

# FOREST MAN OF INDIA

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Ever wondered if someone could single-handedly plant some 40 million trees and create a man-made forest, bigger than the NYC Central Park. Difficult to even imagine, isn't it? But this is exactly what a man from a Tribal community of Assam did for over forty years of his life. This is the story of Jadav "Molai" Payeng, The Forest Man of India. He is credited for the creation of a man-made forest, at the Majuli Reserve in the Brahmaputra river. Today this beautiful forest in Assam's Jorhat district, locally called the 'Molai Forest', is known for its rich flora and fauna. Jadav Payeng is now recognized globally, is a recipient of numerous Honours and awards and has been part of various environmental programs at both national and international levels.

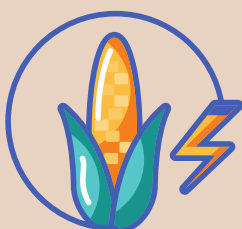


Source: twitter.com

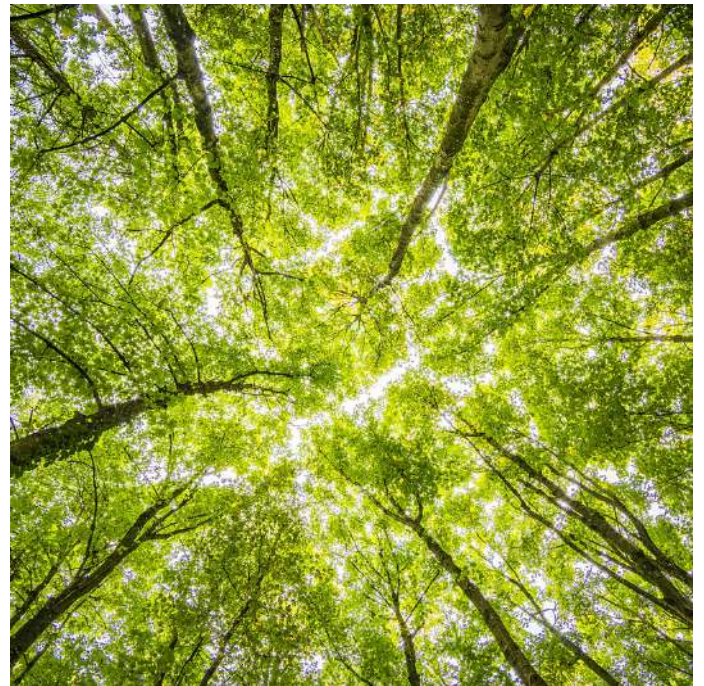
Jadav Payeng's journey began at the early age of sixteen in 1979 when he witnessed the death of hundreds of snakes due to drought. The only method he could think of to help the situation was to plant some trees, so he planted some 20 bamboo saplings. The way to create a 1360 acres forest was paved when a scheme of tree plantation on 200 hectares was launched in the district of Jorhat. This project got over in five years, but Jadav stayed back to look after the plants and continued planting more trees. He worked hard, nurtured the plants and the result is well known to us. For over 35 years he devoted himself to this action; every day he would cross the river on a boat and walk two hours to reach the sandbar where he would plant a tree. Payeng has elaborated on his method of taking care of the plants which involve the use of cow dung and organic matter as manure, use of drip irrigation methods to water saplings and use of earthworms in the preparation of soil. The forest turned out to be dense which today is home to diverse flora including several species of trees, bamboos and medicinal plants along with animals like deer, elephants, tigers and rhinos.

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Jadav's story was highlighted when, in 2007, a photojournalist stumbled upon him and wrote an article about him. This brought him to the attention of the whole nation as well as the government. He was recognized for his incredible efforts and was honoured multiple times. He has given TED talks, has been subjected to numerous documentaries and even a children's book is based on him. He received the title of "Forest Man of India" by Jawaharlal Nehru University in 2012. Payeng was also awarded the Padma Shri in 2015. Recently, he has signed an agreement with Fundacion Aztecz (NGO) to plant 7 million trees in Mexico.



Jadav Payeng's story is truly inspirational for each one of us. He has set up an excellent example of how one only requires an aim and determined efforts to make a change. His journey showcases the importance of an individual's input towards helping our environment and motivates us to follow the same. If a man alone could bring to life a massive forest, why can't we do something similar, either individually or through combined efforts?



## NURTURE

When it comes to eco-friendly living, ecological sustainability is critical. Things start to break apart without a healthy ecology. More people and companies need to make sure that we're planting more native trees to replace those that have been cut to make way for projects in order to safeguard the environment and enhance air quality.

