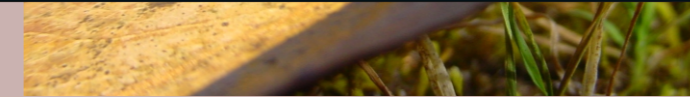




M A D H U D U N I Y A



WHY A MEETING ON HONEY



The role honey plays in the lives of indigenous people is well known. Honey hunting techniques and methods vary across the world. The finer details of tools, beliefs and superstitions related to honey hunting differs from one community to another.

In India, it is estimated that 50-60% of all honey is from *Apis dorsata*, the Giant Rock Bee, though this is hardly ever acknowledged. Wholesale consumers like the Ayurvedic and food industry use this honey which is procured from usually informal sources and sometimes from Co-operative societies for indigenous people.

The NTFP Exchange Programme – South and South East Asia organized this event to bring together honey gatherers from the whole region, including countries of Cambodia, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, Bangla Desh and India. The workshop was held in the lap of the forested Eastern Ghats at Araku Valley near Vishakapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. NGO groups working with indigenous honey gatherers and government officials from either the Forest Department or Co-operative Societies were also invited. Honeyhunters were brought under one roof, to share about their will share issues related to tropical honey, its collection by indigenous communities, sustainable harvesting methods and tools, honey quality and marketing.

An exhibition was also organized in the venue and videos, publications, demos and posters on the issues surrounding honey were available.

The event was organized to enable the gatherers and NGOs working with these communities to share knowledge, exchange technologies and information. The event would also attract the attention of Forest Officials, Policy Makers in the Government and Co-operative Chairpersons and take the voice of the people to them.

The programme was jointly organized by Keystone Foundation, Nilgiris and LAYA, Vishakapatnam.



The Setting & People... Introductions & Warming Up

The sleepy town of Araku woke up to a rather unusual episode on its single arterial road on the evening of 27th November 2008. For two Siddhis, with close resemblance to their African forefathers, were conducting a mock display of their honey hunting prowess, leaving delegate members and passersby speechless. To the accompaniment of music, honey hunters swiftly scaled a eucalyptus tree and artfully hunted mock honey. As they climbed down, an enterprising delegate collected user fees from the exasperated members of the town and gifted it to the honey hunters for their daring effort. This in essence was the spirit with which the first ever Madhu Duniya was held, with camaraderie and a willingness to learn from the experiences of one another.



The Challenge of Translation

At the outset, the meeting organizers faced the challenge of translation for all the varied participants. There were people in the meeting speaking 13 different languages, besides the local adivasi dialects!

The best possible way was to do simultaneous translation – so it was arranged that people sat in language circles with one translator.

Proceedings went on slowly with time given for translations to take place.

A mighty challenge to ensure that everybody felt involved!

Madhu Duniya has been unique in more ways than one. It was an international conference with participants from eight countries and about 70 participants; the agenda varied from scientific collection of honey to its management and marketing. There were technical discussions on appropriate technologies as well as light hearted sessions such as this impromptu mock honey collection. But above all, this was probably the first time in living memory that indigenous honey hunters from so many places on the earth assembled at one place and spoke about their art with pride, disagreed, sometimes even argued vociferously but each one basking in the knowledge that theirs is an art that is unique to the world we live in today. This was also an anthropologist's dream come true for it is not everyday that you find so many sub species of the human race come together, people with different looks and diets, but all sharing the common ancestor.

After months of preparation, Madhu Duniya began with four prospective days worth of an engrossing conference. And that is how it began with day one introducing the tone of activities that was to be held over the next four days.

Prior to the beginning of Madhu Duniya, it is worth mentioning the location of the conference and the hotel where the conference was organised. Araku valley is located in Visahakapatnam district, about 120 km from the main city.

level, Araku is one of the best known and least explored hill stations of Andhra Pradesh. The hotel we stayed in is a venture by the Andhra Pradesh Tourist Development Corporation. Alongside, some guests stayed at a tourist venture run and maintained by an adivasi youth group.

People began arriving on the 25th of November with Sneh and

Madhu arriving first, followed by the rest of Keystone as well as Laya staff. The hall was prepared and displayed with exhibits meant to be showcased for the conference. Posters were arranged depicting activities related with Honey Hunting.

The conference officially began on 26th November. Banners were put up in the morning and final preparations completed. More exhibits from various groups were put up in various parts of the conference room and is explained in the following table.



After lunch, the conference was inaugurated with a ceremonial tasting of honey by participants and assemblage of people as per languages common to them. Thereafter, Sneh introduced the ideas behind the conference and also asked Laya Director Dominique to speak in detail about the region and about his organization, Laya. She then laid out the agenda and programme for the workshop (See Annexure I)

Then, she asked each participant to introduce themselves. Participants were from 10 Indian states and 7 countries. The details of the participants are given in annexure 2.

With introductions over, Sneh invited Jenne De Beer from the NTFP exchange programme to speak about his organization and their work. Jenne using several pictures spoke about the objectives and activities of the exchange programme with interesting anecdotes and loads of photographs. He emphasized on the role honey has played in building this network and the described the activities of different groups across the region. He also explained about different exchanges and trainings that have taken place in the past through the Exchange Programme. His presentation is attached as Annexure 3.

Table 1. Exhibits from Conference Participants

Keystone	Honey bottles, wax, wax candle, wax balms, soap, books and posters
RCDC	Banaja honey samples, Community forestry newsletter
Bees For Development	Newsletter, Information brochures
CGMFP	Honey samples
BARCIK	Photographs and literature
NTFP EP	Newsletters, honey samples, bamboo craft, posters, information brochures
Prakurti	Siddhi honey Hunting products
ECONET	New Product Launch

Honey in the World



After Jenne's presentation, Dr. Nicola Bradbear from Bees for Development, UK was invited to give a talk about the status of bees in the world. Nicola who has over 20 years of experience in the world of bees and beekeeping, spoke briefly about her organization and then divided her talk on bees of the world into different sections, like status of bees, people, markets, etc. In an engaging manner, she spoke about the types of bees found in the world, about their status, diseases that affect beekeeping and the effect of pesticides on beekeeping. She then spoke about the various honey hunting and beekeeping communities found in the region.

