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Science & Technology Resource Centre
Gondwana University, Gadchiroli

A centre of excellence for sustainable value creation conceived & funded by
Rajiv Gandhi Science & Technology Commission (RGSTC), Mumbai, Govt. of Maharashtra.

Issue No. 30
(March 2022)

Scope of Eco-tourism in Gadchiroli Region

'While in nature, if you wish to leave anything, leave only foot-prints and if you wish to take anything away, take only memories' is the concept 'Eco-Tourism' is based on. It basically a form of *Responsible Tourism* which puts emphasis on being in-sync with nature by deriving optimum pleasure out of the comfort, calmness and serenity nature has to provide without disturbing the natural setting or seeking materialistic luxuries. Eco-tourism has a special focus on education and interpretation of natural and cultural environment; an instrument for natural protection and a tool to provide sustainable economic benefits for the local people. While the responsible tourists enjoy their date with nature by upholding the sanctity of the surroundings, the idea is to generate sustainable income generating opportunities for the primary stakeholders; the forest dependent local communities in the process.

Having said that, there exists a very thin line between mass/commercial tourism and eco-tourism; if ecotourism projects are not planned and managed properly, it can inflict damage to natural environment and to the communities living in close proximity to the nature.

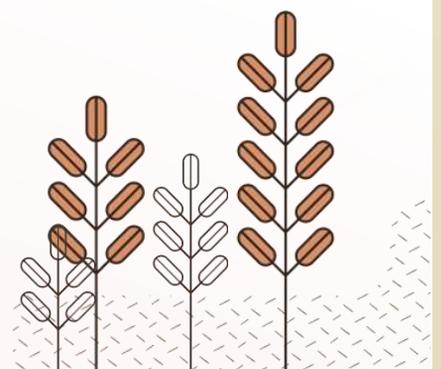
Though India is not entirely new to the concept of eco-tourism, it's not too old either. It has been observed that despite having serious potential and political will to develop the idea of eco-tourism in a natural resource and bio-diversity rich country as India, it was not until late 90s and early in to the new millennium that the concept got momentum.

States like Kerala, Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh and parts of West Bengal can be termed as pioneers of the concept of eco-tourism in India. Lately, Odisha, Uttarakhand and Maharashtra (especially the western region) and few others have taken up significant steps in this direction.

Talking about Maharashtra, like the western part, the eastern Vidarbha region, with its vast stretches of forests having rich floral and faunal diversity, forest dependent primitive tribal groups, natural water bodies, tribal culture and art forms and places of religious importance presents tremendous potential for Eco-Tourism development.

The nodal body for ecotourism development in the state, Maharashtra Eco-tourism Development Board (MEDB) was established in 2015, with a mandate to boost eco-tourism in the state and create employment opportunities for local youths, has been recently reconstituted. With a clear mandate in mind, concerned stakeholders such as department of Forest, Tourism, Tribal Development and District Administration may come forward, drawing reference from successful ET Models from across the country to formulate unique Ecotourism Development Framework for Gadchiroli region.

Author heads the Science and Technology Resource Centre (STRC)



Gadchiroli Mahotsav 2022

STRC participated in a two-day exhibition organized by District Police Department, Gadchiroli under Police Datalora Khidki event held during 1st and 2nd March 2022 at Zilla Parishad Ground.

During the exhibition STRC showcased wide range of Bamboo Products such as; Flowers, Bouquet, Indian Flag Badges and Earrings etc. Visitors from all age groups flocked in to the STRC stall as it became a point of attraction. Enthusiastic bamboo diploma students shared their experiences with curious visitors regarding working on bamboo to develop innovative products through advanced tools and processes at STRC.



Women's Day Celebration; A Platform to Excite Rural Women Towards Bamboo Craft as a sustainable livelihood option

On 8th March 2022, over 30 rural women representing 03 SHGs of Armori taluka gathered together to celebrate Women's Day in Armori town. STRC, through a local artisan took it as an opportunity to introduce its various women centric livelihood enhancement and skill development initiatives during the event. While addressing these women, it proved to be an opportune time to excite them to the idea of creating magic out of Bamboo. STRC believes that with minimal efforts including providing basic and advance hands-on training on Bamboo flowers and jewellery, these women can have a sustainable income generation option for themselves.



