

# NATURE'S TRAIL

## PARADISE LOST



John Seed

**FOUNDER OF THE RAINFOREST INFORMATION CENTRE (RIC) IN AUSTRALIA, JOHN SEED HAS BEEN WORKING TOWARDS CONSERVATION OF RAINFORESTS FOR THE LAST 30 YEARS. HE TELLS TIRNA RAY THAT THE WORLD IS A SPIDER'S WEB AND HUMANS ARE JUST ONE STRAND IN THAT WEB OF LIFE**

In 1979, when John Seed was living near the sub-tropical rainforests of New South Wales on the east coast of Australia, he became involved in a campaign to stop the destruction of these forests by the logging industry. This was the first direct action in defence of the rainforests anywhere in the world.

In the early '80s, when rainforests were yet to be on the world agenda, Seed started the Rainforest Information Centre ([www.rainforestinfo.org.au](http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au)) and began to initiate rainforest action groups around the world. Recipient of the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 1995, Seed has written and given extensive talks on deep ecology. He is an accomplished bard, songwriter and film-maker and has produced five albums of environmental songs and numerous films.

With over 30 years of activism behind him, Seed feels that there is an urgent need to conserve rainforests because they are one of the vital organs of the living Earth. "They maintain the atmosphere and are essential for the cycling of water around the planet. They also contain the bulk of the genetic material out of which all future foods and medicines and industrial products will be created," he says.

As part of the RIC agenda, Seed and his team work on various campaigns to protect rainforests from the Western Ghats to the Amazon headwaters in Ecuador. Last year, he was working with Indian colleagues to try and prevent the India-based Neutrino Observatory from being built in an elephant corridor in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve in Tamil Nadu. This year, Seed is part of the international campaign, which is supporting the Dongria Kondh, a tribal group in Orissa whose sacred mountain, Niyamgiri, is under assault from expanding bauxite mines.

Seed and his team also raise awareness about deep ecology, which is a term that was coined by the late Arne Naess, emeritus professor of philosophy from Oslo University in Norway. It is a philosophy, which shows that the root-cause of the environmental crisis is the illusion of separation of human beings from the rest of nature, caused by human-centeredness.

He elaborates that the wisdom of indigenous peoples and the modern science of ecology teaches us that the world is not a pyramid with humans on the top. In fact, the world is more like a spider's web. "We humans are just one strand in the web of life and if we destroy the other strands, we destroy ourselves," he says.

As a conservationist, Seed's greatest hurdle has been the terrible plague of consumerism. He points out how the advertising industry, which spends over \$100 a year for every one of the 6,500,000,000 human beings on the Earth, is all out to convince us that if only we could have more, a bigger plasma screen, a second car and so on and so forth, then this would fill the

gaping hole in our soul and make us feel abundant and complete.

As a conservationist, his message to youngsters in this field is “spend time in wild nature, by rivers and mountains, forests and oceans. Try and find a strong spiritual connection to nature. Feel the beauty, power and the glory of this world. We need the support and nourishment and affirmation of this to be able to tolerate the anguish of watching beautiful places disappearing one after another,” he concludes.

