



LASTFOREST

ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2015-16

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# CREATING VALUE AT THE GRASS ROOTS

Feeling the need to diversify and build market access in a more sustainable manner, Keystone took a call in 2010 that only a creation of an independent entity would be able to fill that space - Last Forest came into being!! It is a profit hybrid institution that provides marketing solutions to primary producer groups and communities working on forest and agriculture produce which are natural, wild and local. Based in Kotagiri in the heart of Nilgiri mountains, we are a marketing platform for fair trade principles, sustainable harvesting, and biodiversity.

Last Forest also works with similar groups around the country, providing the last mile link to the consumer. Thus, its role as a facilitator between the producer/harvester and the consumer is crucial - on the one side, it provides assured and fair income to the producer while on the other, safe, good and clean products to the consumer.

 **Keystone**

# LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

*Last Forest continues to hold true to its values of promoting biodiversity, generating local employment, building domestic markets and promoting organic & fair trade principles.*



**Hello,**

As we come to the end of 2015-16, the positive atmosphere in the team is palpable. After its birth in 2010, when Last Forest was incubated as a hybrid profit oriented company by Keystone Foundation, the team has worked hard to achieve a level of efficiency and profit that would make it stronger and able to achieve the goals that it set itself up for. This effort was an outcome of the push that was generated by the whole team that worked together – not only did they complete their own tasks and responsibilities but many in the team stood up to support the others, whether it was in despatching goods or retailing at the front end. Credit to them. They have grown individually and as a team – it has been wonderful to see each one of them as they have learnt new things and work to develop themselves. They bring a pride of working for the hills and its environment and people. Their commitment has been unwavering.

## **Mentors**

However, this story would not be complete without inputs from a set of people who identified themselves completely with Last Forest's philosophy and provided the external impetus so crucial to setting higher standards. KavitaPandya, an alumnus of National Institute of Fashion Technology, Delhi (NIFT) took on the task of changing the style and packaging of our entire product range. It was important that the design and the packaging material communicated the ethos of Last Forest. She took on the task with aplomb, scouring printers and suppliers who would be able to do justice to her thoughts. As the products took shape, the excitement levels rose higher too as it seemed to echo many ideas that we had been discussing and deliberating many years ago – use of cork and craft paper.

We had SekharSeshan, an accomplished Chartered Accountant with over 25 years of experience, providing his inputs into the administration and finance sections. His break from work coincided with our need for extensive inputs and he stepped in with clear principles of operations. He streamlined the system of responsibilities and accountability very clearly which has enabled a set of young staff to be more proactive. His work with Monica has been phenomenal and we have seen her grow in such a short span – immense confidence in

her work. Lastly, through Sekhar, we had Soy Joseph from SAS Partners, Chennai – they thoroughly reviewed our compliance processes and have brought Last Forest upto speed with all necessary statutory requirements in perfect condition. The experience of working with these three individuals has enriched the team tremendously and we hope to continue with this level of engagement in the coming years.

## **Special Thanks**

This last year would not be complete without acknowledging the support and leadership of TasnimKhorakhiwala – she performed the role of CEO admirably and helped to sharpen many of the skills of the team. They benefited from her experience and world views. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours. One of the key aspects has been the growth of working alongside Aadhimalai, the producer company – also incubated by Keystone. It has been good to bring focus to the core products that they bring and know the impacts that Last Forest has at the market end.

## **Key Moments**

Last Forest ventured into uncharted territory during the past year – a restaurant, in collaboration with Slow Food India. Ooty saw the establishment of this unique effort bringing excellent food to the consumers – to enjoy the diversity and richness of eating, that different cultures have. A feather in our cap has been the fair trade certification that Last Forest was able to achieve – under World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO). Soon, many of the products will be able to carry the logo of guarantee. With great happiness, we are able to state that due to the strong performance of the company, we were able to share our profits with sister institutions – Keystone, Aadhimalai and Nilgiri Natural History Society. We hope that this process will continue to strengthen each other by the different but crucial functions that each perform.

I took a break for 3 months to recharge and it was a wonderful experience to be away from the daily pressures of work – travelling, reading and spending time with family. We hope that the coming year will see a matured growth of Last Forest as it tries to fulfil its social and economic commitments.

**Mathew John**  
Managing Director

# HIGHLIGHTS 2016

There has been a 12% increase in revenues over the past year but importantly, it has emerged as a strong institution over the past year. Profits have stabilized and have been shared with Aadhimalai, the prime producer partner organization.

