

## Who's Afraid of Land Commodification?

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### Abstract

Land has been or is being commodified everywhere in India. By and large, prices in this diverse range of land markets are the highest in the world. Partly as a result of this, a century-old rapacious land acquisition system collapsed in the last ten years. A new acquisition law was created by the Congress in 2013 and immediately sought to be amended by the BJP in 2014. These differing visions on acquisition are often simplified into opposing camps: people-friendly vs. business-friendly; or “populist” vs. “neoliberal”. Much of the general discourse on land remains similarly polarized. I suggest a different analytical approach. Instead of being judgmental about land commodification, I argue for the need to understand it. Instead of assuming that there is a pan-Indian land condition that can be managed with a single national law, I argue for a decentralized and localized approach. The questions I ask are: How diverse are the regional and local land markets? How does the state manage land use change in these different markets? Who wins and who loses?

### Speaker Profile:



**Sanjoy Chakravorty** is Professor of Geography and Urban Studies at Temple University and Visiting Fellow at the Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania. His current research focuses on India, cities, inequality, and epistemology. He also writes fiction. His recent books include *The Other One Percent: Indians in America* (2016, a collaborative work on the Indian diaspora), *The Promoter* (2015, a novel), and *The Price of Land: Acquisition, Conflict, Consequence* (2013). His forthcoming books include *The Truths of India – Information and Society from Manu to Modi*; and two edited collections: *Colossus – The Anatomy of Delhi*

and *The Land Debate in India – Politics and Markets*.

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