



THE HAPPY TREE

ekta@authorinme.com

Ekta Bajaj

Curator, The Happy Tree

THE HAPPY TREE

A well-being initiative



Submitted by

Ekta Bajaj

Author and Entrepreneur
Co-founder, Author In Me Publishing
Curator, AIM Literary Festival, UK

www.ektabajaj.com

www.happysimplynow.com

ektabajaj@hotmail.com

Content

1. Healing power of Trees
2. The Happy Tree Movement
 - The story
 - The global impact
 - The Happy Tree in France
 - The Happy Tree at the Happiness Festival, Canada
 - The Happy Tree at the AIM Literary Festival, London
3. The Larger vision
 - Why is now the right time for The Happy Tree
 - Creating a Happy Tree in Hyde Park
4. Benefits
 - Environment Preservation
 - Wellbeing and Happiness
 - Positive Values
 - Community building
 - Spreading hope
5. In the Media

THE HEALING POWER OF TREES

Trees stand out as one of nature's most compassionate and powerful manifestations, embodying qualities such as unselfishness, strength, patience, love, healing, nurturing, resilience, and grace. Under favourable conditions, trees can grow indefinitely, serving as silent witnesses to history and the changing tides of centuries. Across various cultures, trees are revered and worshipped, with research even suggesting that communities rich in trees, experience lower rates of hospitalisation.

Beyond their physical attributes, nature and trees contribute significantly to mental health. The simple act of hugging a tree has been shown to prevent mild depression. Additionally, many pharmaceuticals trace their origins to trees, such as aspirin from willow bark, Taxol from yew trees for cancer treatment, ginkgo biloba for improved circulation, tea tree oil for skin infections, and cinchona tree bark containing quinine, a key component in anti-malarial drugs.

In 2004, Japan's National Land Afforestation Promotion Organisation conducted an experiment revealing that a stroll in the forest positively affected blood pressure, heart rate, and the immune system. Merely gazing at a forest view for 20 minutes led to a 13% reduction in the stress hormone cortisol. Recognizing these benefits, some doctors are now referring patients with stress, depression, or anxiety to Green Gyms, where engagement in conservation projects provides therapeutic relief. Oxford Brookes University research underscores that while exercise and fresh air contribute to cardiovascular health, the calming influence of woodland settings aids recovery more effectively than a traditional gym environment.

The Japanese practice of Shinrin-yoku, or "forest bathing" and "forest therapy," asserts that time spent in a forest enhances physical and mental well-being. This concept has gained traction as doctors increasingly emphasize the psychological benefits of immersing oneself in nature. A 2015 study involving over 255 adults demonstrated that exposure to trees positively influences an individual's ability to sleep, aligning the body with the natural rhythms of the day and promoting a restful night.

In India, a prevalent custom involves tying threads around banyan trees as a symbolic prayer or offering to the deities. Revered in numerous cultures, the banyan tree is often linked to notions of longevity and wisdom. This sacred practice is further believed to attract good fortune and blessings.

THE HAPPY TREE MOVEMENT

The Story of initiation

The year 2020 posed significant challenges for humanity, with the lockdown evoking intense emotions that even the most resilient hearts found difficult to withstand. As the year drew to a close on December 31st, 2020, a sense of pain and chaos overshadowed the usual hope associated with the arrival of the new year. With hope dwindling and loneliness looming, I, a fervent advocate of positivity, felt compelled to uplift the spirits of the community around my house.



Image1: The creation of Happy Tree

This community included an elderly couple that took their daily walks, finding solace by the large willow tree in front of my house. There was also a young expectant mother, lovingly cradling her belly with tears of impending fear in her eyes as she strolled past the tree. The children, grappling with the confusion of not being able to meet their friends, bombarded their parents with countless questions. In an attempt to distract the youngsters, parents encouraged them to play with leaves and embrace the comfort of the tree.

The tree served as a shared source of solace for everyone. Personally, every time I embraced the tree, a profound calmness enveloped me, and I wanted to share it with the world. In an effort to amplify the joy and healing the tree provided to passers-by, I painted small circular wooden plaques in vibrant colours and inscribed them with uplifting messages. On the first day of the new year in 2021, I hung twenty-one wooden plaques on the willow tree branches, each carrying simple messages of hope on both sides. My intention was simply to instil hope in the hearts of those who walked by and to foster a community-wide spread of positive vibes.

Over the next few days, the messages gained traction not just from my neighbourhood but also amongst those that lived on the other side of the town. It was overwhelming to see the joy and smile on people of all ages and culture as they stopped to read the messages and hug the tree. In honour of the happiness that the tree was spreading, I named the weeping willow tree, THE HAPPY TREE.

I have since then made it a ritual to decorate the Happy Tree with Happy Messages on the first day of new year.



Image2: The Happy Tree messages

The Global Impact

In the Maha Upanishad, there is a Sanskrit phrase, '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*,' which encapsulates the idea that the world is one family. I truly witnessed the essence of this philosophy when I introduced The Happy Tree to the world. Regardless of our gender or the cultural beliefs that shape us, at our core, we are all interconnected as humans. Our joys and sorrows are shared experiences, and nature serves as a reminder of this profound connectivity. I saw the spirit of *Oneness* emerge amongst the people who connected to the Happy Tree.