Tea followed her presentation and the Siddhis with their drums called back everybody to return to their seats for conclusion of Nicola's presentation, which ended up in interesting discussions. Jenne began with asking about the strict rules of allowing imports into the European Union, but asked for the reasons for continued imports from China. Nicola said that the Chinese honey was banned in 2002 due to the presence of drug/pesticide residues, but thereafter the Chinese have taken a lot of steps to reduce these residues in their honey. Even now, a lot of countries are banned such as Vietnam and Brazil and they need to pull up their socks if they have to export to Europe.

On being asked of her opinion of whether Beekeeping or Honeyhunting is better, her answer was relevant, as she said that any form of beekeeping with indigenous bees is better and Honey hunting done in proper and systematic manner is good.

Sam asked her about the role of honey in the livelihood (income)

of the people to which she said that this kind of data is not readily available and this is the reason that decision makers don't pay much attention to this aspect. Jenne added that now there is increased attention about honey and governments are also paying attention and this should help for better policies in the future. The role of traditional ways of honey hunting was also discussed with both the negative and positive aspects being analysed.



Book Launch



The discussion ended and thereafter the book 'Honey trails in the Blue Mountains' by Keystone Foundation was launched. Madhu launched it with the first copy being handed to Nicola and then inviting Kunal to speak about the book. Kunal spoke about the process of writing up the book and the recent recognition the book received by means of a positive book review in the Indian newspaper 'The Hindu'.

Finally, the movie on 'Honey Hunters in the Blue Mountains' was shown to all and the day's proceedings came to an end.

A Window into every Area Group Presentations



Session I - Modulation by Crissy

Day 2 began at 9 am with a description and reminder of the days events by Sneh. Then Crissy took over as the modulator for the session which elaborated projects on honey across the region, besides India.

Natripal

The first presentation was given by the Natripal group with representatives from Palawan in Philippines speaking about their experiences in the region.

NATRIPAL or Nagkakaisang Mga Tribu ng Palawan is composed of the United Tribes of Palawan. They are composed of Pala'wan, Batak and Tagbanua tribes. They were organized in 1989 and registered with SEC in 1991. There are 68 member associations with 7 associations active in honey enterprise working with 3 major indigenous groups. NATRIPAL aims to promote the rights of the indigenous peoples of Palawan, especially rights to land and natural resources, sustainable livelihood, health, education. The various programmes of NATRIPAL include Training on sustainable, hygienic harvesting & quality control, Information dissemination campaigns (comics), Technical assistance (including permitting and policy reform support) and Infrastructure support for setting up processing facilities linking for capital and packaging & marketing

Discussions

Madhu began the discussions with asking information on whether the organization of communities was voluntary or chosen. In response, she said that the coming together of groups was infact voluntary in nature.

The second query was on sale points. They sell in different outlets in various regions. They sell a large volume to the tourist circuit and to supermarkets in towns in the region. Additionally, one group is totally focused on marketing of honey.

Rajeshwari from CGMF asked about quality control measures. She replied that they use food grade plastics, white cloth to remove impurities and so on. She further mentioned that they do a lot of work on policy advocacy with the government.

It is to be noted that the cost price is 80 pesos per kg and the sale price is 72 pesos for 250 gms.



Dorsata brand

The second presentation was by the Dorsata brand of honey group from Indonesia with Suryanto, Johnny and Neena speaking. Suryanto spoke about collection of honey, Neena about Networking and Johnny about marketing about honey.

Suryanto mentioned that there are three types of honey hunting. The first is by putting artificial sticks or attraction planks, the second is similar to bee having and the third is actual honey hunting. He spoke more about techniques to harvest honey. He spoke about the associations formed by the groups called APDS (Asosiasi Periau Danau Sentarum). The smaller groups are called "Periau ". These groups are aimed to conserve indigenous wisdom. The number of Periaus have increased and more Periaus are keen to join.

The role of the community is to apply hygienic processing during harvesting by employing the slicing method and not hand squeezing. During post harvest, they use nylon filters, during packing, they use white and food grade jerry and make a tag in every jerry can. The community tries to meet Jaringan Madu Hutan Indonesia" (JMHI, Forest Honey Network of Indonesia) standards.

Then Neena spoke about the role of JMHI which is mostly technical support and providing information advice. They also organise meeting and exchanges between various groups involved in honey hunting.

Thereafter, Johnny spoke about marketing and brand support for the "Dorsata" brand, elaborating on the label and design elements. They have links with Amway and in supermarkets where products are sold, both locally and in urban markets.

Discussions

Samraj and Suryanto had a discussion about the role of experience and indigenous knowledge related to honey harvesting and quality. The other question asked was how many people go for harvesting and about the common equipments. Suryanto replied that a minimum of three people go for hunting and they use common tools such as smoker and they also hunt during the day time.

Nicola asked about the major buyer of this honey. Johnny replied that his group accounts for the sale of only 10-20 % of the total supply. Nicola added that sometimes, new buyers enter offering higher prices and tempt suppliers. What do you do then? Johnny answered "MUTUAL LOYALTY", wherein the producers and people involved in marketing have an unwritten rule that the spaces/role for each group needs to be respected.

BRDC - Vietnam

The third presentation of the morning was by Dr. Chinh from the Bee Research and Development Centre.

He said that traditional beekeeping with *A. cerana* existed in Vietnam since long. In the 1960s, modern techniques was introduced the north of Vietnam. *A. mellifera* bees was introduced to the south soon after. In 1985, Vietnam started exporting honey. From 1990 honey quality has been improved, beekeeping developed and exports have expanded. He further added that in 2002, Vietnam exported 14,500 mt honey. He recorded more than 100 nectar resources in Vietnam and spoke about Rafter Beekeeping in detail. Trees in Melaleuca forest have thin branches, so *Apis dorsata* colonies choose the rafters to build their nests. Rafters are put before the Melaleuca tree start to bloom. This method allows Beekeepers to harvest 2-3 times from one colony.