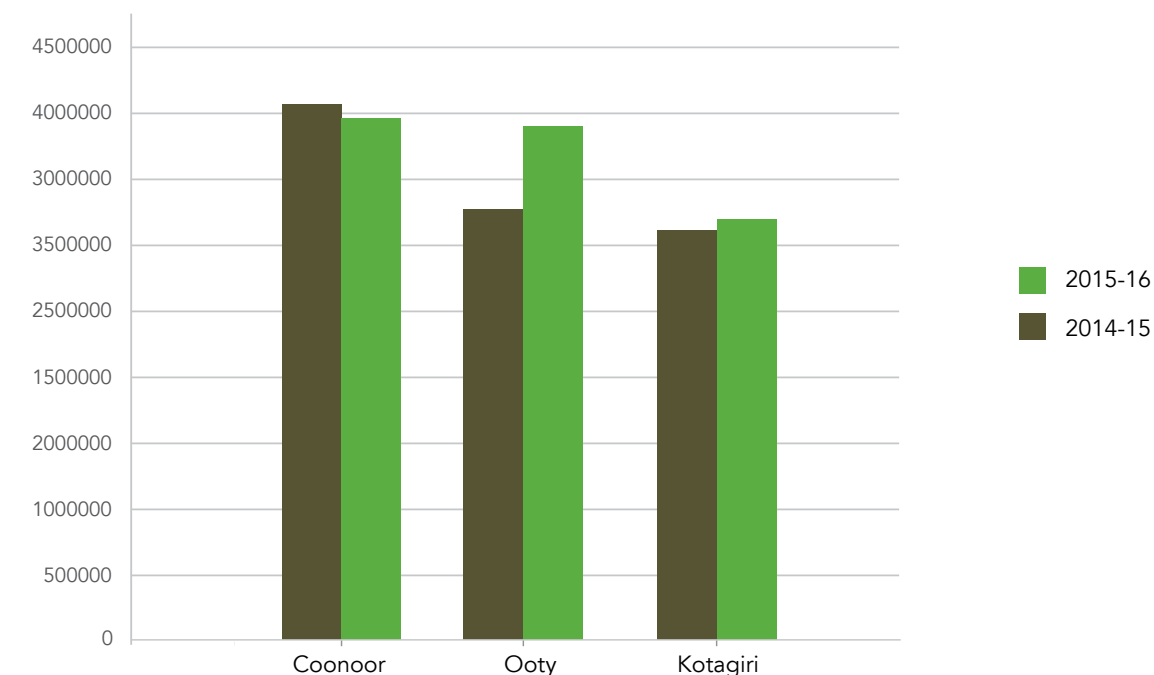
Suppliers have been identified and long term relationships being established. 54 of them present a complexity of management but a diversity that is loved by customers. They range from food products like honey, spices, to garments and crafts - toda embroidery, pottery, to name a few. New suppliers of garments have quickly established themselves.

Through its producer groups, Last Forest impacts close to 20,000 lives across the country. Directly through its stores, based in the Nilgiris, 13,000 customers have walked in and been proud partners. Another 10,000 customers have become stakeholders by purchasing through our network of 62 dealers.

The restaurant, Place to Bee, has seen over 8,000 satisfied foodies who have gone away, knowing that good, local food is available at their doorstep.

Most importantly, the team has matured and stabilized - they have grown in their responsibility and execution.

## Green Shop Revenue 2015-16



	Green Shop Coonoor	Green Shop Ooty	Green Shop Kotagiri
2014-15	4049645	3259017	3101439
2015-16	3948164	3889480	3182476

SLOW DOWN, ENJOY  
YOUR MEAL

In a quaint little corner in Ooty, the Queen of the Nilgiris, a bee museum was converted into a restaurant collaborating with Slow Food India. It specialises in a combination of Italian cuisine and exquisite local food.

Slow Food believes food is integral to life - including culture, politics, agriculture and the environment. Through our food choices we can collectively influence how food is cultivated, produced and distributed, and as a result bring about great change.



Slow Food®  
NILGIRIS



# Slow Food®

## NILGIRIS

Slow Food, a pioneering movement which focuses on the joys and pleasures of appreciating and eating good food, has been able to find resonance with all strands of society. Though begun as a resistance to the fast food movement's entrance into Italy, it soon began to gain strength and momentum. For the young generation, it was an opportunity to reconnect to the tradition and culture that was fast disappearing from the table. However, for Last Forest, it was important that the complex diversity of nature and the bounty that it provides, should be communicated to the consumer and that the consumer understands and appreciates the value of what they put on their table.