During the event, five such women readily agreed to go through a week-long hands-on training in Bamboo flowers and jewellery. In the subsequent week, STRC organised an informal low-cost training cum production workshop for these women to train them in bamboo flowers and earrings. This effort is surely going to attract more women to take up bamboo craft as an additional source of income.

One day Workshop on Livestock Management through Innovative Technology at Kurkheda, organised by Veterinary College, Nagpur

STRC participated in a one-day workshop organized by Veterinary College, Nagpur on 7th March 2022 at Kurkheda to create awareness about Scheduled Tribes Development Scheme sponsored by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi. Organizing experts addressed goat farmers and distributed information booklets, improved breeds, perennial fodder sticks and mineral mixture (quality feed) to make goaterly a viable livelihood option for them.

STRC actively participated in the workshop by communicating STRC's science and technology-based initiatives and also shared experiences and success stories in livelihood development in Gadchiroli.



Three Day Workshop on Value Added Fish Products Organised by MAFSU, Nagpur at Gadchiroli

Maharashtra Animal and Fishery Sciences University, Nagpur in collaboration with ICAR and Dept. of Fishery, Gadchiroli organised a three-day workshop on Training and Demonstration of Value-Added Fish Products at District Collectorate, Gadchiroli.

Having MAFSU, Nagpur engaged as a Technical Agency for STRC's Aquaculture & Livelihoods based collaborative initiatives, STRC was invited to participate in the said event. Along with demonstration of value-added fish products by students of College of Fisheries, Nagpur, there were a few important issues such as; scientific production of value-added fish products, storage & supply-chain market availability etc. discussed during the course of the workshop.

Article

Mahua: A Boon for Tribal Economy

Mahua (*Madhuca indica*), locally known as *Moh/Moha* plays an important role in the social economic life of tribals in Gadchiroli. To date, along with the major utilization of mahua for production of home-made liquor from its flowers, *Mahua* also fulfils many of their requirements such as food for survival, Mahua flowers are used as an alternative to conventional edible sugar, as medicine for treatment of various ailments, timber for construction etc. Mahua is an important Non-Timber Forest Product and due its availability across the Gadchiroli region, it is easily accessed and collected by primary gatherers. Selling dried mahua flowers in the weekly market fetches a considerable income for the communities in Gadchiroli.

Mahua is a deciduous tree that sheds its leaves and flowers during fall (February to April). Fruits mature after a couple of months of flowering period and seeds (tori) get matured around June-July. According to the secondary data generated by the forest department in recent years, about 55,467 tons of *Mahua* is available for collection in the Gadchiroli region, out of which about 60% of is being collected by the NTFP collectors. Economics of *Mahua* flower is unique. Fresh *Mahua* flowers get sold at a price range of Rs. 30/- to Rs. 35/- per kilogram, while during the off-season (Oct. to Feb.) it fetches a premium of around Rs. 70/- to Rs. 100/- per kilogram. Hence adopting Good Storage Practice (GSP) would help the gatherers gain much-needed additional income. Also, it presents a lot of scope to develop value-added products such as *Mahua laddus, cookies, jams, drinks, etc.* Scientific collection practices use of nets or sarees helps retain the quality.

Taxonomical Classification		Vernacular Names	
Kingdom	Plantae	Sanskrit	Madhuka, Gudapuspa
Division	Tracheophyta	Hindi	Mahuwa
Class	Equisetopsida	Kannada	Erappe, Hippe
Order	Ericales	Tamil	Kattu, Illuppi
Family	Sapotaceae	Oriya	Mahula
Genus	Madhuca	Gondi	Erap
Species	<i>indica</i> (syn: <i>longifolia</i>)	Marathi	Moh, Moha

