



Lecture Series

125th Foundation Year Celebrations

Smt. Sreya Guha, IAS

Director General, National Archives of India,

Cordially invites you to the ninth Lecture in the Special Lecture series

by

Prof. Minoti Chakravarty-Kaul

Professor of Economics, (Retd.), University of Delhi, New Delhi

On

**The National Archives of India and the making of New Delhi: An Untold Saga of the
Shamlat-deh or Village Commons, 1911-2015**

Date: 23 November 2015 at 3.00 PM

Venue: Conference Room, Ground Floor, National Archives of India (Annexe)

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Abstract

The National Archives of India and the making of New Delhi: An Untold Saga of the *Shamilat-deh* or Village Commons, 1911-2015

The historic twinning of the National Archives with the making of New Delhi has come full force to me from that day in August 1978 when newspapers reported the arrest of peasants from Kanjhawala defying prohibitory orders on Parliament Street, as they protested against the acquisition of 123 acres from the village common lands in Kanjhawala, by Delhi Administration to be distributed among the landless poor in Kanjhawala. Fortunately, in the process I discovered what land acquisition was like 100 years ago but also revealed the old roots of the Kanjhawala unrest; and with it was exposed the untold saga of village communities of northern India and pastoral people which lay buried in the historic decision to shift the capital of British India from Calcutta to New Delhi. The result of my quest is a tribute to the memory of Vincent and Elinor Ostrom, the Nobel Prize winner of 2009 for their research on the commons and support to institutional analysis which lies at the heart of my endeavour. I must hastily add here that I also discovered what not to expect to find in this repository of national memory – yet in the same sentence I appeal that they be addressed in an archive – for example the absence of village records which need special linguistic skill and the colonial village cartography, the likes of which I could not have imagined existed. The absence of this infra-structure reveals why the agrarian story of New Delhi still remains largely untold. The future is thus both daunting and full of hope.

Speaker



Prof. Minoti Chakravarty-Kaul is an economist with specialization in economic-history. She taught these subjects in Lady Shri Ram College, University of Delhi from 1961-2002. Her research in common property began with an upheaval over the distribution of common lands from the villages of a cluster in North West Delhi in 1977. This inquiry led to a PhD degree from the Delhi School of Economics under Prof Dharma Kumar. Her manuscript was published by the Oxford University Press in 1996: *Common Lands and Customary Law, Institutional Change in the Past two centuries*.

She is the Tropical Forestry representative for the IUFRO and a member of the IASCP. Her research in institutional analysis and natural resources received a fillip at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis with her association with Profs. Vincent and Elinor Ostrom in Bloomington in 1990-92 with a fellowship from the Ford Foundation. Recipient of major academic recognition through The Fulbright Fellowship (1966), The Ford Foundation Fellowship (1990-92), The Ciriacy Wantrup Fellowship(1994-96)University of California, Berkeley and The Shastri Indo-Canadian Fellowship, (1998).Her current work relates to publication of the New Delhi Book and an annotation of the correspondence of Sir Henry Sumner Maine and common property rights debate of the nineteenth century. She is the founder of RAHAT, a resource centre for the Gaddi shepherds in H.P. and in the Shahpur Kandi common forests at the foothills of the Siwaliks.