



# Sustainable Biodiversity Conservation Through Strengthening Communities *- by Kaigal Trust*



## COMMUNITY AND CONSERVATION

India is among the richest biodiversity regions in the world. Through the history of this ancient civilization, peoples' lives have been closely linked to their local biodiversity resulting in a rich variety of livelihoods. In spite of major changes over the last 300 years in land use patterns and land ownership rights and the advent of industrialization and rapid economic growth during the last century, a large number of people continue to pursue their traditional livelihoods, in craft and art forms, farming and animal husbandry, fishing, forest based livelihoods, folk healing, medicinal practices and many more.

A large number of tribal communities living in and near forests have immense knowledge on biodiversity based resources and make a livelihood by trading non-timber forest produce they collect, in its primary form. Closely linked to the traditional livelihood patterns are the traditional practices of conservation and an intimate understanding of the local ecology and in-built mechanisms for ensuring sustainability of the bio-resource.



Government of Andhra Pradesh  
**A.P State Biodiversity Board**

UNEP-GEF-MoEF&CC-ABS Project





## BEGINNING :

The Kaigal Education and Environment Program of the Krishnamurti Foundation India began as an effort for conserving the local biodiversity with people's participation in 2002. The program was involved in extensive conservation and biodiversity documentation in the areas surrounding the Kaigal Valley and the reserve forests on the buffer of the Kaundinya Wildlife Sanctuary, in collaboration with the local and tribal communities. One of the focus areas of this program was to examine if and how the local communities could be empowered and encouraged to participate in sustained biodiversity conservation.

There was a need for a model that would :

- ❶ Demonstrate sustainable use of the locally available biodiversity combined with the traditional knowledge of the forest, allow for locally relevant skill building,
- ❷ Provide a better price to the produce being collected by tribal communities in the area so that they can avoid middlemen in bio-resource transaction and
- ❸ Economic development for the community.

Such model, would allow the local communities to retain their cultural identity while being a part of the larger community. Thus the idea of a Self Help Group as a small livelihood enterprise was formed by the Kaigal Trust.



This enterprise mobilised women and youth from the local and tribal communities, introduced them to value addition of bio-resources and marketing, thus creating livelihood opportunities for the local communities. To help the enterprise sustain and develop into a financially independent organization, KT was registered as a Public Charitable Trust, with the objective is to develop and nurture a community centred approach and empowering rural and tribal communities by building skills and capabilities in them towards more sustainable livelihoods.





## CORE PRINCIPLES :

- Organizing a community based enterprise for rural development and conservation.
- Focusing on sustained conservation efforts with community participation.
- Identifying and providing opportunities for locally relevant skill building for the members selecting local bio-resources for value addition, based on their sustainability status – both in the wild and in private lands.
- Procuring bio-resources from the local communities at a fair price.
- Developing simple, ecologically sound, affordable, replicable technologies for value addition
- Anchoring and facilitating similar conservation, skill building and community empowerment efforts



## ACTIVITIES :

Started as a small initiative with a core team of 4-5 members, KT now is a registered Trust, with 12 members and a turnover of over Rs. 25.00 lakhs.

### The activities of the Kaigal Trust include:

- Collection of seeds from forest and maintaining of seed bank
- Maintenance of a forest nursery of endangered indigenous forest species and medicinal plants to reduce dependence on forests and regenerating habitats
- Procuring bio-resources for value addition from various sources including the afforestation site, herbal garden and nursery being maintained by the KT afforestation site, members own backyard gardens, local farmers, authorized forest collectors (Yanadhi tribals) and from nearby markets. The raw materials are procured from 3 panchayats covering 11 hamlet villages. The Yanadhi tribals who are part of the KT initiative are knowledge holders of the forest produce.



- 🔧 Researching, identifying and developing appropriate value addition techniques based on local knowledge
- 🔧 Developing craft based products including macramé decorative items, embroidered materials and dresses and bags
- 🔧 Producing, packaging, sales and marketing of a wide variety of products for economic empowerment of the community

## PRODUCTS:

Combining simple processing techniques and traditional knowledge systems with a rich diversity of bio-resources, a group of innovative, enthusiastic and co-operative minds from KT were able to develop more than 55 products to take to the market.

In addition to work with bioresources and their value addition the members have also been trained in craft skills such as embroidery, macramé and paper craft, besides receiving extensive training on tailoring and garment designing. The KT has, therefore, been able to diversify its' products which helps in maintaining financial sustainability as well as ensuring sustainable use of the local resources.