The Place to Bee, an innovative experiment with Slow Food India, is a starting point - a fusion of Italian food with local culinary delights. This was earlier the Bee Museum above the Ooty store which was interestingly converted into a restaurant. The exquisitely delicious food has brought in varied customers and subsequently increased the footfall at the Ooty Green Shop. Slowly as a combination, the store and the restaurant are generating not only increasing revenue but also building the brand value of Last Forest and spreading its values.



## Customer reviews

“ What a fantastic Place to Bee! Amazing food and awesome ambience, lovely to see the local food on the menu. Thanks to the Place to Bee I have become a fan of Slow Food! Wish they had it when I was posted here. A quaint little paradise in the Queen of Hills! Well done and way to go! ”

- **Supriya Sahu**  
Former Collector of The Nilgiris

“ I loved the food. The place is amazing, kudos to the host. He makes a lot of effort to provide a good service. Thanks for dinner!! ”

- **Chinmoy**

“ Great Pizza, nothing short of expectation. Honey lemon was something new and different to us. And the music is great. Keep it up! ”

- **Shailu**

# A FAIR NETWORK

It is important that every individual who walks into our supply chain gains value, respect, economical benefits, and dignity. At every step we consciously strive to implement this value system immaterial of the hurdles we face. A fair network is the power to build better livelihoods, ethical trade practice and better working conditions for communities in rural India.







## Aadhimalai Producer Company

Sumitra, who hails from Masakkal village, is from the Kurumba community and currently a resident of Pudukkad. She moved to Sedikkal from her home shortly after her marriage and worked in the tea estates there for five years after which she moved to Pudukkad where she currently lives with her family including her five year old son, Hariharan. She is now the head administrator at the Pudukkad production centre of the Aadhimalai Pazhangudiyinar Producer Company Ltd.

When Sumitra first moved to Pudukkad village along with her family, she began life farming a few crops for the first few months. After this she teamed up with Susheela, another member of the Kurumba community and set up the first production centre in Pudukkad in the year 2005. Susheela assisted Sumitra well into the year 2009 after which Sumitra took over all the operations, stock maintenance, accounts, reporting to the head office (Aadhimalai Pazhangudiyinar Producer Company Limited) and distribution of salary to the producers in the centre and the overall administration in the Pudukkad production centre.

Sumitra is only one among the 1609 shareholders in Aadhimalai of which 834 are men and 775 are women. This year witnessed an AGM which was a grand event hosted in Gandhi ground, Kotagiri for the producer company with share certificates being distributed to 800 members and the rest to the holders in their respective villages. The value of the shares is Rs.3000, for each member.

This year Aadhimalai has witnessed a number of changes that have allowed for improvements in all the production centres. In Sumitra's village Pudukkad the women were trained in the production of a new soap design for Last Forest. A new machine and mould were also introduced for this.

Other changes include the purchase of a new oven in Hasanur, and the production of millet cookies, buns, cakes. Other ready to eat millet products are also being manufactured now. Besides this, training was given to all the honey hunters for sustainable harvesting as an initiative to refresh methods and consciousness. Overall, this has proved to be a year of productivity and growth for Aadhimalai and people on the ground, like Sumitra continue to benefit and grow along with the venture.

## World Fair Trade Organisation Certification

Fair Trade is a manifestation of the struggle to remove poverty. It believes that trade must benefit small, marginalized communities and provide them secure livelihood and income opportunities. The recurring global economic crisis reaffirms that an equitable supply chain is the only way to reduce disparities in this world.

The World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) is a global network of organizations representing the Fair Trade supply chain. Membership in WFTO brings a guarantee to the consumer. WFTO includes producers, marketers, exporters, importers, wholesalers and retailers that demonstrate 100% commitment to Fair Trade and apply the WFTO Principles of Fair Trade to their supply chain. Practices used across the supply chain are checked against the WFTO Fair Trade Standard, a set of compliance criteria based on the 10 Fair Trade Principles and on International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions.

Last year, Last Forest went through a stringent audit conducted by the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO). We are now proud to announce that the certification was successful and all our products will now carry the WFTO logo. The global organisation now recognises our efforts to maintain standards of fair trade in our operations. This accreditation will also help us in strengthening our systems and policies for making Last Forest a robust institution that practices the ten principles related to ensuring trade and business that are fair.



