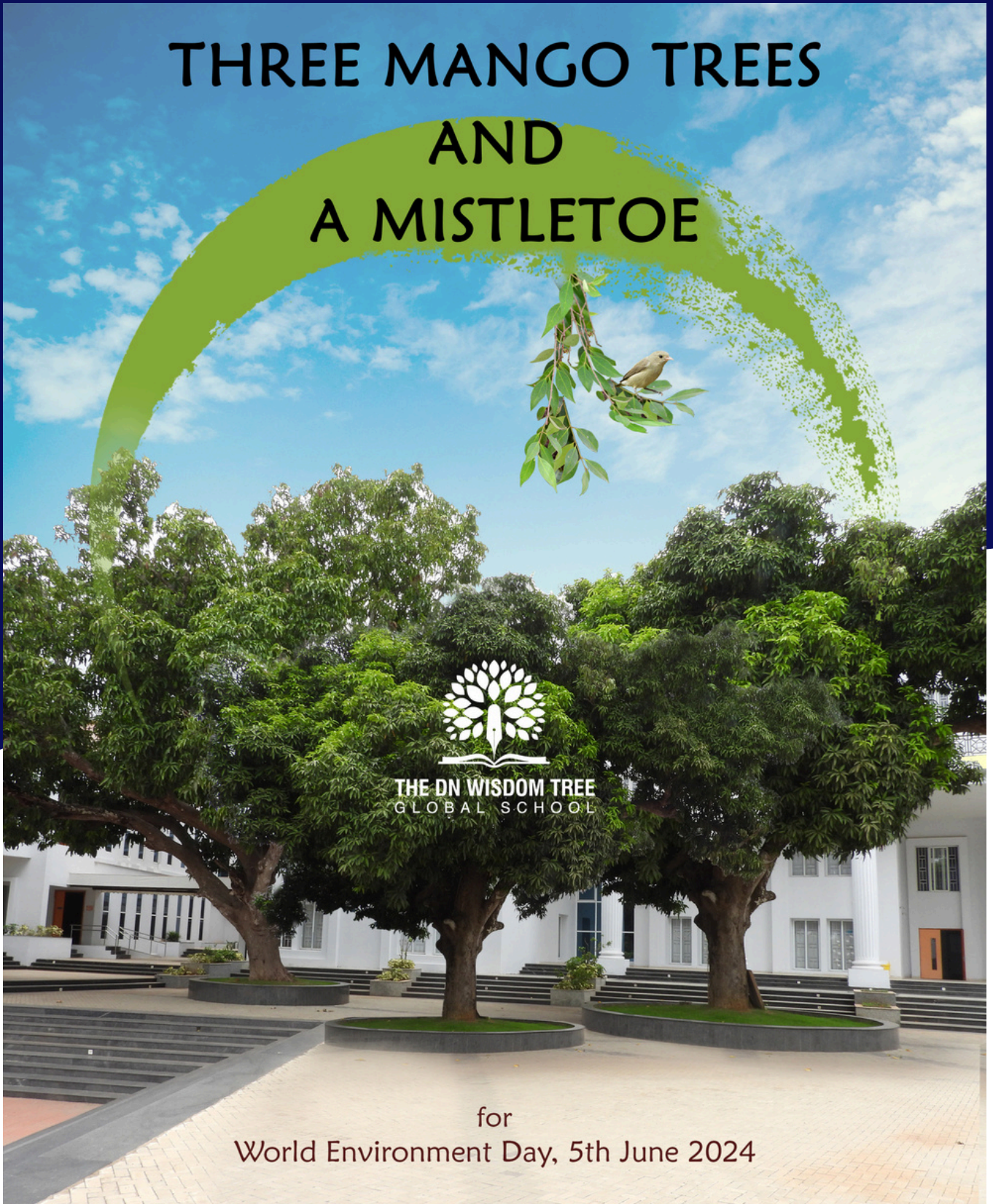
# WIZNEWS

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## THREE MANGO TREES AND A MISTLETOE



for  
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By  
Panchami Manoo Ukil



