



# Green wings

*Green Life* brings you *Ek Titli*, an Indian greentech startup by a group of young entrepreneurs and volunteers, headquartered in Pune.

Words by Khursheed Dinshaw



It's every Indian's dream to get the perfect product at the best price, and many of us spend hours, even days, scouring flea markets and bazaars, in the hope of discovering our next big bargain. With this knowledge of the Indian psyche and a love for recycling and reusing products, Nukkad Mandi was born.

Open litter everywhere, play grounds becoming dump yards, unclean footpaths, the condition of air and water beginning to show an adverse affect on the environment – a witness, Vaibhav Dugarchose, chose no longer to be silent but to act on his instincts. And so *Ek Titli* was created in 2010.

*Ek Titli* started with two initiatives: Ek Titli Farms and Ek Titli.Org. The former is an organic farming venture where the members conceptualize and develop farms for farm owners. In the urban space they create micro farms that can meet a large portion of the daily food requirements in the household and also contribute to a cleaner urban environment. The latter a web portal, is an initiative to raise environmental awareness amongst the public and various

organizations. *Ek Titli* aims to sensitize the urban population about the importance of achieving a balance between nature and a modern lifestyle.

The organisation's various online social engagements has a member base of around 15,000 while the portal gets a page view of 3.6 lacs per month. Under Ek Titli Farms, workshops are conducted for the general public, and for companies and organizations. It is a practical guide on how they can grow their own food organically and naturally. The 2-hour workshop takes them through a journey of facts and awareness on the advantages of organic farming and why they should opt for it. It also explains how food can be grown naturally and methods and steps to achieve it. At the end of the workshop, the participants are enlightened enough to start on their own.

The portal not only interviews and profiles various people and initiatives but also partners with various global events and conferences and if an opportunity arises, presents *Ek Titli's* work too. The members hold contests and review products and

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showcase the various new developments happening in the green space.

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But the journey hasn’t been simple. There were many challenges that tried to pull this human butterfly down. For the portal the challenge is to get as many inspirational and positive stories as possible supported with adequate references and also to reach a larger viewing audience. There continues to be a constant need for creative writers and thinkers who are not only passionate about writing but also wish to create a change, an impact for the betterment of the environment. “They need to have as much green as red in their blood. Also the belief that you can grow food in your own back yard is taking time to be assimilated. People still believe food can only be grown in the farms not in 2 inch deep soil,” adds the 28 year old wistfully.

The highs, of course, give the members their green wings to fly. The self satisfaction that they are contributing to a greener and cleaner planet keeps them going. The realization that the lives the portal has been able to touch and inspire through the information provided gives them that added positive push. “Our other high is the team

that we have and who together work and collaborate on this quest of *Ek Titli*,” adds Dugar immediately.

The support of parents, friends and believers during thick and thin has immensely helped. Add to that the satisfaction of clients calling first thing in the morning saying that, “*Aisa palak humne jindagi mein kabhi nahi khaya hai.*” or “We have pumpkins! We have pumpkins on our terrace! Thank you!” or “*Itna bada tamatar? Why don’t you take some home for your family?*”

“We need people who love nature, and believe that they are playing a major role in this age of sustainability and holistic living. We need passionate people who believe that each one of us has to contribute to make this happen. By passion, I do not mean, planting a tree, switching off the lights, saving water and not littering. I consider them to be daily practices. What is important for that member is how s/he can inspire another dozen to make changes each day, every moment. S/he has to be a change maker,” emphasizes Dugar about the membership criteria.

*Ek Titli* members also help to dispel myths regarding organic micro farming. These include demonstrating how fruiting trees can be grown in 2-inch soil and how rooted plants, especially carrots, radishes and onions can be grown as well. All that these plants need is nutritious soil and timely care. People also frequently ask them why insects should have the right of eating food grown by them.



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“Bees and butterflies account for 80% of the pollination. Without them, we will never get our food, yet they never say, ‘you don’t have a right to eat these plants and their produce because we pollinated them.’ Pests have a right to eat your plants, yet a balance needs to be created through various organic and sustainable practices. In this cycle of plants and creation of the food, every being on the planet is playing a very important role. If anyone is disturbed the entire cycle can be affected. It is important to respect this fact and live in harmony with nature so that this balance can be maintained,” explains Dugar who believes that we need to start switching to renewable energy, using organic products and becoming more responsible and aware of our daily impact on the environment.

Recycling our kitchen waste by converting it to soil, seeing if waste can be recycled

by giving it to the rightful authorities, exploring the possibility of harnessing the power of the sun or wind, growing our own food and through community based initiatives working on various sustainable initiatives are easy yet crucial ways of achieving this. The organisation is looking to create a large footprint on organic farming and reach a very large audience through their portal.

“Plant a seed of your favourite vegetable, in a pet bottle. Once it grows, eat it and share your experience with others on how you felt during the entire process. From the first sight of creation of life to eating its fruits and the leaves, talk about it. Through your actions, create the needed positive change, inspire others do try and experiment. Nature is kind,” adds the 28 year old Dugar wisely, on a parting note. ♻️