**LAST FOREST  
GUARANTEED  
FAIR TRADE**

# ORGANIC IS OUR HERITAGE



Our Indian culture has an organic tradition which goes back hundreds of years. In the name of development, green revolution and other such schemes have snatched away the independence that our farmers had - seeds being such an obvious example. Being owners of their own seeds is a right that each farmer should enjoy, not being reduced to borrowing to survive. The farmers produce for others to live - we need to accord respect to these people for the continuing link to mother earth.

**IFOAM**  
**ORGANICS**  
**INTERNATIONAL**



Other meetings where Mathew took part were in Seoul, Korea for the IFOAM Asia General Assembly; at Biofach Kochi and at Sunshine Farm, Chengdu, China for the PGS Summit.

Mathew stepped down last year as a member of the International PGS Committee as well as from the PGS Organic Council Management Committee. Sam and Leo were active in conducting a number of training programmes on PGS in Puducherry, Auroville and Meghalaya in 2015-16. The training programmes in Meghalaya were conducted in co-ordination with NESFAS, the North East Slow Food & Agrobiodiversity Society. The principal learning from here was that the system of organic agriculture was recognised as the traditional method, now being eroded by modern practice and looking to be revived by the introduction of the PGS initiative.

The training sessions in Pondicherry were organised by Ekoventure, a local organization. They have been working on organic farming since the past few years and they felt the need to engage with the market could be enhanced with PGS.



**Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.**

## IFOAM - Organics International

2015-16 was the second year of Mathew's second term on the IFOAM World Board. His activities during this year, as part of the Congress Steering Committee (CSC), focussed on ensuring that preparations for the IFOAM-Organics International Organic World Congress in 2017 in New Delhi progressed smoothly. The CSC had its first

meeting in Delhi at the end of May 2015 for preliminary discussions and finalizing the venue for the event.

An exciting feature of the Congress would be participation of the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO) in some sessions. It would be able to further establish that many such movements need to network and establish platforms where issues of common interest are deliberated and discussed. A strength of purpose is derived from such efforts.

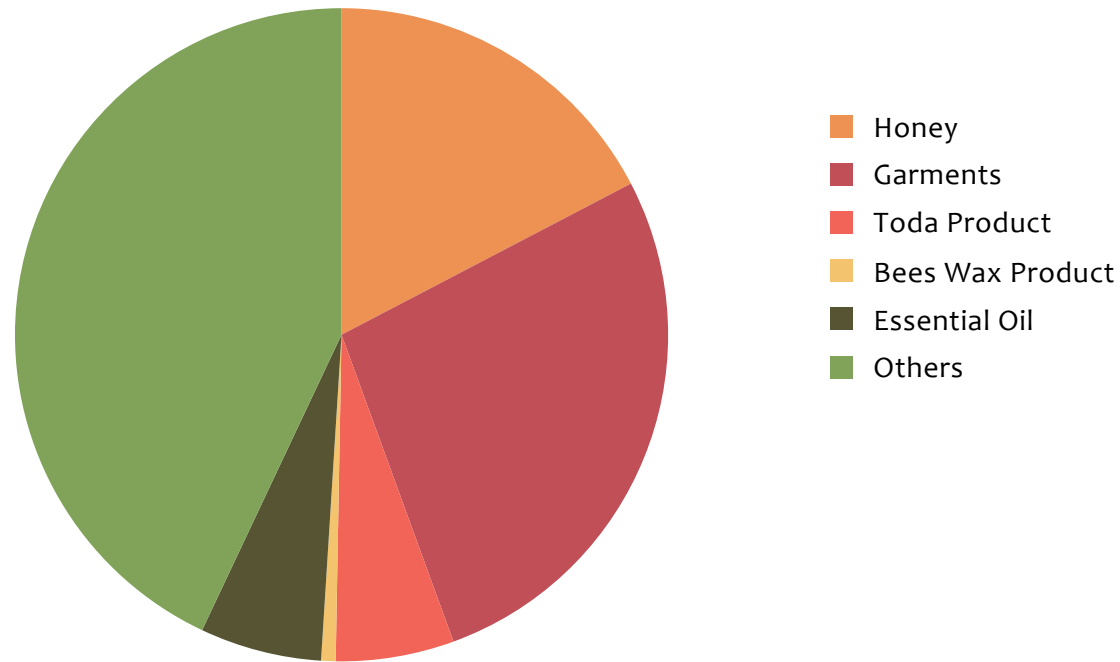


# ENRICHING LIVES



Through its producer groups, Last Forest impacts close to 20000 people spread across the country. Directly through our three stores based in the Nilgiris, 13000 customers have made purchases and close to 10000 customers have bought through our network of over 62 dealers contributing to the lives of the indigenous communities. Our partners also equally share the ethos of our company and believe in the principles of Fair Trade and ethical business practices.