The Happy Tree originated from a single thought – the desire to disseminate happiness and hope. Like a captivating fragrance, this initiative extended its influence far and wide, bringing smiles to countless hearts. The power of social media propelled the idea forward, allowing me to connect with fellow advocates of positivity worldwide. A community of Happiness Ambassadors emerged, and through regular Zoom meetings, we collaborated on ways to amplify the wave of happiness.

The Happy Tree garnered tremendous support from a worldwide community throughout the year 2021. On the 2022 New Year's Day, while the world was facing the second lockdown, individuals from India, South Africa, the UK, Canada, the USA, Australia, Belgium, and France joined hands to create their own Happy Trees, adorning their communities with messages of hope.

Transforming into a powerful symbol of hope and life, the Happy Tree has earned recognition from various media outlets over the years. It has been featured in iGlobal news, Wycombe Sound Radio, Marlow FM, Bucks Free Press, and Wycombe Today, amplifying its impact and spreading positivity globally.



Image3: The global impact of Happy Tree. Messages created around the world

I live in Belgium in the Hainaut region. I am a pyrographic artist. In this activity, I engrave messages of love, peace, and joy on small wooden logs. Happy Tree is therefore a movement that fully fits my values. It is therefore with great joy that I joined the team of ambassadors and that I will propose for the first time this year 2021, at the individual level but also in my city, projects and workshops, so that happiness can reach the heart of people who will read them, or pick them and can, by this beautiful vibration, sow a sweet and vivifying light on our beautiful planet. It is peaceful and joyful hearts that will make our planet a place of peace and joy.

EMILIE, BELGIUM

THE HAPPY TREE IN FRANCE

In April 2021, Christine Delmar, a happiness coach, and ardent supporter of the Happy Tree concept, reached out to propose the creation of the first Happy Tree in France. Invited by the mayor of Forcalquier, a small commune in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence department in south-eastern France, I had the honour of initiating and leading the community project for this endeavour. The selected tree, located in the village community garden just in front of the mayor's office, became the focal point of a heart-warming initiative.



Image4: At the village in France with the community and the Deputy Mayor, Forcalquier

Witnessing the entire village actively participating in crafting messages of hope and love for the Happy Tree was truly overwhelming. The mayor orchestrated the involvement of school children, their families, residents from old age homes, and employees of the mayor's office. Together, we created 140 happy tree messages that adorned the chosen tree. Today, the Happy Tree proudly stands as a symbol of joy and hope in the quaint village of Forcalquier.

Following the event, I received a personal letter from the mayor expressing the happiness the tree brought to the village and expressing hope for the creation of more Happy Trees in France. The news of this uplifting initiative was also featured in the local media.



République Française

Mairie de Forcalquier

Forcalquier, le 17 mai 2022

CABINET DU MAIRE
DG/VR – N° 2022-66

Objet : Initiative Happy Tree

Dossier suivi par : Valéry ROCHAS, cabinet du Maire
cabinet@ville-forcalquier.fr

Madame, Monsieur

En avril dernier, Forcalquier a été la première ville de France à expérimenter le dispositif "Happy Tree". Cette pratique issue du Royaume-Uni a su trouver son public dans notre ville. De fait, de nombreux enfants, parents, associations et élus municipaux ont pu venir participer à cet événement unique. Les messages d'espoir, de bonheur et d'amour ont pu faire rire et sourire nos administrés, ce qui devient particulièrement rare en ces temps troublés.

Ces arbres, habillés de ces rondins de bois qui savent conjuguer art et écologie, en sont d'autant plus magnifiés. Ils sont aussi, un moyen de communication pour les habitants d'une ville, et permet à chacun de partager ses idées, ce qu'il peut avoir sur le cœur.

Ainsi, j'encourage sincèrement l'initiative, et espère pouvoir voir ce mouvement grandir et s'étendre dans d'autres communes.

Merçi ecar pour ce beau moment. !

Le Maire,

David GEHANT

Image 5: A letter of appreciation from the Mayor of Forcalquier

Happiness is the solution! Because when we are happy, we discover the desire and the capacity to love everyone! The meaning of life is to be happy. Life gives us many opportunities to come back to joy, expand it and share it around. Happy Tree is one of them. I appreciate very much its simplicity and its heartfelt expression. Let's open our hearts to be happier because it is in our hearts that peace, love, joy stand. Let's listen to our heart vibrating with Mother Earth's heart and resonating with our brothers' and sisters' hearts, meaning the humans, the animals, and the plants. Let's hang on Happy Tree the message which lies in the bottom of our heart. This message is our light shining in the world.

Christine Delmar, France

THE HAPPY TREE AT THE MONTRÉAL LA PLUS HEUREUSE, THE HAPPINESS FESTIVAL IN MONTREAL, CANADA

Since 2021, the Happy Tree has actively participated in the Happiness Festival. The organiser, Rossana Bruzzone, is passionate about cultivating joy within her community. Incorporating the Happy Tree activity has significantly increased participation and engagement during the festival. Rossana encouraged children to adorn all the trees on a street with messages of hope, effectively turning each tree into a Happy Tree on that street.