Discussions

Which types of bees have residues?

Dr. Chinh answered that it is usually *Apis mellifera* and *Apis cerana* and drug residues can be treated with appropriate disease management. *Apis dorsata* does not have any residues.

Also asked was, how is it possible for *A. dorsata* to nest at 3-6 feet? How do bees get attracted? What about attacks from animals at such small heights?

The rafter method is only done in submerged forests where tall trees are very less. The attraction planks are made. To the question of attacks from bears, he said that there are no bears left in the forest and only monkeys occasionally raid these colonies. *Apis laboriosa* is found only in the highlands above 1200 metres.

Mowalis of Sunderbans

The fourth presentation of the day was by Shaheen from BARCIK who spoke about Honey hunting in the Sunderbans. Before starting, he asked everyone to be silent for a minute in order to pay homage to the dead and injured in the recent cyclone "Sidi".

Shaheen began with speaking about Bangladesh and the Sunderbans, the largest mangrove forests in the world. He spoke about the types of trees from where honey is harvested and said that the quality of the honey is very good. There are more than 45000 honey hunters in the region who practice this activity. There are teams of 7-8 people who go for the hunt and the season lasts from March to May. Shaheen spoke about the difficulties that people face in harvesting honey as they do have the means to arrange for funds to collect honey, hence they hire boats or are hired by middle men who collect the honey and pay just little wages to the honey hunters for their collection. This has transformed a cultural activity into a subsistence commercial one. He also spoke about the permission systems granted by the forest department which is 15 days to 45 days depending upon the length of the permits. Besides, they have to pay an entrance fees to the department for this entry into the forest.

Discussions

There were many questions to Shaheen as this was a different honey hunting method, in low mangrove trees. There was a discussion about the role of the traders in getting the permissions and organizing the money for the hunt to take place. Why was it not possible to organize the Mowalis themselves to collect honey? Who were the buyers, where was the honey traded and what were the risks honeyhunters faced especially from the famed tigers of the Sunderbans. Shaheen did his best in fielding these questions, but as an organization involved in documentation and preservation of indigenous knowledge, he stressed the need to learn more about the commercial aspects of the situation in his country.

The meeting was adjourned till after lunch with Shaheen breaking into one of his inimitable Baul songs that proved to be one of the most abiding moments of the workshop, along with the Siddhi drummers from Uttar Kannada.



SESSION II

Modulation by Madhu Ramnath

This session was the beginning of experience sharing by honey hunters from all parts of India and began with experience sharing from Honey hunters in the Nilgiris.

Presentation about Honey Hunting in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve

Honey hunting techniques in the Nilgiri region was divided into three groups. The honey hunters of NBR are renowned for their valour and skill. Numerous adivasi groups hunt honey and each have certain methods peculiar to them. The Alu Kurumbas in the eastern and southern parts of the Nilgiris and in Attapady are renowned for scaling cliffs more than 500 feet in height while the Kasavas and Irulas are adept in harvesting large quantities from giant trees. The Kattunaickens are expert hunters in and around Mudumalai and Muthanga forests just as the Jenu Kurumbas are famous in Nagarhole and Mysore regions. In addition, the Cholanaickens are renowned for their legendary skills in New Amarambalam region using basic equipments to scale high trees and cliffs.

Though geographically adjacent, groups have formed specialized niches that differentiate one from the other e.g. Kurumbas and Irulas often share the same village but one is an expert on rock hunting while the latter is a master of scaling trees. This has resulted in specific 'honey territories' and locally adapted methods of collection. This demarcation has given rise to specific techniques and traditions mastered as per one's own needs.

Chandran spoke about the various tools and techniques as well as sharing minute details in sharing

play an important part in honey hunting. The actual date for hunting is usually set based on common consensus amongst honey hunter and villagers. It is now that they declare that the comb is ripe and the hunt must start.

Preparation begins in serious earnest. Days before the harvest, the honey hunter goes on fast- praying and

bathing with regularity. Any relationship with women is avoided. Observance of these austerities varies significantly in different groups.

Adivasis worship their local gods before setting out. They believe that some cliffs are god's cliffs - from where no honey can be collected. Spirits are accorded special status during this period, as there is a belief that disturbing or angering the spirits can lead to an unsuccessful hunt or even a death in the vicinity. The village pujari is consulted and it is he who usually fixes the date and time for the harvest. He conducts a puja invoking the gods and ancestors praying for their blessings and signals the start of the entire process.

The honey collecting ritual includes an invocation to the bees to leave their combs so the honey can be collected, beseeching them to return to bring forth the blossoms in the forest and fields. In several places, certain cliffs have been venerated and marked as sacred - there is no extraction of honey from them.

Sivaji spoke about the actual process of honey hunting. The honey hunter climbs down the sheer cliffs unprotected and armed with little other than a smoker and a bamboo spear. He hangs on the ladder which is secured to the base of a tree on the cliff. While it may vary in regions but upto five ropes are dropped down to the hunter. As he proceeds, people at the base light huge fires. Alongside the comb, he employs the smoker to the already disoriented bees and starts operating the poles. At this moment, his partners handling the various ropes are in full concentration ensuring the rope is secure and assist in maneuvering ropes for the honey hunter. There is a person who acts as a signalman passing messages from the hunter and group members and vice versa.

As the hunter faces the comb, the honey basket and equipments are lowered to him. The hunter uses a long stick to balance the honey basket under the comb. He uses the bamboo stick to cut the comb. He balances precariously on the rope making dexterous jabs at the comb. The disturbed bees swarm around him in droves, but he carries on unperturbed.

The hunter with some help from his group members directing the ropes guides the bamboo stick easily. He places the stick just above the brood portion and cuts it apart. Separating the brood portion from the honey part, he lets the brood fall below into the valley, for his group members to collect.