## Top Products



## Top Dealers



## RETAIL

The retail stores of Last Forest have grown tremendously over the past year. Our staff is now well trained to handle customers from all geographies and also well versed with all the details of the products in store. There is a healthy competition between the three stores to outdo each other and has led to a positive increase in sales. Apart from being in charge of the Coonor store, Shalini has now taken up the extra responsibility of coordinating between all the three stores and solving issues. She has also taken up the responsibility of converting interested customers to potential dealers by linking them back to the office at Kotagiri.

As the three stores are the face of Last Forest Enterprises, it has been important for us to make sure that all our store members are well informed about the unique and distinctive characteristics of each product that is sold. Every product that is sold in our stores has a story to recount.

Although we wished to have participated in several exhibitions and fairs, we managed to take part in only a couple of them close to home - one at the Gymkhana Club in Coonor, and the other at the Adventure India resort in Aravenu.

## NON RETAIL

The number of dealers across the country have been on the rise in spite of a wrap up with a few older partners. The revenue is constantly increasing with them and the market reach expanding with every passing week. We have now 54 active dealers across India but more concentrated in South India.

The total turnover in 2015-16 is Rs. 20,117,126 of which Green Shops have generated Rs. 11,020,120 and our network dealers Rs. 7,589,802.



## Balance Sheet as of 31.3.2016

EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	2015-16	2014-15
Capital Funds	4,216,217	1,979,636
Non-Current liabilities	902,982	643,920
Current liabilities	5,612,580	6,052,461
ASSETS		
Fixed assets	1,127,329	406,165
Other non current assets	-	-
Current assets	9,604,450	8,269,852

## Profit and Loss account for the year ending 31.3.2016

	2015-16	2014-15
Revenue from operations	20,505,126	18,289,183
Other income	70,534	577,831
EXPENSES		
Purchases	12,482,096	11,944,576
Changes in inventories	-1,603,917	-826,716
Direct and indirect expenses	9,252,912	7,792,580
Profit before taxation	444,569	-43,426



## Team - Head Office



Mathew John

Mathew is the co-founder and Managing Director. Apart from that he is also a director of Keystone Foundation, a World Board member of IFOAM, an active member of Fair Trade Forum - India, and an influential member of PGS both at the national and international levels.



Tasnim

Tasnim worked with us till the end of Oct, 2015 and brought energy and life into her work. Her infectious laugh echoed around the campus. Her focus on re-shaping the organization and working with the team was noteworthy.



Frango Thomas

With his easy going nature and pleasant familiarity towards the team, Frango, as operations manager makes for a natural leader and is looked up to as such by the entire team. Although often affectionately chided by the team; all of whom are older than him, his directions are unquestioningly followed as they are recognised as being efficient and in the best interest of the team.



Monica

Monica heads the accounts single handedly. After a bachelor's degree in commerce and a stint at an auditing firm, she joined Last Forest six years ago. With a meticulous follow up on every transaction that takes place, she has a good hold on all the numbers.



Ashok Miller

Miller is the senior most member of Last Forest Enterprises. He has been here for close to two decades so his in depth knowledge of local conditions, and people make him an asset to the company. Being an expert at honey, he manages most of the honey sourcing, and primarily builds the market across the Nilgiris.



Madhusudan

Madhusudan who was first part of the team in 2014 on contract basis has been a full-time employee since March 2015. Mostly known for his quiet nature and habit of never speaking except to answer questions, Madhu who is currently Supplies in Charge is known for his efficiency and having quickly learnt the ropes around the place in what is his first job since he was fresh out of college.



Sangeeth

Sangeeth, has been on board since December as the Sales-In-Charge. This is his first job and he is proving to be a capable worker, learning the ropes, developing his soft-skills and establishing communication with our many customers and suppliers. He is successfully learning to adapt and evolve strategy from the members with prior experience.

