

**Towards Justice in Natural Resources Management  
Understanding Social-ecological Marginalization  
in the context of Chilika Lagoon, India**

with

**Prateep Kumar Nayak**

Doctoral candidate, Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba and  
Trudeau Scholar

**Friday, January 30, 2009 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm**  
Genesis Boardroom, INCO Innovation Centre, Room 3001



As a development worker **Prateep Nayak** spent over a decade working on issues concerning community-based land and water resources management in India and its enabling policy frameworks. His publications include a number of academic and policy papers. Prateep's doctoral thesis examines social-ecological marginalization of the fishing communities of Chilika Lagoon on the east coast of India where the loss of rights and livelihoods for the fisherfolk, along with the breakdown of traditional systems of management has disconnected them from their lagoon environment. His current research area concerns understanding the

society-nature connections using conceptual elements from social-ecological systems, complex commons, environmental justice and political ecology. Prateep is also a recipient of the Trudeau Scholarship.

**Refreshments will be served.**

**Please confirm attendance with Janet Oliver ([joliver@mun.ca](mailto:joliver@mun.ca)) or 737-7551**

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Organized by the Community University Research for Recovery Alliance (CURRA), Memorial University, St. John's, NL A1C 5S7 [www.curra.ca](http://www.curra.ca)

**Abstract:** The presentation builds on the outcomes of research that looked at the case of Chilika Lagoon (a Ramsar wetland site of international conservation significance) on the eastern coast of India, the largest brackish water lagoon in Asia. Chilika Lagoon has a history of communal management for more than one hundred years through traditional fishers' institutions. However, during the second half of the 19th Century, it suffered tremendous ecological degradation thereby impacting the social, cultural, economic and environmental life of about half a million fisherfolk. Outside interests came in direct conflict with the local ways of managing the lagoon. Consequently, traditional institutional arrangements of fisherfolk started to disintegrate. This resulted in a loss of rights and livelihoods of local fishing communities, and initiated a process of their disconnection from the Lagoon.

With this as a backdrop, the presentation explores the notion that disconnection in the relationship between people and their natural surroundings is related to the marginalization of local people and results in the loss of rights, equity and justice. With a focus on the concept of marginalization as analyzed and understood by the local fishers, but often challenged by those in power, I will argue that local perceptions of marginalization are inherently linked to the natural environment in resource-based communities. I also argue that disconnection in the relationship between people and their natural environment is related to their marginalization and this is probably a two-way, feedback process. The presentation seeks to determine the implications of marginalization for social and environmental justice, resource access, entitlements and commons rights. I conclude by arguing that a regime of community-based resource management could act as a means of reconnecting people to their natural surroundings, a critical part of ensuring rights and justice.