As he cuts the honeycomb, thick flows of honey could be seen dripping of the comb. Chunks of the falling comb are collected into the basket. Once the basket is full, he tugs at the rope to be safely carried to his expectant partners. This procedure continues until the hunter is contented.

Finally, Arade Kuttan spoke about the Toda way of Honey Hunting and about indigenous ways of bee having that they practise as a group. They hunt for Apis cerana honey which they mostly use for own consumption. Arade spoke about Nettli Kuttan who is a famous honey gatherer. He mentioned local names for various types of honey found. Todas leave the brood for further regeneration and cover the hives to prevent the bees from escaping. They have ancestral trees that go from generation to generation. He also mentioned that honey has increased this year. He also described the actual method of extracting honey from a dead tree, wherein they cut the part of the trunk that harbours the colony. He said that honey has several uses and is used for rituals.



Discussions

Sneh translated for the speakers. Chandran said that they hunt at heights for more than 150-350 feet in groups of 3-5 men. They collect during the day time and rarely at nights as they fear falling or slipping during night time. Traditionally, this honey was not for sale but was used in barter with other groups. It was only ten years back that they started selling to the outside world.

For smoking, they use materials from the forest only and except for plastic nowadays to provide a container for collecting honey, no other plastic or other materials is used.

They harvest upto 2-3 times in a year and use sustainable harvesting methods. The use more than 4 types of vines from the forest.

Sivaji then spoke about the methods involved in climbing a tree. He spoke about his father who is a master honey hunter. They collect honey using material from karasi maram or Hardwickia binata. The honey season starts after the 15th of January each year and lasts till the end of the month of June. They use a bamboo spear to detach the combs and phoenix grass as a smoker.

On being asked about the sharing system, the major discussion was on traditional ways of collection where sharing was based on the group formation and honey was distributed on that basis, wherein the team members shared the proceeds equally. Chandran said that this happens till today.

About the Baigas of Dindori and Mandla district in Madhya Pradesh

Naresh from NIRMAL and two Baigas spoke about their honey hunting techniques. The two Baigas were Chamanlal and Sunderlal. They spoke about various aspects of the Baiga way of life. Their culture, the association with the forest, low levels of literacy and close bonding with nature make them a special people. Though no longer associated with the term 'hunting savage' nevertheless they still follow many ancient traditions. The characteristics which made the Baiga special, namely the cult of magic, bewar or shifting cultivation, ancient customs of medicine, their formidable hunting prowess, their famed story telling abilities may have lessened in the new centuries but against all odds, the Baigas have still managed to retain all these characteristics even if to a little extent. The Baigas are spread all over the central highlands though their main concentration lies in the Mandla, Dindori and Balaghat districts of Madhya Pradesh. These districts encompass the impenetrable Maikal extension of the Satpura ranges and cover the watershed of important rivers like the famed Narmada. Though they are known by different names by many people such as the Bhumia, Bhuiya, Narotia, Binjwar, Bharotia, Narotia, Raibhaina, Kathbhaina, Kondwan and Gonwaina, essentially they share similar characteristics.

He said that traditionally Baigas considered bees as guards and they used to collect honey without the aid of smoke. Once in eight years, they celebrate a honey festival where dance and celebrations ring in the air. Infact, traditionally the Baigas used to play holi with honey. The two Baigas sang a traditional song that they sing while climbing up trees.

About the Chenchus of Andhra Pradesh

Represented by staff of Centre For People's Forestry, Hyderabad and Chenchus from Nagarjuna Srisailem region.

They live in Nagarjuna Srisailem area and live in more than 150 villages across the sanctuary spread over 3500 sq. km. There are several problems including exploitation by middle men. To counter these problems, a project was initiated on sustainable harvesting of honey. After the team leaders introduction, two Chenchus showcased various methods of honey hunting.

According to him 'I have been using new methods of honey hunting after training by the NGOs as I believe that in old methods, the smoke used to kill the bees'. We go in a group and completely cut off a honey comb and we were seeing that many of the bees were dying because of honey hunting techniques.

They now do scientific methods of harvesting and have been trained extensively in that and practice that method. Earlier they were harassed by the police and the naxals because they always misunderstand what we are going there for. Police always thought we were supporting the naxals as they are located in the interior forests. They all go in a group along with the women. Women collect the NTFPs in the region while the men go and collect honey. After police see us carrying this dress for harvesting, they don't torture and they also get an identity card signed by all the groups concerned. The person then showed the card to everybody.

After their training, they only collect from the honey portion and so can collect upto three times in a year.



Presentation by Kovel Foundation

Kamraj from East Godavari, Bhimraju and Erikaraju from Vizag along with Krishna Rao of Kovel Foundation.

The participants started with a song about honey bees and hunting. Thereafter, Mr. Rao started interacting with the honey hunters on their particular ways of honey hunting.

Kovel is the name of gum tree and thus the foundation gets its name. There are 10000 families depended upon Gum Karaya. It teaches sustainable technologies and tribals themselves run the trust. More details about Kovel could be accessed from their presentation that was provided to all the participants. More than 3000 hunters are there, while 15 districts out of 23 districts collect honey. GCC procures and markets honey at Rs. 80 per kilo with more than 90% of the produce being Apis dorsata honey.

"My Name is Erikamandra and I from Vizag and when we plan to go to the forest for honey collection, we always go from the same village. There are usually 7-10 members in the groups and we carry water also. So when go to a forest, we search for a honey tree and check if it matured. We collect materials and one person climbs in the tree and collects honey. Once we collect, we used to process without proper harvesting methods but nowadays do so with proper harvesting. I have undergone a training programme such as proper methods of collection upto marketing. This is a very good method to disseminate this idea and should be taken up by all the groups involved." The other honeyhunter explained about how to identify a matured a comb. He goes to the forest and when the leaf falls, especially of Butea monosperma, it is an indication that the honey is fully mature. If he finds a tree with 30-40 honey combs, they remove all in one night as the next morning, the bees will come back much more ferocious. "We are taking out only honey portion and leave the brood back and now I get out double the quantity as compared to older days. We have no fear from the naxals or the police as we have identity cards..."

