

Globalization and the crisis of environmental governance in India

a talk by Ashish Kothari

an acclaimed environmentalist from India

Founding member of Kalpavriksh, Indian environmental NGO active on conservation and livelihood issues since 1979

Co-Chair of the IUCN Inter-commission Strategic Direction on Governance, Equity, and Livelihoods in Relation to Protected Areas (TILCEPA), 1999-2008.

Member, Steering Committee, World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), and Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy (CEESP), of IUCN – World Conservation Union Chair, Greenpeace India Board of Directors

Kalpavriksh believes that a country can develop meaningfully only when ecological sustainability and social equity are guaranteed, and a sense of respect for, and oneness with nature and fellow humans is achieved.

Economic globalization introduced in 1991, has caused a drastic decline in the quality of environmental governance in India. Already weak, environmental standards and policies have been further weakened to enable domestic and foreign companies to invest in various destructive projects. Globalization has only pushed an unsustainable model of ‘development’ to higher levels, sacrificing the environment and the livelihoods of tens of millions of people. Hope lies in people’s resistance and the growing exploration of development and governance alternatives.

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Time: 6pm

Venue: MIT Room 8-205

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A Brief Bio of Ashish Kothari and Kalpavriksh

Ashish Kothari is one of the founding members of the Indian environmental action group Kalpavriksh (www.kalpavriksh.org), started in 1979. He has a Masters in Sociology from the Delhi School of Economics, and taught environmental studies at the Indian Institute of Public Administration for several years. He has been a member of anti-big dam movements like the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save the Narmada River Movement), and continues to actively support people's struggles against destructive development projects. He has also been active in reshaping the way the government perceives environmental issues and with the issue of environmental governance in particular. He has served on many government and international committees relating to sustainable development, protected area management, environmental clearance, framing of biodiversity legislation and wildlife action plans, and others. In 2000-2004 he was the Technical Coordinator of India's ambitious National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.

For almost two decades, Ashish and Kalpavriksh have been among those Indian environmentalists that advocate a more socially and culturally sensitive process of wildlife conservation. He has been deeply involved in documenting and supporting community based conservation initiatives, and in coordinating a global network under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), on indigenous peoples and protected areas (www.tilcepa.org). Ashish started as an animal rights activist and remains passionate about this issue, and is also a passionate bird watcher.

Kalpavriksh is an environmental group that was started in Delhi in 1979. It was a unique organization at its inception since it was founded almost entirely by and run by schoolchildren from the 8th grade to the 12th grade! It ran Nature Clubs in several schools, organized trips by its members to learn from and support environmental movements in India, notably the Chipko movement in the Indian Himalayas, carried out an annual bird count in Delhi, sent teams to study human-sanctuary conflicts, and carried out a very influential early study of the environmental impact of the proposed Narmada dam project. Among its major recent initiatives was its coordination of India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan process, during 2000-2004.