



## Colloquium Series: Building a Sustainable India

Speaker:

Aseem Srivastava, Environmental Economist and Writer

Date / Time:

October 25, 2012 - 3:45pm - 5:30pm

Venue:

10th Floor, Auditorium, Pixel A, APU

Abstract:

In *Churning the Earth: The Making of Global India*, my co-author Ashish Kothari and I examine the socio-economic and ecological impact of globalization in India after its first two decades. We look at the way the reforms were introduced, what they consisted of, and what results they have brought about. We offer many reasons why the expected development transition (as it has happened in Japan, East Asia, and the Western world) is most unlikely to happen in India. We argue that the mind-set of globalized developmentality that our elites have now come to believe in can only worsen, in the long-run, prevailing conditions of poverty, unemployment, inequalities and environmental devastation. The final result may be a uniquely Indian dystopia.

The talk will summarize some of the main arguments and evidence presented in the book. However, its chief focus will be on something else. It will address the following questions: Is our profligate way of life inevitably paving the way to a tragic ecocide which will, in the end, threaten the agro-ecological foundations of the civilization that the people of the Sub-Continent have known for millennia? Or do Indian elites have the courage and vision to suspend an unsustainable business-as-usual and build a new India, respectful of nature and the urgent needs of hundreds of millions? What evidence – in the shape of actual experiments – can be mustered to find hope for this new, alternative, India? What sort of politics will need to emerge to defend, strengthen and mainstream these experiments which are today mere islands in a sea of unsustainability? How might they be defended by new policies? The second part of *Churning the Earth* describes a large number of experiments going on across the country which creatively practice the values of sustainability and equity. If these experiments can be defended by appropriate policies, backed by a new, environmentally sensitive politics, a “radical ecological democracy” can be envisioned which would bolster hopes to face the increasingly formidable challenges with a high chance of success. India is uniquely placed by the facts of history and destiny to serve as the world’s ecological pioneer – if only it would surrender its

present “corporate nationalism” and stop misunderstanding its role in the world as an aspiring superpower.

A Note on the Speaker:

Aseem Shrivastava is a Delhi-based writer. He wrote his doctoral thesis in Environmental Economics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He has taught economics for many years at college and university level in India and the US. Most recently, he taught philosophy at Nordic College, Norway. He has written extensively on issues associated with globalization. He is the author (with Ashish Kothari) of *Churning the Earth: The Making of Global India* (Penguin India, 2012).