

PERSPECTIVES

invites you to a

CONVENTION

COMMUNITIES, COMMONS AND CORPORATIONS

The Struggle for Rights and Resources

on

24th and 25th February, 2010

VENUE

Room No. 22, Faculty of Arts
North Campus, University of Delhi

contact.perspectives@gmail.com
theperspectivesblog.blogspot.com

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

Wednesday, 24th February - 1:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Arundhati Roy
Activist and Writer

Usha Ramanathan
Law Researcher and Lecturer in Law, Indian Law Institute

Felix Padel
Anthropologist working in Niyamgiri, Orissa

Joya Mitra
Activist and Writer from Bengal

Thursday, 25th February - 1:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Shamim Modi and Anurag Modi
Activists, Shramik Adivasi Sangathan, Madhya Pradesh

Film by Amar Kanwar
Independent Documentary Film-maker

Dayamani Barla
Journalist and Activist from Jharkhand

Prof. Nirmal Chandra
Formerly Professor of Economics, IIM-Kolkata

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'One does not sell the Earth upon which the people walk'

– Tashunka Witko (Crazy Horse) from a book by Dee Brown on the history of the American West

The voice of a Native American against the British conquest in late 18th century resounds in the forests and hills of even our country today...Have you ever thought of buying up a part of Mt. Everest or a slice of the Atlantic Ocean or maybe the Amazon Rain Forests? Earth, mountains, forests, seas and rivers — who do they belong to?

The conquest of the Americas in the 19th century was the transformation of nature as a support system for human life to a resource for profits. The violence, greed and audacity with which the Indian state is helping the corporations to buy minerals, forests and even water is reminiscent of the same process. The people who have inhabited these lands for centuries are struggling to prevent the encroachment of miners, corporations and soldiers upon their land, forests, culture and freedom.

In a world where development is equated with unbridled economic growth, where there must be rapid industrialization even at the cost of the people and their environment, the question of the appropriation of natural resources becomes fundamental. In the race to capture all possible resources (land, forests, minerals and water) for profit maximization under the garb of 'progress', several things never get mentioned. What happens to the lives and livelihoods of the people who are dependent upon the resources being expropriated? Towards what purpose is this appropriation taking place? Who are the people expected – or forced – to give up their rights over land and other resources for this larger 'national good' and do they ever receive any of the benefits of all this?

Whether we look at the mineral rich belt of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa; forests all over the country; the construction of big dams for hydro-electric power in the hill states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and the North-East; or the mushrooming of Special Economic Zones, there is a similar pattern of dispossession and repression of the people being affected. Interestingly, all this is perpetuated in the name of 'public purpose', which is unequivocally equated with corporate profit and a consumerist way of life. From

Vedanta to POSCO in Orissa, Reliance in Raigarh, Tata and Jindal in Jharkhand and Chattisgarh, Salim in Nandigram, there is a race to grab the maximum possible. To make things even more farcical, several laws exist to prevent this very misuse of resources such as the Forest Rights Act and the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act etc.

A hill, a forest or a river may appear as a source of profit to some but for many it is an intrinsic part of their subsistence and culture. What we are seeing today is not just an assault on the rights of human beings to their life and livelihood, but also the destruction of the environment at an unprecedented rate. As to who benefits and who loses the most, the answer becomes obvious. Ask the tribals whose lands are snatched away for mining, whether they ever get to drive the cars being made, or what meaning the arms and ammunitions manufactured hold for them...

About Perspectives

Perspectives is an independent non-funded research group started in February 2007 by some teachers and students of Delhi University to create a much needed space within the University concerned individuals can come together and address issues of social, political and economic relevance, especially those ones which remain largely unaddressed by the academic curricula.

We live in an unequal and divided society. We, members of the various universities, are the privileged ones with access to higher education. Along with the opportunities that this education opens up for us, it also confers upon us the responsibility to contribute to society in a meaningful way. There are many facets of reality, which are not given adequate attention. Perspectives strives to make its work available to as wide an audience as possible.

Perspectives has published two books, 'Harvesting Despair: Agrarian Crisis in India' and 'Abandoned: Development and Displacement'.