

## **Challenges in shifting the perceptions of the community in the tropics with reference to the use of native species in plantation/restoration projects**

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Tree plantation at scale has been with us for many centuries, in the initial period the majority of plantations we made for economic reasons. Within the South Indian context this often involved the clearing of native forests for the monoculture plantations of teak. Since the last 30 years, some mindsets have changed, plantations have been carried out for more social reasons and consequently, the range of species has increased to include trees with potential for minor forest products. Today there is much being said about plantations that support the conservation of biodiversity – however, there is a lack of knowledge about the appropriate native species both with respect to awareness and subsequently with propagation and establishment protocols. Until the resources are available and the awareness has been raised, plantations will continue to fall short of the mark. A multi-faceted approach is required to deal with this scenario, which involves changing the mindset of government officials, corporate interests, higher education colleges, as well as the general public. Species profiling, development of education resources, as well as persistent and variable communication strategies are required, all of which need to be implemented alongside meaningful practical examples of appropriate plantation projects. This talk will showcase the work carried out in South India with respect to the tropical dry evergreen forest, one of India's most vulnerable ecosystems.