## Honey Section



Marimuthu T

Marimuthu is recognised throughout the team for the ease and familiarity with which he interacts with them. Many on the team remark that he has come through on more occasion than one, when they have had problems either at work or otherwise, and is always willing to help in any way he can. He is currently the head of the honey section.



Mahendran

Mahendran is known to the whole team as a jovial person but a solitary worker who never expects help with the tasks he is set to although being always willing to help others if their tasks prove too much. He works in the honey section.



Mala

Mala is one of the oldest members on the team, and a favourite because of her small person and smiling countenance. She is looked up to because of her commitment to punctuality and quality in the work that she does.

## Packaging Section



Sujini

Another local citizen of the Nilgiris, she's been with Last Forest for a couple of years. A willing worker, she puts her hand to any task that she is given. She is picking up computer skills as well as making an effort to speak English fluently.



Francie

Francie, who has worked for two years in the packaging section is showing the others the ropes around the place and is always willing to teach the newer teammates the nuances of the job. The team members always remark that it is indeed fun to work with this cheerful person.



Asia Begam

Asia who has been a part of the packaging section for two years is an efficient worker known for her ability to co-operate with everyone on the team having established a friendly rapport with all.



## Retail Staff at Green Shops



Shalini

Shalini has been with Last Forest for close to five years and has risen in ranks quickly. From efficiently managing the Green Shop she moved to head the Coonor Green Shop. In a few months she was promoted to becoming the incharge of all three stores.



Kokila

Kokila has been working since close to three years as a sales executive in the Kotagiri Green Shop. She has been constantly improving and is now also training new members and assistants at the stores.



Vijaya

Vijaya is the sales executive at the Kotagiri Green Shop and she has been with us since two years.



Immaculate

Immaculate is the senior most member at the Green Shops. She is currently the head of the Ooty Green Shop.



Shanthi

Shanthi is an able senior sales executive who shuffles between Ooty and Coonor stores based on requirement.



Bharani

Bharani has joined as a sales assistant at the Ooty store close to a year ago. She primarily pitches in in the evenings and on Sundays to keep the store open.

## Place to Bee



Aritra Bose

Aritra, who today is the manager at Place to Bee, is a dreamer. Catapulted from a childhood spent in Pondicherry, joined Keystone Foundation as a communications manager to lead, learn, build, create a team to run this restaurant. Place to Bee has become his first love and he is living the dream (in a way) of running his own restaurant.



Abhijeet Manjhi

Abhijeet, who is the Head Chef at the restaurant and everyone's hero - customers and team alike - has worked his way up in the restaurant business right from the dishwashing section, step by step, a challenging step. He is the product of a vision and faith from Enrica and Geulio his mentors and former bosses at the Barefoot Resorts in the Andamans who are passionate about building local restaurants with local and environmental causes.



Purna Bahadur

Mostly known for his quiet nature, Purna - a Nepali born and brought up in Kodanad here in the Nilgiris - is the resident pizza-man at PTB. He is fast learning the ropes of managing the restaurant and helps out whenever he can spare time from keeping a constant stream of the restaurant's much famed pizzas going. He is often known as the "best pizza maker in town"!



Surendra

Yet another quiet soul, is Abhijeet's right hand, having moved up from basic kitchen chores to making entire dishes from scratch. Apart from that he is constantly on his toes helping with the entire team's workload.



Rani

Affectionately known as Rani Amma, she is like a mother to the young team, constantly concerned about each person's welfare as much as her job which is to maintain and clean the restaurant and kitchen. She is very attentive to detail and is extremely committed to her work.



Manoj

Manoj guards the restaurant premises at night and is very keen at his job. Besides this, he also helps with whatever he can - washing, cutting vegetables and cleaning in the evenings when the rest of the team is exhausted from a long day on their heels.



Kamala

Kamala is a crucial element of the team behind the scenes at PTB. She is in charge of cleaning and is extremely efficient at her job, constantly maintaining the place without interfering in the other processes.



# lastforest

## **Last Forest Enterprises Pvt Ltd**

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## **Green Shops**

### **Kotagiri**

Johnstone Square  
(Kamraj Square)  
Kotagiri - 643217  
Ph: 04266 273887

### **Ooty**

Sargan Villa, Club Road  
Opp. Hill Bunk (Petrol pump)  
Ooty - 643001  
Ph: 0423 2441340

### **Coonoor**

Jograj Buildings  
Bedford Circle  
Coonoor - 643101  
Ph: 0423 2238412