Lantana Empowers Communities

This is a story about how Soliga, Korava, Malayali and Palliyan tribal communities in South India are using lantana in diverse ways to improve their livelihood. Lantana is used as a substitute for native species such as bamboo, cane and others, therefore, aiding in the conservation of these species.

No-cost technology, simple skills and abundantly available resources are empowering women and their families in Male Mahadeshwara Hills and beyond.

**Today...**

**ATREE has trained over 350 craftspeople in lantana craft**

80% of these folk are women

Trained artisans derive nearly 80% of their cash income from lantana craft

Average income of an artisan ranges from Rs 2500 - 6000

Lantana is now being used to make furniture, toys and ornaments

Over 50 lantana products are being designed and marketed

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**Chronology of Lantana’s Development in India**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>The British introduce South American species, Lantana camara, into the Indian landscape.</td>
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<td>1940</td>
<td>Lantana spreads across forests, fields and fallow lands and dominates landscapes at the expense of native plants, wildlife habitat and ecosystem services.</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>Koravas and other communities start using lantana for basketry.</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Dr. Anil Joshi, founder of Himalayan Environmental Studies and Conservation Organisation, Dehradun, promotes the use of lantana to make furniture in Uttrechal.</td>
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<td>2005-09</td>
<td>ATREE introduces lantana craft to forest-dependent communities in Male Mahadeshwara Hills, Karnataka.</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>ATREE disseminates technology and craft to NGOs and forest communities in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Establishes Lantana Craft Centre (LCC) to promote lantana craft among tribal and other forest dwelling communities.</td>
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<td>Government bodies recognise craftsmen and provide market channels for lantana products.</td>
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Initially, baskets woven from lantana were coarse and had a limited market. Debarking the lantana stem was laborious and time consuming.

Interns from France at ATREE suggested boiling the stems to enable easy debarking and bending of stems, which made it possible to make a range of products.

Further creative technological interventions allowed for making lacquer-finished toys, utilities and ornaments.

ATREE'S ROLE

ATREE entered MM Hills to study governance and socio-environmental issues, and to study the role of non-timber forest products (NTPPs) in the income basket of forest-dependent communities. This study laid the ground for further research programmes, among which were mapping the distribution of alien invasive species, Lantana camara, and its impact on local biodiversity. ATREE introduced lantana craft as a way of improving livelihoods, using a readily available, non-NTPP resource. ATREE disseminated technical know-how on processing lantana and making it more pliable for making furniture and other utility products.

The communities now independently manage their business of lantana eco-products. ATREE is helping in networking efforts through which Soligas, Palliyars, Malayalis and Kurumbas share their experience on lantana product development and market linkages.

Lantana Craft Centre (LCC) is a collective of lantana craftsmen. It has been registered under Indian Societies Registration Act 1860 (Reg. no.119/2009-10). LCC provides artisans membership to Department of Handicraft and Marketing Extension, Karnataka; Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED); and access to NABARD for better marketing opportunities and financial aid.

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