

## The do-gooders

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All the hoopla surrounding issues like global warming, terrorist attacks and environmental pollution never seem to die down. Several documentaries have been televised; brochures and information booklets have been distributed and news channels and social activists are going that extra mile to create enough awareness, but the million dollar question remains, are people listening?

Is every Indian citizen making his/her contribution towards the betterment of the society? Is change taking place? It might take a while for every citizen to join the 'Save the society' bandwagon but there are, of course, a few who have taken it in their stride

to make a difference for their society.

Neil Dantas, an industrial designer by qualification who left his secure job to be a full-time 'Doer', Poonam Kasturi, an '85 batch graduate from National Institute of Design who pursues her passion of converting household waste into useful compost and Ragini S Jain, a businesswoman who bid farewell to her corporate life of almost a decade in order to work in the field of developing sanitation products are real examples of ordinary people with extraordinary missions.

### **The young and the ambitious**

They were a bunch of friends with strong views on different subjects ranging from politics to environment but could never let their thoughts transform into actions. Eventually, when responsibility sunk in, one fine day, their lives changed forever. They realised that instead of pointing fingers at the authorities, they should stand up for themselves and create change.

Neil Dantas, one of the primary founders of 'The Doers' says, "When we look at the current state of affairs in our country, we only blame the government. There were certain issues affecting the society at large that needed to be addressed. However, not too many people were doing anything about it. That's how 'The Doers' came into existence.

We, the Doers always try to inspire people to do something good for the betterment of the society." "The 7/11 tragedy triggered our conscience and we designed T-shirts urging citizens to stand tall in times of disruption and terror." The Doers are active participants and are making multifold contributions towards causes of serious concern like global warming, pollution, deforestation and

other environmental issues. They have T-shirts specifically designed to address the above issues.

“The team of Doers has definitely expanded since its inception and we hope that many more will follow,” he confides. Dantas, has taken this as a full time initiative as this is his vision. As Dantas concludes, “Things will change if we all stand up and realise our responsibilities. These are nothing but efforts of individuals to make people sit up and take notice of causes that affect lives of people.”

### **Woman on top**

After a stint at NID, she could have easily led a secure life by working in a MNC. But Poonam Kasturi had other plans. She chose to make a career out of converting waste into useful compost. ‘Daily Dump’ helps people manage their household waste and convert it to useful high-quality compost. It supports them with flexible service plans to achieve the goal of becoming a green citizen.

“The Daily Dump products are designed to ensure that you compost at home, conveniently and hygienically. As responsible citizens, we should know that the waste we throw add up to huge piles outside our cities and therefore, pollutes our surroundings. Its time we make a difference – starting from home,” says Kasturi, Founder, Daily Dump.

She says that the products they offer are designed to make the environment better – both aesthetically and ecologically. If one is able to manage the waste from the point of its origin, then it is a direct contribution to the ecology and well-being of you as well as your city. “Sceptics and cynics might ban plastics and emphasise the damage caused due to the use of plastics but they should also evaluate the situation from a retailer’s perspective. People don’t look at the broader picture,” she says.

“The technologies are available abroad but they all are patented and some aren’t applicable in India,” she expresses. Kasturi works in an educational consultancy to earn the money, which she puts on research required. She wants all homes in India to be fixed with mechanised composters so that the process begins from the place of origin itself.

### **A unique eco-native**

Ever heard of an eco-toilet? It is a new term coined by Ragini S Jain. A thorough social activist by nature, she knew that working only as a consultant or as the founder of an NGO, Gitanjali Envirotech wouldn’t suffice if she had to realise her dream of being an avid social worker.

She says, “In India, 72 per cent of the Indian population do not have access to proper sanitation and majorly due to acute water shortage in most parts, the problems are further aggravated.” “We need about 21 litres of water a day for sanitation. However, we end up using more than required,” says Jain. She has developed a technology where people can use only 5 litres of water to meet the necessary requirements especially for rural areas.

Jain says, “It’s named, eco-toilet. However, in India, there isn’t enough technological assistance that helps us generate such ideas for the betterment of the society.” Jain who is also the VP of Shangrila Projects Pvt. Ltd. under which she has developed the design of eco-toilet also adds that she is passionate about the community she lives in and feels strongly about the things that hinders the growth of the society.

Jain is also working in Uttar Pradesh for a project that involves turning the sewage drains into an eco one! Sounds weird? She intends to make all the drains in UP ammonia, SO<sub>2</sub> and methane free. “The water won’t be black in colour anymore and completely odourless,” she says emphatically. “My dream is to sustain the latest technology to achieve 100 per cent sanitation in India,” she concludes.

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