

# Tribal youth trained in honey extraction

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**COIMBATORE, MAY 31.** Tribal youth in and around Coimbatore are being trained to extract honey. This is one of the measures initiated by the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) to create job opportunities and boost their income.

The project officer of the DRDA, P. Jeyabalakrishnan, told *The Hindu* that the tribal youth initially collected honey by manually crushing the comb. This was a tedious process and it also involved risks, as there were possibilities of getting stung by the bees.

About 25 youth from Top Slip, Karamadai and Pilloor were recently trained by the Keystone, a non-governmental organisation of Kothagiri in harvesting, processing and marketing of honey.

According to Robert Leo, coordinator of the Apiculture project, the tribal youth were trained in bee keeping, especially the Apiscerna Indica, the native Indian bee variety. It has the ability to balance biodiversity by pollination. In a bid to promote bee-keeping, wooden boxes were distributed free of cost.

"Honey can be extracted at least four times a year. A sus-

tainable harvesting method is adopted to extract honey and it is ensured that the bee colony is not destroyed. They are also trained in producing value-added products like bee wax, which is used in making candles, skin lotions and soaps."

The 'Green Shop' in Coonoor exclusively markets these products made by tribals. Besides the Nilgiris, tribal people from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala were also trained. They also produced value-added items out of the non-timber forest produce.

About 650 youths have been trained in the Nilgiris and 350 from other places. "This training has benefited the women also. The honey is sold at Rs. 160 per kg. The products made of bee wax range between Rs. 45 and Rs. 180.

As part of the other welfare measures of the DRDA, an ambulance was donated to seven tribal hamlets in and around Top Slip in association with the Indian Oil Corporation.

This has helped them rush emergency cases to the city hospitals. The ambulance was operated by the tribal youth and the cost of diesel and daily allowance were borne by the DRDA, Mr. Jeyabalakrishnan said.