## THREE MANGO TREES AND A MISTLETOE

"You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

- Jane Goodall



Once upon a time, until five years ago, there stood three trees of mango in a row, in a place called Sundarpur. They were named Kairi, Ambi and Aamra. All three of them were more than a hundred years old. They looked exactly the same, and they had been neighbours and best friends to each other ever since they had germinated, sharing water, soil, and sunlight. Their canopies looked like giant green umbrellas against the vivid blue skies, shading the ground from the harsh sunlight. The three of them would giggle when tickled by drizzles, share secrets when their deep-green leafy canopies brushed against each other in the sway of the gentle south breeze, and danced with joy when they were drenched by the pounding monsoon rains. Under the earth, they talked to each other when their roots touched and entwined. All three of them became happy hosts to countless species of birds, squirrels, bees, and butterflies, especially during early spring, when they would be laden with mango blossoms. Koels, bulbuls, and barbets called out from the shade of the tightly meshed boughs, orioles made nests and tended to their chicks in the safety of the thickets of leaves, while, through the day, palm-squirrels scampered over the flaky trunks and branches.

Sometimes, a water snake would slither up onto one of the trees lazily, winding itself around the branches, looking to steal an egg or two from the nests of orioles. After having its fill, it would suddenly drop down with a light thud, evoking sharp screams of fright from anyone who was under the tree. Many a spring season, a whimsical queen bee would choose a spot on one of the branches for a hive, her hundred thousand industrious worker bees feasting on nectar of mango blossoms, the hive then assuming gigantic proportions and hanging steadfastly from the branch. Below the soil, the roots of the three mango trees made friends with ants, earthworms, red velvet mites, beetles, moss, lichens, and countless other creatures that thrived in the soil, depending on each other for survival. Men, women, and children passing by would look up at the trees admiringly, and marvel at their stately forms and magnificent canopies. The wearied ones would catch some rest under their cooling shade.



Kairi, Ambi and Aamra would spread boundless joy when they would bear fruit with the onset of summer, the searing heat of May and June turning the green fruits into yellow and orange. The ripe and juicy mangoes hanging from their branches would draw every kind of creature to feast on them. Like all trees, true to their nature, this trio of mango trees were also generous and giving; they loved having the mangoes plucked off them and eaten. Then, they would fluff up with pride, as the flavour and sweetness of their mangoes would be talked about with great appreciation by everyone who had eaten them. The three mango trees were the stars of "Amrapalli", the little ecosystem that they had earmarked and enveloped with their shade. As they grew bigger and bigger with time, they became more strongly rooted and resilient and so did their friendship.





Five years ago, a fierce tropical storm called "Fani", born in the ocean in the Bay of Bengal, tore through the land and fell in Sundarpur and its surroundings. With its landfall, it was as if the devil had emerged from the deep seas, so frightening was its fury. As the storm approached, the winds roared and howled their war-cries. The three friends trembled with fear, the lull before the storm indicative of the havoc that it was about to wreak. The incessantly lashing rains accompanying the angry winds threatened to flood every inch of space, and, this was no time for the three friends to do a merry rain dance as was the practice on a normal rainy day. Their thoughts raced back in time to the super cyclone twenty five years ago, that had decimated almost every tree that had come in its way. Many of their cousins, far and near, had fallen to the cyclone, leaving the land bare and devastated. Fortunately, the three friends had escaped the fury but the losses had left indelible scars.

As "Fani" gained momentum and whirled around their trunks and branches, the three friends swayed like drunken elephants, their branches swerving crazily, the weaker ones cracking and falling with a "whoosh." They could hear the cries of the teak and sapota trees as they fell to the storm one by one. Quaking in fear, the three friends linked their roots and held on to each other for dear life with the faith that this too shall pass. But this time, lady luck wasn't smiling at them. Kairi and Ambi suddenly felt that Aamra's grip was loosening. They pulled hard but Aamra was slipping away until they could feel her roots no longer. Above the ground, Aamra was lurching violently in the intensifying strong winds that literally wound around her, forcing her roots out of the earth. In a few moments, the stately Aamra had been razed to the ground, her roots now pointing towards the sky. As she lay sprawled, the rain waters swirled over her green canopy. Kairi and Ambi were traumatised and shattered as they looked at their friend lying in a watery grave amidst a relentless storm. Helpless as they were, they clung to each other through the dark night, weeping for their fallen friend, and praying that together they both would be able to weather this violent storm. The cyclone battered the land through the night, moving away only in the early hours, leaving behind an eerie silence of destruction.