Image 6: The Happy Tree in the Happiness Festival, Canada

THE HAPPY TREE AT THE AIM LITERARY FESTIVAL, LONDON

The Happy Tree has been a part of the annual AIM Literary Festival, an all-day in person event in London organised with an aim to promote diversity in publishing. Stories affirm hope and embody subtle lessons of life. The Happy Tree served as a vibrant display, showcasing a multitude of messages, quotes, and positive words contributed by authors, attendees, and children alike, thereby enhancing the spirit and essence of the festival.



In 2022, a replica of Happy Tree was inaugurated at the Nehru Centre, London, The Cultural wing of the High Commission of India, which hosted the AIM Literary Festival that year. This artificial tree now occupies a prominent position within the distinguished reception hall of the Nehru Centre.



Image 7: The Happy Tree at the AIM Literary Festival, London

The AIM Literary Festival 2023 was hosted at the Brent Civic centre. The Happy Tree was a central highlight of the festival and inspired numerous literary conversations around affirmations, mindfulness, and positive wellbeing.



THE LARGER VISION

Why is now the right time for The Happy Tree

The time is always right to spread happiness and hope, the indispensable lifeblood of a flourishing community. In light of disconcerting global political landscapes and the heightened concerns for well-being following the challenging years of the pandemic, there is an urgent need to reaffirm faith in humanity and reignite the hope for a brighter future.

The surge in online interactions has brought about a concerning risk of loneliness among individuals. The Happy Tree has the potential to serve as a medium for uniting communities, fostering a sense of unity, empathy, and love within society.

Sustainability and environmental preservation pose shared challenges for all countries and individuals alike. Attaching a personal message of hope to the tree encourages people to form a connection with it, harmonising with the natural environment and contributing to a sense of shared responsibility towards the nature.

Creating a Happy Tree in Hyde Park

Over the past three years, the Happy Tree community has evolved from a singular entity to a thriving collective. Fuelled by the aspiration to instigate positive change in the world, we are eager to establish a Happy Tree at the heart of London, The Hyde Park. We have Identified a suitable Tree in The Green Park, London, W22UH, and it's our request that we are given permission to adopt and as the Happy Tree.

The envisioned Happy Tree will embody the resilient spirit of London and encapsulate the dynamic essence of the vibrant city, fostering community unity and ultimately becoming an iconic symbol of hope for the world.

Our broader objective extends to creating Happy Trees in various locations, including town centres, schools, hospitals, old age homes, and community parks.



Image8: The proposed Happy Tree in Green Park



BENEFITS

- Environment Preservation
- Wellbeing and Happiness
- Positive Values
- Community building
- Spreading hope

IN THE MEDIA

Wycombe Today

News for High Wycombe, Marlow, Aylesbury and South Buckinghamshire

HOME NEWS OPINION SPORT REVIEWS EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

High Wycombe resident creates 'The Happy Tree'

Matthew Clark | January 17, 2021



Ekta Bajaj stands in front of 'The Happy Tree' (image supplied by Ekta Bajaj)

A local Wycombe resident has created 'The Happy Tree' in the front garden of their house to spread hope and positive vibes during Lockdown 3.

On New Year's Day 2021, entrepreneur and blogger Ekta Bajaj initiated a small project in her front garden by turning an ordinary willow tree into the 'Happy Tree'.

A series of wooden plaques were created containing positive messages of hope. Using string the plaques were hung on the willow tree in Ekta's front garden. The people who walk by read the messages on the tree and it revives their hope. Many of those who were walking by with a frown or engrossed in thoughts decide to stop, smile and hug the tree.



Home News & Views iCommunity iEntertainment iWellness iMoney Videos Profiles

A diaspora Happy Tree of hope that crosses borders



iGlobal Desk

Published on: 21 Apr 2022, 12:07 pm



Provence - Verdon 9

10 avril 2022

Place à la musique minérale

Bricolage et ateliers enfants

AUBENAS-LES-ALPES

Le conseil municipal n'approuve pas le budget

FORCALQUIER

L'arbre du bonheur a traversé la Manche

VACHERES

Au foyer rural, stage de chants polyphoniques

SAINT-MARME

Ala mine

GRÉOUX-LES-BAINS

L'office de tourisme propose ses idées de "Destination Famille"

Post

Author In Me @AuthorInMeUK

What an honour from the Mayor of France David Gehant- bestowed upon #thehappytree - conceptualised & developed by @EktaBajaj in 🇬🇧 & carried forward by Christine Delmar in 🇫🇷

Ekta Bajaj @EktaBajaj · Apr 8, 2022

Messages of hope on a tree. This is HAPPY TREE. I made the first happy tree in my front garden in 2021 with 21 msgs of hoped again in 2022. Positive vibes travel far and this week, the first Happy tree was made in France! #thehappytree

0:05

9:13 AM · Apr 12, 2022

1 3

Post your reply Reply

