

Namma Bengaluru Awards: Stone inscriptions enthusiast is Citizen Individual of the Year

NAMMA BENGALURU AWARDS 2019



Namma Bengaluru Awards Trust hosted its flagship event – ‘The 10th Edition of Namma Bengaluru Awards’ (NBA) in Bengaluru today. The awards, which aim to honour the ‘real heroes’ of Bengaluru, **recognised six extraordinary Bengalureans for their exemplary contribution towards making the city a better place.**

Namma Bengaluru Awards was launched in 2009, by the initiative of MP Rajeev Chandrasekhar. In this award system, the citizens of Bengaluru themselves identify and nominate their heroes. Following nominations, an eminent jury of Bengalureans shortlist candidates after a series of meetings, which include interviews of nominated individuals, before deciding the final recipient of the awards.

Since 2009, Namma Bengaluru Awards has received over 2.5 lakh nominations and has recognised 87 unsung heroes from among 261 finalists. This year, Namma Bengaluru Awards Trust shortlisted 28 candidates from among hundreds of nominations, in different categories.

This year’s theme was that **Awakened, Aware, Active, Informed and Determined citizens can create change.** The awards began with the gathering paying their respects to deceased leaders from Bengaluru – former Bengaluru South MP Ananth Kumar, former Bengaluru North MP CK Jaffer Sharief, and former Jayanagar MLA B N Vijayakumar.

This year, Bengalureans extraordinaire, along with our winners over the past nine years, graced the 10th year celebrations of Namma Bengaluru Awards.

Hon'ble Justice (Retd) M N Venkatachaliah presided over the event, as the chief guest. Following are the recipients of the tenth edition of Namma Bengaluru awards:

- **Udaya Kumar, History and stone inscription enthusiast** – Citizen Individual of the Year
- **Rohith B R, Deputy Chief of Bureau, Times of India** – Media Person of the Year
- **Ravindra Kumar N, Karnataka Forest Department** – Government Official of the Year
- **Rajesh Babu and Victoria Joslin D'Souza, Co-founders of Swachha Eco Solutions** – Social Entrepreneur of the Year
- **Meghana Murthy, Founder, Smitam** – Rising Star of the Year

Ashok Kamath of Akshara Foundation was honoured with the coveted '**Namma Bengalurean of the Year**' award for his exemplary service to reinvigorate the public education system in Bengaluru and Karnataka.



Namma Bengalurean for the Year 2019 – Ashok Kamath, Chairperson, Akshara

Additionally, this year, the Namma Bengaluru Awards Trust felicitated the following individuals and organisations as 'Champions of Namma Bengaluru' for their demonstrated passion and compassion.

Charlie's Animal Rescue Centre (CARE) – An animal rescue centre, founded by Sudha Narayana and five friends, which began as a shelter for 10 dogs and cats, and is now home to 200 animals including dogs, cats, guinea pigs, rabbits and cattle .

Sangeeta Halimani – A woman constable from Yelahanka Police Station for her exemplary act of humanity, for having breastfed and comforted a day-old baby found abandoned on the streets of the city.

Uday Kumar, Shiva Kumar, Chetan Kumar B M and Prajwal H K – They were instrumental in saving the lives of two Surya Kiran pilots who crashed while training for the AERO India show this February.

Suresh N R, Managing Trustee of Namma Bengaluru Awards Trust, said, “All of the 28 finalists are winners for their excellent work in their respective fields. The jury had a tough time, and held multiple rounds of discussion, to decide on the awardees. We thank the citizens of Bengaluru for nominating such wonderful people who are an inspiration to all of us.”

Hon’ble Justice (Retd) M N Venkatachaliah commemorated the winners, and thanked Namma Bengaluru Awards Trust for its efforts in recognising the unsung heroes of Bengaluru.

Details of winners of Namma Bengaluru Awards 2019 and Champions of Bengaluru

Ashok Kamath – Namma Bengalurean of the Year

Akshara Foundation, chaired by Ashok Kamath, has been a godsend to primary school children in the government schools in Bengaluru and Karnataka. Shocked with the declining numeracy and reading levels of students, Ashok Kamath joined hands with the Government of Karnataka around 10 years ago to increase the reading ability of children in 1425 BBMP schools. This benefited 80,000 students between classes II to VII in the initial years.

The Ganitha Kalika Andolana (GKA) or Learn Math Movement conducted in partnership with the Education Department, seeks to make Mathematics fun for children who otherwise fear the subject. It strengthens the analytical skills of students, making them employable in future.

Akshara Foundation has also ensured that they take full advantage of technology, and that children from disadvantaged groups take advantage of learning systems otherwise only available to the affluent. They have developed an app called Building Blocks, available in android phones, which makes simple math problems fun for children.

In the last two decades or so, Akshara has impacted the lives of over a million children in Bengaluru and Karnataka. Their success in Karnataka has seen their education programmes spread to Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and beyond.