A new day had dawned. Kairi and Ambi could not bear to look at their fallen friend. Their hearts were heavy with inexplicable grief, the unrelenting rain felt like the heavens were also weeping at the fall of such a magnificent tree. They could not imagine a life ahead without their friend. All the creatures who had been their happy companions were nowhere in sight this morning. Unripe fruits, leaves and broken branches lay scattered all around, and, it seemed as if "Amrapalli" had turned into a graveyard of trees. With their own dismembered branches, Kairi and Ambi looked forlorn and fragile. Over the years, there had been many such hurricanes with varying degrees of severity, but they had managed to survive them together. The fall of Aamra, therefore, was a shock, an event beyond comprehension. Somewhere, the duo felt guilty of not being able to hold on to their friend more tightly and not letting go.



Soon, a team of people arrived on the scene to survey the damage. From their conversations, Kairi and Ambi gathered that there were discussing ideas on how to raise Aamra to her former position. The inspecting team made many video calls to experts in Kolkata and Bengaluru, hoping against hope that a solution could be found. The tree translocation experts requested for close-up visuals of the roots. At the end, all of them were unanimous in the opinion that the roots had been damaged too severely to hope for any kind of resurrection for the tree. On hearing this, Kairi and Ambi were crestfallen as the members of the inspecting team. It was decided that the tree would be cut to pieces and moved away. Kairi and Ambi felt as if a part of them would be cut off forever. Aamra was eventually moved away, a gaping hole in the earth left as a reminder of the grand mango tree that had once stood there for a hundred years or more.



That year, Kairi and Ambi were fruitless. There were no bees and butterflies hovering over them, no cheery chirps of birds. They missed the presence of their friend and their hearts were filled with grief. Both of them would talk to each other about the changing times. They remembered the days when the air was cooler and cleaner, when forests were dense and green, when storms were less intense, and, when roots of trees held the soil together firmly. The wilderness used to be a safe haven for its inhabitants. Gradually, however, there began the practice of cutting down trees in forests to make space for "urbanisation" and "development." This was the beginning of the phase of degradation of the environment and loss of biodiversity that triggered the critical problems of "global warming" and "climate change." In fact, Climate Change was the cause for more intense and destructive tropical cyclones. Kairi and Ambi sighed at these thoughts and wondered if good sense would prevail soon, if carbon emissions would reduce, and, more trees planted to make up for those that had been felled.



A few months later Kairi and Ambi sensed that there was a stillness all around. There were no passers by, no one to rest under their shade. It was perplexing. Soon they heard that the world had been struck by a pandemic. A virus named COVID-19 had shut down the world. Thousands of people were dying everyday. People now stayed locked inside their homes and wore masks to avoid infection. One single virus had changed the world. There was great shortage of something as basic to life as oxygen. There was shortage of hospital beds. Experimental drugs were being used to treat patients as no one knew the antidote for this new virus. Scientists and experts attributed this deadly pandemic to human interference in forest habitats and cautioned for protection of the environment in order to leave a safer planet for the next generation. Kairi and Ambi lamented the state-of-affairs and wondered if the next generation would ever know about co-existence with nature and the need for smaller carbon footprints, so immersed was it in the comfort zone propelled by technology.



The pandemic went on to persist in a world that was disconnected and in despair like never before. Sometime later, people with mask-covered faces arrived at "Amrapalli" and began surveying the site. Apparently, a good Samaritan had decided to build a school there for children, a school that would enable children to bond with nature and learn about the need to exist peacefully with the elements of nature. The founder was an astute visionary who had, in fact, lived and worked for a greater part of his life in the deep forests, and hence, he had a deep understanding of the need for preserving biodiversity. He had clearly instructed the designers to create the plan around the existing old trees so that none of the trees would be felled to make space for infrastructure. On knowing this, Kairi and Ambi were emotional and hoped that this exemplary attitude would be replicated everywhere. Work on the school structure commenced soon thereafter.



