

Last Forest is providing livelihood to over 6,500 tribals in remote Nilgiris

[Hema Vaishnavi](#) posted on 30th August 2017

The enterprise provides livelihoods and training in sustainable harvesting and organic agriculture to indigenous communities in the area and aims to preserve, conserve and nurture the environment.



Nestled in the heart of the gorgeous mountains of Nilgiris, Kotagiri is located near Ooty and Coonoor, popular hill stations in Tamil Nadu. On the drive to Kotagiri, one can see the tea plantations scattered all over.

Kotagiri, which falls under the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna and also houses a rich reserve of natural resources. It is also home to different tribal groups like the Todas, Kotas, Irullas, Kurumbas, Paniyas, Adiyans, Edanadan Chettis, Cholanaickens, who are native to the region. A perfect example of cultural diversity.

Providing livelihoods and training in sustainable harvesting and organic agriculture to residents in this area along with the mission to preserve, conserve and nurture the environment, is Last Forest, a profit-hybrid institution incubated by the NGO, Keystone Foundation.

Fair trade practices



Mathew John, Pratim Roy, and Snehlata Nath, are the founders of Last Forest. They are also the founding directors of [Keystone Foundation](#), which has been working with indigenous communities on eco-development initiatives in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR) since 1993.

Last Forest was created to primarily serve as a marketing platform for the indigenous communities, self-help groups, social enterprises, and Fair Trade entities.

In any supply chain, it is always the producer that takes the hardest blow and yet carries the heaviest yoke. This is the issue we are attempting to

tackle every day - to increase benefits for the producer. We are also a fair trade entity, one of whose principles is to ensure fair prices are paid back to the grass root level, says Nandan, senior manager for enterprise development.

Organic produce



Last Forest has a vast range with the flagship product being wild honey from the Giant Rock Bee, collected using traditional methods by these indigenous communities. Over the years Keystone and Last Forest have worked extensively with these groups and trained them to maintain and ensure sustainable harvesting of honey.