Presentation by Orissa group – RCDC and Gram Swaraj

Deepak Pani introduced representatives from RCDC and honey hunters. The group started with a presentation about the forests of Orissa with a representative from RCDC speaking about this issue. Thereafter, a member from the Kharia community who belong to the primitive tribal group status in Simplipal spoke about his region. The Kharias in the periphery of Simplipal collect about 30 tonnes of honey each year.

He said, "We start collecting honey on the basis of some biological indicators. Just at the end of the flowering and before the fruiting of the sal tree, they realize that honey is ripe for harvesting. Before entering the forest, we collect some money from the traders as advance and we have rituals before entering the forest. They call the rock bee colonies as honey bhandar. There is a priest in every village and after he grants permission, the hunters enter the forest and start making ladders. They use a local creeper locally known as Siali (Bahunia vahili). Some people are at the top and 2 are at the ground. They put fire and smoke for self protection and to drive away bees. They put leaves in the basket to prevent seepage. A person at the top drops the basket made of siali leaf. We never use any metallic container and only use the bamboo basket.

During tree hunting, they put smoke and request the bees to go away. The bees listen and really go away. They never eat freshly collected honey and first they give it to the gods and only then do they eat honey. More than 4-5 people have died.

"We sell our product at throwaway price as we usually take an advance. We get Rs. 25 -30 per kg. So we don't collect much nowadays and collect other NTFPs. We survive mostly on tubers and other eatables from the forest." He talked about his difficulties and about the less market price and that they are approaching the forest department, yet nothing much has been done.



Discussions

This presentation invoked a lot of discussion on the dress and the tools provided through the training. Whereas some felt that it was impossible to climb trees and cliffs using the dress, some believed that it was good and adhered to the form of training provided by Government Agencies, mainly TRIFED. Arguments went back and forth regarding loss of indigenous knowledge and forced interventions vs safer and 'scientific' ways of harvest. Sam said that with this dress and training anybody could start harvesting honey and thus the Chenchu's may lose their exclusive rights to honey harvest.

When asked, the Chenchus said that they harvest all the combs and do so during the night. The status of the forest as a protected area has not resulted in stopping this activity.

Discussions

Discussions involved more questions on honey collection, and the participants listened with awe and admiration at the details told by Baneswar Dehuri. Regarding marketing, Banaja is a brand and a chain of shops that aims to open in many places and RCDC is promoting it in a big way so that marketing quality is increased in the near future.





NTFP India - Film Launch

After all the presentations there was a launch of the NTFP EP film, which focuses on NTFPs in India. This film called, ~Voices from the Forest 2~ was shot in the summer of 2007 by a joint team from India and Indonesia. Rita Banerji of Dustyfoot, New Delhi and Nannang from Telapak, jointly filmed the issues and covered the work of the partners.

Jenne introduced the film to the participants, who were happy to see themselves in the film!

Presentation by Indigenous communities from Maharashtra

“We watch the bees flying and determine which region they fly in and so hunt in that region.” They start in 5 in the morning for the hunt. They climb a tree and take the honey out. They are not using any cloth for filtration and adopt squeezing by hand, but then impurities come into the honey. With Apis cerana, out of 7 combs, 5 are harvested, while the rest are left behind. They are found in stone, ground and tree cavities. There are varying sizes of the combs in the region. They break the honey portion and leave the rest of the comb separate and protected. They are among the communities that practice a large amount of Apis cerana honey hunting.

The other presentation was given by Kolam people from Yavatmal district. Initially, they used to fire honey combs leading to deaths of the bees. Now with training, no bees are killed. Now they wear the great dress and no bees are killed or hurt. Whatever system was shown by the Chenchus, they use the same technique and also spend a day to locate the colonies. If the bees are active, then they wear the dress at a distance, otherwise, they wear it near the tree. They have three seasons and hence three festivals to celebrate the presence of honey. They don't harvest bee hives close to the villages and go far out. This is so that the people in the villages do not have protective clothing. They use smoke to drive the bees away.



Presentation by the Siddhi group - Karnataka

In what was the defining moment of the day, two honey hunters of the Siddhi group demonstrated real time hunting across two tall eucalyptus trees. Throwing a rope, climbing the first tree, throwing a rope to the other tree, gliding to the other tree and doing the hunt, doing the puja also and offering real honey. Amazing display!!!! And a fitting defining moment for Madhu Duniya. A movie was made of the episode and is available for interested people.



Presentation by the Durwa Indigenous Group- Chattisgarh

Laikan and Sadhu from Kakalgura spoke about their activities. “Whenever we see honey, two or three of us go to climb and eat it. We climb not with ropes, but by making footholds on the trunk and so we can go higher. I have seen a lot of techniques here and may try out some of these back home.” But Madhu adds that there is far less honey in the region and it is a worrying trend to which answers are not being sought.

¹ More details can be obtained from the group

Delving into Details

The third day began with presentation from Cambodia Participants, who had arrived late. Participants from the WWF office of Cambodia spoke in detail about their experiences. They work in the Mondul Kiri Protection Forest and the forest is divided into 5 zones. It was an interesting example of how WWF works in other countries. After their presentation, Jenne asked on the structure of the honey collection group. The hunter explained about their techniques and more. There were 2 communes and 3 villages in the beginning with 500 families but it is increasing now. The people have been trained by Dr. Chinh and learnt a lot from him.

Thereafter, group discussions were held amongst the participants, wherein each group was divided into the following issues. The resource people involved and issues were -



GROUP I

Resource Person – Nicola

Topic

Tropical Honey Quality and Value addition of Honey and Bees Wax

Honey markets – global

- Standards and Recognition in Global Market
- Certification Issues

GROUP II

Resource Person – Dr. Chinh

Topic

Techniques, Tools and Technologies used – processing/harvesting

GROUP III

Resource Person - Leo

Topic

Indigenous knowledge and sustainable harvesting

Issues concerning sustainable harvesting

- Importance of Resource Monitoring

GROUP IV

Resource Person - Samraj

Topic

Building a sustainable local market

The participants could join any group of their interest. The groups interacted for two hours and came up with the following outputs

GROUP I

Nicola



Two issues discussed in Nicola's group were value addition and the scenario in the global market. Pandu started with the presentations in the first group. The bees produce the best quality of honey but the moment human actions start, the quality of honey goes down. This leads to a fall in quality. Then there are risks of transporting as these are all in the forest areas, transport from one region to another is a risky venture. Yet, the honey from the tropical forest is the best available honey in the world because it is organic in nature.