## KT PRODUCTS INCLUDE:

- 🔧 Medicinal plants grown in KT nursery including thulasi (*Ocimum sanctum*), adathoda (*Adathoda vasica*), lemon grass (*Cymbopogon citratus*), brahmi (*Bacopa monnieri*), etc.
- 🔧 Herbal infusion powders, based on medicinal plants grown in the herb garden maintained by KT
- 🔧 Churnas and medicinal oils based on bioresources in the KT-maintained garden as well as forest produce like arjuna (*Terminalia arjuna*), brahmi (*Bacopa monnieri*), neem (*Azadirachta indica*), thulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*), hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*), etc.
- 🔧 Cleaning powders with raw materials from own gardens and forest produce including chigere (*Albizia amara*), sikakaki (*Acacia concinna*), soapnut (*Sapindus emarginatus*), neem (*Azadirachta indica*), tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*)
- 🔧 Pickles and preserves made out of wild fruits and farm produce like tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), mango (*Mangifera indica*), kalimbi (*Carissa carandus*), jamun (*Syzygium cumini*), amla (*Phyllanthus emblica*), maredi gadda (*Decalepis hamiltonii*).
- 🔧 Kitchen staple items like rice, cold pressed oils and spices
- 🔧 Honey sourced from the local market and authorized tribal collectors
- 🔧 Craft items including macrame items, embroidered products and tailored goods.



The Products manufactured by KT are sold under the name "KAIGAL".



## MARKETING STRATEGY :

The Kaigal Trust is encouraging consumers to buy products that support and conserve different ecosystems and without exploitative practices. The Trust is also participating in direct sales events such as 'melas' and fairs organised by different institutions and organizations for sale of their products. In addition it has a network of over 22 dealers across Bengaluru and Hyderabad who stock their products now. Some of our products are also sold in collaboration with a similar community based enterprise based in Tamilnadu.





## SKILL BUILDING AMONGST THE COMMUNITY

One of the core objectives of the Kaigal Trust is to build an empowered community whose right and responsibility it becomes to conserve the local biodiversity. Accordingly, multiple training and skill building programmes have been conducted to build a variety of skills amongst the members of the Trust as well as the larger community. This widens the scope of their learning and potential capabilities.

- Members of the Kaigal Trust have been trained in afforestation and nursery management techniques. The nursery is maintained also as a centre for spreading awareness and as an educational resource.
- Members have been trained in different value addition and processing techniques of locally available bio-resources.
- Craft training in different areas has been conducted for the members of the Kaigal Trust.
- They have been trained in different soft skills of enterprise management including maintenance of accounts, inventory, management, maintenance of orders, sales and marketing.
- Members of the Kaigal Trust have conducted capacity building training in different community resource centres.
- Organised training programmes for sustainable harvesting of honey and Bee Keeping for the tribal communities.
- Decision making in the Kaigal Trust is through participatory group processes and different members take responsibility for different operational aspects.





## INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGES

KT has built linkages with resource persons and institutions engaged in Biodiversity Conservation, education and documentation, community enterprises, Government bodies and so on.

Some of the important initiatives include:

- ❏ Biodiversity Management Committees are constituted by A.P. State Biodiversity Board in majority of the villages in the Kaigal Trust area.
- ❏ Peoples Biodiversity Registers are also prepared in some villages by the Kaigal Trust with financial and technical support from APSBDB under UNEP-GEF-MoEF & CC-ABS Project.
- ❏ The A.P. State Biodiversity Board is also supported the BMCs with Local Biodiversity Fund under UNEP-GEF-MoEF & CC-ABS Project to strengthen the capacities and to implement Biodiversity Conservation activities.
- ❏ The Trust has also documented Tradable Bio-resources of Chittoor and Anantapur Districts with financial and technical support from APSBDB under UNEP-GEF-MoEF & CC-ABS Project
- ❏ Some of the Trust members are participated in the Exchange Visits being organised by APSBDB under UNEP-GEF-MoEF & CC-ABS Project to Gujarat and Assam Biodiversity Boards and learned various new initiatives implemented as part of Biodiversity Conservation and associated livelihoods.
- ❏ Collaborations with the Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT)
- ❏ Participation in events and exhibitions conducted under the aegis of the Small Grants Programme of the United Nations Development Programme as GEF Partners



## MODEL OF ACCESS BENEFIT SHARING

Kaigal Trust sources its raw materials from different panchayats. Under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 KT has entered into an agreement with APSBB for accessing bioresources used by them for commercial purposes and sharing benefits back to the communities through APSBDB. Over the years, the Kaigal Trust has come to be seen as a key community space bringing together suppliers and users of bio-resources. The local enterprise has been able to demonstrate an Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) mechanism which can potentially be a model for similar community led enterprises dependent on local and forest bioresources. The local youth and women seeking meaningful livelihoods and for learning new skills.

### INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT:

The following institutions and organizations are supported in different aspects of the formation and functioning of the enterprise *viz.*, Andhra Pradesh State Biodiversity Board, Centre for Environment Education, Foundation of Revitalization of Local Health Traditions, Krishnamurti Foundation India, National Biodiversity Authority, The Valley School, UNDP Small Grants Programme,

Numerous other organizations, resource persons have also shared their resources and skills with the members of the Kaigal Trust and the larger associated community. The KT is thankful to our consumers for their continued support of our products.

Kaigal Trust is a well established successful model to demonstrate how a community enterprise is building empowered, financially stable communities for sustainable biodiversity conservation.

The Trust is well equipped with skilled human resources and need support from Government, scientific and other organizations to yield better results in Biodiversity Conservation and sustainable utilization of bio-resources through community participation.

For KAIGAL products and further details do visit the site in Kaigal or write to

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