

US partnership: a Field Learning Center in the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve in the Western Ghats of South India.

HOST: Pratim Roy

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This is to invite you to a topical lunch, sponsored by the Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future, to discover a new India - US partnership: **a Field Learning Center** in the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve in the Western Ghats of South India. The approach would be multidisciplinary and the mantra is *thinking differently*--within and out of the box--using arts, sciences, research and native wisdom and folklore.

Keystone Foundation is a small NGO with big ideas. We have been working with indigenous hill communities since 1995, and have grown from a team of 3 to 50 persons that includes Adivasis (members of aboriginal populations in India). Keystone is field-based and has been implementing projects in 89 villages in the Biosphere Reserve on:

- * Beekeeping & Honey Gathering
- * Traditional Agriculture & Food Security
- * Shelter & Basic Needs
- * Biodiversity & Conservation
- * Water & Wetlands
- * Enterprise Development
- * Environmental Governance
- * Training & Information
- * Culture & People

I am Pratim Roy, one of the Founding Directors and Trustees of the Foundation. The idea of the Field Learning Center was born during my Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Residency in 2009, during which I developed a five-year strategic plan for Keystone titled "Blue Peace" (<http://keystone-foundation.org/downloads/408>). I have a Masters degree in Ecology and an advanced certificate degree in Environmental Diplomacy from the United Nations Environmental Program and the University of Geneva.

Since 1989, I have transformed ideas into initiatives. Today, through the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship, I am exploring collaboration between Cornell University and the Keystone Foundation from which new initiatives may emerge.

The idea is to develop a living field course within the ecology, social and cultural context of the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve. This program would encompass mutual exchange between and within researchers, practitioners, students and indigenous people. The diversity of fields and modules of study would open different aptitudes, talents and perspectives and create a new breed of "perceptive leaders."

I hope you will join me for a stimulating conversation and exchange of ideas.