In the world, wherever there are a lot of exports taking place, it is mostly *Apis mellifera* honey and residues are present in the honey due to treatment of Varroa. Honey in the international market is homogenized, maintaining just one quality standard. However, because of the diversity of tropical areas, there is the possibility of organic certification, fair trade and preservation of different flora and fauna.

Nicola said that raw honey which is not heated and not over filtered has a greater demand in Europe as consuming pollen helps in development of immunity. Hence, what we assume, that neat and good looking honey is good is not correct; the best honey is the forest honey.

Why we should add value to honey

If the market chain is shorter, then we can increase more profit.

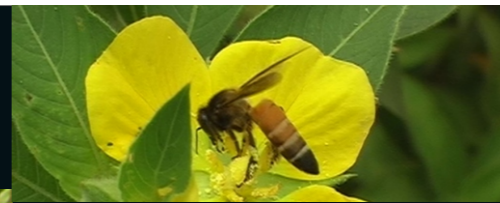
Product diversity – tree specific, forest specific, region specific and get a premium price for it.

It creates employment during off season also – bees wax, honey mead.

Not just the actual harvesters, but women and children too can add value to the products.

With diversification, we have more control over price.

Global Marketing - In the international market, the price of honey is less than local honey eg. Mexican which is the best honey gets 1.8 \$ per kg but even locally, dorsata brand gets more than 1.8 \$. Besides, for exports, we have to follow a lot of restrictions leading to waste of time. Instead of export, focus on local bees and local markets.



GROUP II

Dr. Chinh

Their topic related to methods, tools and technologies in value addition

Is it very easy to see that the combs are sealed –

HH from east Godavari - If the upper portion is swelling and lower is thin – honey is mature

HH from Kotagiri - by looking at the size and length of the comb, we can tell. After larvae is matured, an insect (wax moth) will come and eat honey, hence it is ready to be harvested.

HH from Orissa - when honey is mature, the bees will come to the lower portion of the comb

Chenchu – when the trees are in full bloom, and when the flower drops, it is an indication that the honey is ready.

Leo – when the honey comb is capped with wax, yes it is visible from below. If comb is capped, then bee movement is very less in the comb area... Further labour is not required in that particular area. In the below region, the bee curtain has 2-3 layers as compared to the upper layer, it will have 1 layer.

How to reduce water content of after harvesting

high water content is a major constraint to beekeepers and honey hunters in Asia

It is not accepted in world markets

Simple equipments that ease honey collection

- Dehumidifiers
- Two electrical fans
- Stands and Trays
- Stainless steel funnel and containers
- Refractometers
- Small room

Doing this, after 24 hours, water content reduces by 50 % and more than 150 kgs can be value added.

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GROUP III

Leo



- IP have an ancient history of harvesting honey.
- Most HH eat the brood but now with change and more food being available, we can suggest to the group that there is no need to eat the brood at all times. This is because
 - We will fetch a better price
- We will keep the bee population alive and thriving
- When the brood is in the larval stage, it is good to eat it as it is unsealed.
- When the brood is in the pupal stage and capped, do not eat it.
 - Dorsata and florea, migrate for climatic reasons.
- Most communities have their own sustainable ways of harvesting honey, there may be variations but the objectives remain the same
- In the Nilgris, there are traditional areas for harvest – domains
 - Any new intrusion is immediately known and no other group may come in .
 - An unclaimed area always has mixed groups to harvest.
- Todas practice Bee having - They maintain it by identifying the cavities, are cleaned before bees come and maintained.
- They own tools.
- They don't harvest all colonies.
- They understand the store of honey available.
- They work as a team.
- Feces of Dorsata as they splash can say which direction Dorsata has migrated and seeing pollen in dung can tell the types of honey being made.
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GROUP IV

Samraj

Mahabeleswar spoke about Building Sustainable Local Markets using interesting anecdotes for his presentation.

He asked the participants to imagine that there is an Indonesian and Indian joint venture, not only for marketing honey but also other products such as vegetables, fruits and so on. Secondly, the labeling of the product goes as Indonesian-indian product. Packing, labeling, information, quality and packing are important criteria for such a project. Such a project will need to develop good relationships with the community, besides having own shops and look after seasonal availability of the products.

Besides, an effective marketing strategy will be to advertise honey as not only a medicine but also a supplementary diet. The group will survey the customers and provide valuable information to customers about the products.

He further added that we should again revert to the barter system, such as bartering honey for rice, food for coconuts and for medicine.

The marketing initiative should grade the honey quality taking care that even low quality honey finds a market and mention it in the labeling system.

This in gist was his presentation about marketing, and as is Mahabeleswar ji's trade, he left us with a smile wondering about his ingenuity in presenting to the audience a new Indonesian-Indian initiative.

After that, Sneha took over and invited Krishna Rao to speak about the village visits. The participants were to be taken to two villages Peddabidda and Bangarampeta where Kovel Foundation is involved in its work on honey training and raising of Gum Karaya nurseries. The delegates got a glimpse of the village life of the indigenous people of the region. The afternoon was spent in speaking to the people about their honey hunting techniques and benefits accrued from training sessions.



Voices of People in Authority

Session 1

Modulation – Jenne

The day began with Jenne speaking about the past days and the diversity of discussions that took place amongst the participants. He also spoke about the programme to speak about his organization and their work. Thereafter, he called Kunal to wrap the session.

Kunal began with thanking everyone who came and made this conference an unique experience. This conference was made special because of the numerous groups of honey hunters who shared their experiences along with professionals and technical experts from across the bee world.

