

THE REIGN OF *compostwali*

A recipient of the *Namma Bengaluru Award*, this entrepreneur helps avoid 13,000 kilos of waste from hitting landfills everyday



Poonam Bir Kasturi

SWATHI CHATRAPATHY
DECCAN CHRONICLE

M“In Bengaluru, everybody wants to be a geek. Nobody wants to do any ground work or sweat it out a bit. This must change,” believes Poonam Bir Kasturi, the founder of Daily Dump, a company that produces composting ceramic pots and offers services in the same area. As we enter her store in Indiranagar, our eyes are met with Earthen pots, called *Khambas*, which help store compost and the wall is filled with tips to save nature’s resources. This mother of two, who is lovingly called ‘*compostwali*,’ at work, recently received the

Namma Bengaluru Award in the Social Entrepreneur category. She sits across a table, clearly a multitasker, doing some paper work and chatting away.

“I have no clue how I received the award,” exclaims the co-founder of Srishti School of Art and Design, who graduated from National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad. She started Daily Dump eight years ago as an experiment, when nobody knew that waste could be converted in compost, to help nurture plants and also avoid

it from reaching landfills. She has come a long way since. “We went from home to home asking people to keep their wastes and compost it. It was hard to convince people, but we did the best we could. Until last year, we were just three people on the team. Now we have a lot of volunteers,” she says. The company is under a Creative Commons License, which allows others to start clone companies, as long as they give Daily Dumps due credit. “Right now we have partners in Chile, Brazil, the Middle East, and all over India,” she says.

Poonam, however, doesn’t think of her company as a business. “It’s about contributing to the nature. For the past two months, I’ve worked non-stop, even on Sundays. Besides that, in my daily life, I make sure I don’t unnecessarily buy. The more you buy, the more you consume nature’s resources. If I want the latest cell phone, it means more children are going to be sent into mines,” she says. Clearly enough, in front of her sits an old cell phone, which serves the basic purpose it was designed for. “I basically want to tell youngsters these days to think for themselves, not to get unnecessarily influenced. It doesn’t matter if you’re recognised for your work; In fact, it’s good if you get humiliated a bit. It makes you stronger,” she says. This woman, to whom leadership comes naturally, is helping keep 13,000

kilos of organic waste out of landfills everyday. “This simple contribution shows that it can be done, if you get your hands a bit dirty,” she says. When she’s not getting her hands dirty, however, she likes to draw, spend time with family, read about history and travel.

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POONAM BIR KASTURI,
ENTREPRENEUR

You can do your bit for nature by starting to compost at home. You can buy the Khambas on <http://www.dailydump.org/all-products> starting at ₹500.