While the world was in stillness, Kairi and Ambi became witness to the creation of an outstanding edifice. Stately white ornamented pillars rose in "Amrapalli" along with galleries for seating. Trees and plants lined the walking trails. "Amrapalli" turned into a grand amphitheatre for children. Most importantly, the filling of the hole in the ground where Aamra had once stood was a kind of closure for both the friends that she had left behind. Kairi and Ambi finally had reason to smile, imagining the sounds of laughter of children in their surroundings. They began to fruit the next season. Soon enough, the doors of the school opened as soon as the pandemic ended. Everyday, children began to file into the amphitheatre, playing, singing, dancing, painting, sculpting, and, of course mango-picking with utmost delight. Kairi and Ambi became a part of their joyful activities. Important events took place under the trees, festivals were celebrated and Kairi and Ambi were referred to as trees of wisdom. Slowly, Kairi and Ambi began to feel unburdened by the weight of their loss, and, even though the hole in their hearts was yet to be filled, they felt like they could finally move on. The birds and the butterflies, the bees and the squirrels came back to the trees and there was hectic activity once again. The "Amrapalli" amphitheatre had turned into a happy space of learning.



One day, Kairi heard a shrill and sharp whistle that was unfamiliar. At first, she thought it was the restless squirrels. Looking around, she saw a little olive-green bird with an unusual sharp and small bill, flitting between the two trees. The tiny bird finally perched on one of her branches. It was a lovely pale-billed flowerpecker, a new bird at "Amrapalli." After the bird had flown off, Kairi noticed a small pellet stuck to the surface of the branch. In a few days, a little shoot germinated from the pellet. Kairi and Ambi watched with wonder as the shoot grew swiftly into a plant with fleshy leaves. It was a mango mistletoe! The mistletoe wound its way up to the top of the tree, its leaves hanging in pretty bunches along the way. By the next spring, it had flowered. Sunbirds and flowerpeckers arrived to feast on nectar from these blooms. Soon the mistletoe began to fruit with tiny berries which were gobbled down by the tiny flowerpeckers. Subsequently, a pair of pale-billed flowerpeckers also built their nest on Ambi. The ecosystem was growing and these guests were soon turning into friends. Kairi and Ambi felt that Aamra had returned to them in the form of the mango mistletoe. The holes in their hearts were filling up because the following summer, both of them had fruited plentifully. They could giggle and dance in the rain once again.

The trees, birds, bees, butterflies, and the children love the little "Amrapalli" ecosystem in which they are nurtured everyday. They have learnt to enjoy each other's company. The children understand that they have to take up the mantle of being green crusaders. They have to plant more and more trees and adopt green habits in order to ensure that forthcoming storms are less severe so that Kairi, Ambi and all other majestic old trees like them can live for at least a hundred years more. They pledge to respect every species that is part of the larger ecosystems, the co-sharers of mother earth, in order to prevent killer pandemics in the future. They have learnt that there is no planet B – the earth is the only planet we have and to protect the earth is to safeguard our own survival.

Kairi and Ambi now look forward to many more fruitful seasons of hope.







## Teachers' Training and Summer Workshop

Our Head R&D Ms. Sharmistha Gupta conducted an enthralling two-day training programme for our teachers on the unique curriculum and pedagogy of The DN Wisdom Tree Global School. The sessions concluded with fresh perspectives gained by the teachers as they prepare to make learning more enriching and inspiring for the students when they are back to school after vacations.



# Teachers' Training and Summer Workshop

Conducted by  
**Dr. Namrita Chahal, Life and Business Coach, Therapist**





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📍 Plot #740/1363, Sundarpur, Khandagiri - Chandaka Rd, Bhubaneswar, Odisha 754005

☎ 9439070000 ✉ [enquiry@wisdomtreebbsr.com](mailto:enquiry@wisdomtreebbsr.com)