There have been an enormous amount of experience sharing and some heated discussions. In wrapping up, various interesting issues came up. The issue of drug residues needs to be understood, especially in context of Nicola's presentation. She had added that beekeeping with indigenous species is good while honey hunting done in a systematic manner is also an option.

Participants from NATRIPAL explained about the virtues of good organisation. Johnny spoke about the need for mutual loyalty that is essential for proper marketing. Dr. Chinh provided insight into the technical aspects of beekeeping and honey hunting. Then the second day involved further experience sharing from honey hunters from all over the country and the world.

This was followed by talks and presentations by the officials from the Government bodies, who had been invited for the last day.

Mr. Tapesh Kumar Jha who is the Conservator of Forests in Bastar spoke about their work and his region. As CF, he explained the role of his organisation. He has been working at the basics and strengthening the organisational structure of the NTFP collectors and hopes to see a far greater increase in efficiency in the near future.

He said that a forum such as this, is doing an excellent job and the FD needs to integrate with NGOs and the government. He said that bureaucrats should play the role of communicators. Our efforts is to create a good body in the form of SHGs i.e. 8000-10000 people have been mobilised through 700 plus SHGs. We ask the SHs to act as entrepreneurs on the mechanism of honey management. Therefore, the best way is to mobilise people and nurture them so that they can take up greater responsibilities in the future.

Thereafter Rajeshwari from Chattisgarh Minor Forest Produce Corporation said that their main aim is to ensure no destructive harvesting which would lead to good rates and increase of collection through sustainable means. They work with SHGs where they try to solve the problems of improper harvesting and processing. Their strategy is to identify areas of honey collection and covering those areas thereafter. People are then trained and a group is formed. A master trainer is identified who trains the group members. A honey collection centre is set up in the "haat" or local weekly market.

For marketing, the SHGs are utilised who sell the products and share the profits amongst the group members. There is a significant amount of quality control and stringent measures are undertaken to ensure that the best quality is maintained. The entire state has been divided into 6 parts and 34 shops have been set up to meet the state's local needs. The outlet is called Sanjeevni. For technical skills, they take help from groups based at Wardha and Pune.

After that and prior to lunch, Mr. Pattabiramaiah, senior manager of the Kasipatnam branch of GCC, explained his organisation's pioneer role in organizing the tribal population and initiating sales. He spoke about the process of honey collection employed by GCC and his role as the senior manager. His focus was on increased quality and better collection. GCC collects more than 350 tonnes per year and it is expected to increase in the near future.

Thereafter, a Mr Kumar from TDCC from Orissa, spoke about their strategies wherein they have established a brand called Gold Honey which is an award winning product. Some positive aspects include -



The third day consisted on group discussions and some of the major points discussed were –

- Value addition is important
- Local markets need to be promoted
- Indigenous culture needs to be preserved
- Experiment with AT but implement them in a proper manner
- Any activity done with indigenous bees and in a sustainable manner is preferred.
- Necessary to consolidate individuals into groups
- Branding is essential, "Dorsata", "Last Forest"
- Technical research must touch the honey hunters and beekeepers
- Policy need not be tunnel vision in nature that ensures that one size fits all, but be much more accommodative.
- Take efforts to identify indigenous knowledge techniques and suggest improvements in them in order to meet changes in modern times.

- Reduced volumes of collection
- Injuries are reducing with greater training
- There are more opportunities for better systems to come into place
- It is a major livelihood for forest dwellers
- Policies have not been implemented in the ground
- Potential to lessen poverty of people

Session 2 Modulation by Madhu Ramnath

The participants sat down and discussed on what should be the next steps in the light of a highly engaging conference. Several points were brought forward and taken up for discussions. The main issues and future directions which emerged are as follows:

Ecological Status and Monitoring

The group felt that this was important, given the lack of information concerning ecology of *Apis dorsata*. It was essential to know the status of the forests, flowering, pollination, etc. on which bee populations are interdependent. Participants requested more fund allocation for research studies and over all regeneration/conservation of forests. It was necessary to accept the difference between market and conservation related initiatives, with each being given their importance.

The group felt that over harvesting could be an issue in some areas and NGOs in the network should make efforts to conserve the bees/forests. Estimating areas and rough populations and make reserves in those regions as current systems are overexploitative and protection is required. Earlier during lean seasons, there was little harvest. Now with trainings and dresses, they can harvest anytime, which may prove to be harmful in the long run. Resource use must correspond to resource protection.

It is important to collect as much data as possible about the ecology of *Apis dorsata*, through the active participation of each of the groups involved with honey and honey hunting peoples. A crucial aspect is to mark areas where honey production has decreased within living memory of the inhabitants (as in central Bastar, India): such changes could be related to (unnoticed) changes in the larger forest ecology, such as fire and slash and burn cultivation, and could provide relevant clues to remedial action.

With regard to flowers and pollination, it might be useful for the various groups to take note of the dominant flowering periods of their forest as well as the dominant species: conversely, it is necessary to see what the bees forage on in the "non-flowering" period. Many of these latter species may be "unimportant" commercially and could be unintentionally destroyed. A separate fund to promote such studies and local-level research that is handled within the EP-MD would be of considerable help.

Methods, Practices and Tools

It was felt that there were differing views about the methods that should be adopted for honey collection. The use of the dress while going for honey collection again generated a lot of debate as it was impractical and killed indigenous practices/knowledge. It was decided to check with the honeyhunters if the trainings had been of any use and only after sufficient interaction, these tools etc. should be introduced.

The exchange programme should do a coding of good practices. It would be useful to put together all practices and see which one is good and which one is not. This could relate to all the stages of honey collection to marketing.

part from a few regions in the country, the practice of honey hunting has not been completely sustainable: the destructive uses of fire, the harvesting of immature honey, over-exploitation, etc., are some of the reasons for this. Inappropriate practices with regard to the processing of harvested honey (squeezing the combs, heating, etc.) have affected the quality of honey and the

prospects of marketing. The pressures of the market have also created situations where conservation has been relegated to a secondary position. In some regions where NGOs have conducted training programmes for local populations on honey hunting (as a means to enhance their livelihoods) and given them protective clothing, the dangers of over-exploitation of resources is imminent. When larger numbers of people are enabled to access a finite resource formerly collected by a few (who were also knowledgeable about its ecological links), the groups working with local people need to exercise much effort to see that matters remain within control. The challenge will be to find a method for the twin aspects of conservation and marketing to be brought together in a judicious way.

