

## **Beekeeping, A Viable Livelihood Option for Mountain Communities: A Success Story**

Apiculture, an income generating activity not only contributes to the upliftment of the rural communities but also promotes biodiversity conservation through rendering vital pollination services. Apiculture has been closely linked with the cultural and natural heritage of the rural people and the mountain ecosystems. The **Appropriate Technology India (AT India)** first initiated an effort to promote beekeeping in the western part of the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) particularly Uttarakhand, with the support of various livelihood enhancement supporting projects. AT India's efforts was focused on building the capacities of potential beekeepers with bee management, honey production, and market linkages. Building on the traditional knowledge base of Himalayan communities, AT India developed *A. cerana* honey production activities involving over 5000 households in six remotest districts of Uttarakhand viz. Rudraprayag, Chamoli, Tehri, Pauri, Dehradun and Uttarkashi, and one in Himachal Pradesh viz., Sirmaur between 1200-2400 m. The AT India has also developed a producer-based enterprise which includes procurement, processing and marketing of honey processed from mountain farmers. The households were given training, knowledge and some infrastructural support including the construction of beehives and boxes.

**Mr. Gaurav Rana** (a 23 years old young graduate) of Bhaddakoti village in the outskirts of Gopeshwar, Chamoli district is one of the most successful beekeepers in the area. He belongs to a middle-class family with an average monthly income of Rs. 3,000/- to Rs. 4,000/-. Primarily, his family is involved in agriculture, but it remains as subsistence for self-consumption. Before his involvement in beekeeping, his father worked as a labour to fulfil the needs of his family.

Gaurav was introduced to the beekeeping in 2018, when he was in 10<sup>th</sup> class. Now, he manages an apiary of more than 20 bee boxes, and is involved in other bee-based enterprises as well. During the initial times, he was part of the several training programmes on beekeeping and allied activities organized by AT India for local community. Gaurav says he had listened very carefully to the resource persons facilitating these trainings, and take notes throughout. He decided to give beekeeping a try then.

Gaurav added that he has produced more than ~100 kg of honey in the last season, and sold the same @ INR 500 per kg. He also learnt how to multiply bee colonies from the training programmes, and last year he sold 30-35 bee colonies locally at a rate of INR 1,200 per colony. At present, he has 20 colonies for his own business, and produces ~100-150 kg of honey a year, selling it at the rate of INR 500-700 per kg,



based on the time of year the honey is harvested. Beekeeping brings him a cash income of over INR 1,50,000 annually. He also manages other farmers' colonies, charging a fee of INR 300 per day as payment for his services. So far, Gaurav has provided 25 trainings on beekeeping in nearby villages as a resource person of AT India. Now a days, beekeeping has become an important source of cash income for him and his family, as he is the only earning hand in his family after his father.

Gaurav, is an example of how beekeeping can be an effective livelihood option for locals in the region, particularly for youths migrating from mountains for their bread and butter. He hopes to expand his business in the near future. He also motivates other youths and community members to come forward and also provide them basic knowledge of beekeeping and honey production.