Udaya Kumar P L – Citizen Individual of the Year

Working in a technological services firm, Udaya Kumar is an accidental historian and works with his team to ensure that Bengaluru’s history, hidden in inscriptions on stones and carvings, is preserved and catalogued for posterity. Udaya Kumar has helped unearth inscriptions as far back as 900 AD, and gives us a glimpse of the political, social and economic history of Namma Bengaluru far richer than we know today.

So far, of the 160-odd inscriptions documented in the city, only some 50 are intact; the rest were destroyed due to ignorance and apathy. With rampant urbanisation destroying our heritage structures, Udaya and team continue to work tirelessly to rescue these before it is too late.

So far, the team has managed to save nine of 11 critically-endangered stone inscriptions, and is trying to digitally secure all inscriptions via very high resolution 3D optical scans. In the meantime, Udaya has been creating awareness about these inscriptions among the local population.

Ravindra Kumar – Government Official of the Year



Unknown to many city dwellers, Bengaluru has numerous protected forest areas that are not only home to our city's wildlife, but are also crucial for maintaining the local climate and protecting our city from heat island effect.

Sadly however, Bengaluru's sky-rocketing real estate market and urbanisation have made these forests vulnerable to encroachment. Ravindra Kumar, the Assistant Conservator of Forests and official in the Karnataka Forest Department, has been instrumental in reclaiming encroached land in Bengaluru. He has managed to reclaim 130 acres of forest land, including areas in the Turahalli Forest Zone.

His war against encroachers resulted in vested interests knocking the doors of power for his transfer. Yet, owing to citizens' pressure and widespread protests, his transfer was put on hold. Added to this, Ravindra Kumar is also trying to ensure that encroachers do not use loop holes in our legal system to get stay orders against the reclamation drives carried out by him and his office.



Rajesh Babu and Victoria Joslin D'souza – Social Entrepreneur of the Year

Rajesh and Victoria are Co-founders of Swachha Eco Solutions, along with Vinay Raghavan. They have been instrumental in utilising technology to convert plastic waste into innovative durable products, such as drip irrigation pipes, HDP water pipes and interlocking recyclable plastic tiles. With the motto 'NO WASTE IS WASTE', they run a dry waste processing centre which collects plastic waste across 54 wards in Bengaluru, and recycles over 150 tonnes of plastic every month. The organisation works closely with ragpickers, who are some of the most disadvantaged groups in Bengaluru.

They also work with apartments and gated communities to manage wet waste responsibly. Their long-term aim is to ensure that no waste enters landfills, but is recycled either through composting or converted into products that are durable and cheaper than virgin plastic products and are widely available to consumers.

Rohith BR – Media Individual of the Year

Rohith B R is the Deputy Chief of Bureau for Times of India. He has actively reported on pressing civic, social and environmental issues, including citizens' fight for transparency and accountability in governance, as witnessed in his coverage of citizens' demand for public consultation for the elevated corridor project.

He has also covered the environmental degradation of Bellandur and Varthur lakes, and Bengaluru's heritage stone inscriptions.

His work has invariably served as a pressure point for the government to act and to not take citizens for granted.

Meghana Murthy – Rising Star of the Year

Meghana had founded Smitam in 2017, with five volunteers. Smitam's journey began with tutoring and mentoring children from mainly disadvantaged backgrounds, helping them excel in studies and boost their confidence.

Having reached out to around 4000 children, Meghana decided to address taboo subjects like menstrual hygiene, targeting school girls who are generally unaware or shy to discuss the subject. Through the #NoHesitation programme, Smitam conducted workshops for over 1200 girls from government schools about menstruation, highlighting the consequences of improper menstrual hygiene. Her workshop helped break the taboo around the subject and instil confidence in young girls.

This year, Namma Bengaluru Awards felicitated extraordinary individuals and organisations for their demonstrated passion and compassion. These are the Champions of Namma Bengaluru for 2019:

Charlies Animal Rescue Centre

Eight years ago, Sudha Narayana, along with five of her friends, began an animal rescue centre, a shelter for 10 dogs and cats. It has grown to become an organisation with 100 volunteers, and a shelter with about 200 animals at any given time, including dogs, cats, guinea pigs, rabbits, pigs, ducks, and a calf.

Sangeeta S Halimani

This January, Sangeeta, a constable at Yelahanka Police Station, showed an exemplary act of humanity by breastfeeding a day-old baby girl who was abandoned on the streets near GKVK campus. Mother of a one-year old child herself, Sangeeta did not think twice before comforting the abandoned child. She has been applauded by the police and the public for this act.

Uday Kumar, Shiva Kumar, Chetan Kumar B M and Prajwal H K

They were instrumental in saving members of the Surya Kiran aerobatic team that crashed while training for the AERO India show in February. Their immediate action prior to the arrival of ambulance was instrumental in saving the lives of two Surya Kiran pilots.

[This article is a press release sent by Namma Bengaluru Foundation and is published here with minimal edits, as part of our Message Forward service that allows non-profit organisations to issue public announcements.]