The meeting generated a few heated debates about the need to introduce new kinds of equipment to hunt honey, especially protective clothing. Whether such interventions result in a loss of indigenous knowledge and skills may not be evident immediately, but it is definitely worth bringing honey-hunters together to discuss such issues and supporting them to find a code of "best practices", that may vary according to their specific terrain and conditions. At present, the honey-hunters have not yet been able to contemplate and discern the long-term effects of these modern interventions. The coding of "best practices" could be carried a step further and include the various stages from collecting the honey to its marketing, and perhaps establish an EP-code for honey!

Indigenous knowledge

Knowledge needs to be transferred between generations and in every training, the second generation needs to be involved. It was important to see how the youngsters are taking up honey hunting and whether traditionally followed conservation measures are still kept in mind.

There is some concern of how the passing down of traditional knowledge about honey-hunting to the second generation will happen. The pull of modern society, the lack of sufficient opportunities in rural areas, shrinking forests, all contribute to the youth drifting away from this unique tradition. It is therefore necessary to consciously involve and encourage the younger people to be receptors of such knowledge, specifically by learning the practical skills that go with it. Training programmes on the various stages of honey-hunting, from subsistence to marketing, should definitely include the younger generation. Programmes should keep the ecological constraints in mind and stress that enterprise could be a flexible entity and ensure the long-term protection of the wild bee populations.

Livelihoods & Marketing

This aspect should be addressed for honey hunters covering all aspects of subsistence and commerce. Training and awareness on different aspects need to be extensively provided and honey gatherers involved in all the aspects of the value chain. This should not become a 'number game' which would be harmful for the resource base and enterprise should be made flexible to take into consideration ecological aspects that are affecting wild production.



FINALLY ...

with most participants already left and the remaining leaving in the next few hours, the conference finally came to an end.... Thank you's were offered to the organisers and to everyone for coming and the conference was declared over...

Documented by Kunal.
Edits - Sneha

PROGRAMME

DAY 1 – 26.11.07

Morning	Arrivals from Vishakapatnam to Araku Informal meeting and setting up exhibition Registration
Afternoon	Post lunch (2 pm to 5 pm) Introduction and Welcome – Keystone/Laya/NTFP Exchange Programme (20 mins) Introduction of Participants (40 mins) Honey in South and South East Asia – Jenne (20 mins) Presentation on the overall theme of Honey in the world – Dr. Nicola Bradbear (30 mins)
Book Launch	Honey Trails in the Blue Mountains
Film	On honey hunting
	Welcome Dinner

DAY 2 – 27.11.07

Presentations	9.30 am to 1 pm with a tea break – South East Asia. Each country representative should briefly talk about honey and bees in their country and more in detail about their own intervention. (Modulation: Crissy) –20 mins presentation, 10 mins discussion each Philippines – Natripal/Crissy Indonesia – Johnny & Suryanto Vietnam – Dr. Chinh Cambodia – Mr. Im Noeun (shifted to Day III) Bangladesh – MD Shahin Islam
Post Lunch	Wake up drums - (2 pm to 5 pm with Tea Break)
Presentations	10 mins each for presentation and 10 min (Modulation – Madhu) India – Orissa – Khadia Maharashtra – Mahadev Kohli Maharashtra – Kolaam Karnataka – Siddhi Tamil Nadu – Kurumba Tamil Nadu – Sholega Tamil Nadu - Toda Andhra Pradesh – (Kovel Foundation) Andhra Pradesh – Chenchu (CPF) Madhya Pradesh – Baiga (Nirman) Chattisgarh - Durwa
Video Launch	NTFP EP – India. Film made by the Exchange Programme. Introduced by

DAY 3 – 28.11.07

Presentation	From Cambodia Participants 9.30 to 10.30 am
Group Discussions	10.30 to 11.30 am Resource Person - Nicola • Tropical Honey Quality and Value addition of Honey and Bees Wax • Honey markets – global • Standards and Recognition in Global Markets • Certification Issues Resource Person – Dr. Chinh • Techniques, Tools and Technologies used – processing/harvesting – (Dr. Chinh) Resource Person - Leo • Indigenous knowledge and sustainable harvesting • Issues concerning sustainable harvesting • Importance of Resource Monitoring Resource Person - Samraj • Building a sustainable local market
Tea	11.30
Presentation	12 noon to 1 pm – Presentation of Group Discussion Highlights (15 mins each) - Modulation - Crissy
Post lunch	2 pm onwards
Field Trip	Field Trip to 3 villages in the Araku Valley in 3 groups. Interaction with honey gatherers and being in their environment.
Close the day	With cultural exchange/dance/song/flute/drums/etc.

DAY 4 – 29.11.07

Modulation	Jenne/Madhu
Morning	Before 10 am - Arrival of Government Officials. 1. Girijan Co-operative Corporation Limited, AP 2. Andhra Pradesh Forest Department Officials 3. Chattisgarh Forest Department Officials 4. Orissa Forest Department Officials 5. Chattisgarh Minor Forest Produce Co-operative
Summary	10 am – Welcome and Summary of findings and discussions for the past 3 days Presentation by Kunal This will be followed by presentations/discussions with the officials present. After the discussions a tour of the exhibition followed by lunch
Post lunch	
Open Session	Rights and Issues being faced by Communities for Honey (other NTFP) collection. Modulation (Madhu) Working session – What can we do together as a group? Resolutions - Modulation (Kunal)
Discussions	Informal Discussions
Concluding	Concluding Events - Prize and Gifts

Annexure I

S.No

Name & Address

Organization

Country

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