

# 'Tribes' and History: Categories, Communities and Practices (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century)

Course Instructor: Sangeeta Dasgupta

This course, divided into six rubrics, offers a broad overview of themes and debates central to the study of 'tribes' in India. It introduces students to the emergence of the category of 'tribe' in official and missionary writings in colonial India; the location of the term within and across the disciplines of anthropology, sociology and history; a study of tribal economies and practices; the nature of tribal/ adivasi movements in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century; and the ways in which tribal groups in recent decades have related to the contending categories of 'Scheduled Tribe', 'Adivasi' and 'Indigenous Peoples'. Drawing on diverse sources in the form of ethnographic, missionary and anthropological texts, visual material, local pamphlets and petitions and oral narratives, it discusses the methodological challenges of writing histories of marginalized groups and fractured pasts. As a background to the course, I discuss the emergence and development of anthropology as a discipline in the West, and also introduce students to literature pertaining to ethnicity in different parts of the world.

## **1. Introduction: situating tribal studies**

This theme will discuss the emergence of tribal/ adivasi studies as a field in Indian historiography, and identify the debates central to it.

## **2. From Evolutionary to Critical Anthropology**

This theme will map the way the idea of the 'tribe' has been framed within ethnographic and anthropological studies in the west from the late nineteenth century. It will also introduce students to the discipline of anthropology and track some of the important shifts within the discipline.

## **3. Colonial Conceptions**

This theme will look at the way colonial officials and missionaries viewed and related to the 'tribe'. It will trace a historical process through which a variety of pre-colonial categories – *aranyakas*, *mlecchas*, *jangli jati* - came to be replaced by the word 'tribe'. In this context, I will discuss photographs that accompanied ethnographic and missionary texts, and objects that were sent to the museums in Britain. The sub-themes will be as follows:

- Official Writings
- Missionary understandings

## **4. Within and Across Boundaries of Disciplines**

This theme will discuss how tribes'/ adivasis and tribal societies have been studied within the field of anthropology, sociology and history in the Indian context. The sub-themes will be as follows:

- Anthropology, sociology and the ‘tribe’ in India
- Early historical studies and tribal communities
- Recovering the voice of the marginalized in *Subaltern Studies*
- Tribes/Adivasis and environmental history

## 5. Livelihoods, Economies and Practices

From a discussion of categories, ideas and representations, explored in earlier lectures, this theme will move to a study of the working of tribal economies, and their relationship to the wider world of commerce and industry. The sub-themes will be as follows:

- Forest societies
- Pastoralists
- Crafts production and tribal economies
- Adivasis/tribals as ‘Peasants’
- Mobility and Migrations (focus on plantations, steel/coal industries and other spaces)

## 6. Power, Politics and Protests

The theme, which cuts across the colonial and contemporary, will discuss the way adivasi/tribal movements spread in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century, and continue even today. It will analyze the visions and ideals of the leaders and followers, their organizations and practices. It will also look at the way nationalists sought to relate to tribal/adivasi movements. Finally, it will discuss the recent debates around the contending categories of ‘Adivasi’, ‘Scheduled Tribe’, and ‘Indigenous Peoples’. The sub-themes will be:

- Colonialism and tribal/adivasi protest (focus on Santhal Hul, Jitu Santhal’s movement, Birsa’s Ulgulan, the Devi movement and the Tana Bhagat movement)
- Tribe, nation and nationalism
- Politics of self-representation: Adivasi and Indigenous Peoples

## **Reading List:**

(Some of the readings are useful for more than one section. This reading list will be updated periodically.)

### **Topic 2**

Asad, T. ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, London, 1973: Introduction and selected essays

Clifford, J. and G. Marcus eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley, 1986: Introduction and selected essays.

Fabian, J., *Time and the Other: How Anthropology makes its Object*, New York, 1983.

Khazanov, A., *Nomads and the Outside World*, Cambridge, 1984.

Kuklick, H., *The Savage Within: The Social History of British Anthropology, 1885-1945*, Cambridge, 1999.

Kuper, A., *The Invention of Primitive Society*, London, 1988.

Li, T. M., 'Articulating Indigenous Identity in Indonesia: Resource Politics and the Tribal Slot', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 42:1, 2000.

Owusu, M. 'Ethnography of Africa: The Usefulness of the Useless', *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 80, June, 1978.

Pagden, A., *The Fall of Natural Man*, Cambridge, 1982.

Pels, P., 'The Rise and Fall of the Indian Aborigines: Orientalism, Anglicism, and the Emergence of an Ethnology of India, 1833-1869' in Peter Pels and Oscar Salemink, eds, *Colonial subjects: Essays on the practical history of anthropology*, Ann Arbor, 1999.

Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins and Escobar, Arturo eds, *World Anthropologies: Disciplinary Transformations within systems of Power*, Oxford and New York, 2006

Stocking, G.W., *Victorian Anthropology*, New York and London, 1987.

Stocking, G.W., 'What's in a Name? The Origins of the Royal Anthropological Institute (1837-71)', *Man*, New Series, Vol. 6:3, 1971.

Trautmann, T.R., *Aryans and British India*, Berkeley, 1997.

Vail, L. ed., *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, Berkeley, 1989: Introduction and selected articles.

### **Topic 3**

Bates, C, 'Race, Caste and Tribe in Central India: The Early Origins of Indian Anthropometry' in Peter Robb ed., *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, Delhi, 1998.

Bates, C., 'Lost Innocents and the Loss of Innocence: Interpreting Adivasi Movements in South Asia', in R. Barnes, A. Gray and B. Kingsbury eds., *Indigenous Peoples of Asia*, Ann Arbor, 1999.

Chandra, U., 'Liberalism and its Other: The Politics of Primitivism in Colonial and Postcolonial Indian Law', *Law & Society Review*, Vol. 47:1, 2013.

Chattopadhyaya, B.D., 'State's Perceptions of the 'Forest' and the 'Forest' as State in Early India', in B.B. Chaudhury and Arun Bandopadhyay eds., *Tribes, Forest and Social Formation in Indian History*, New Delhi, 2004.

Comaroff, J. and J., *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, Colorado and Oxford, 1992: Selected essays.

Damodaran, V., 'Colonial Constructions of the 'Tribe' in India: The Case of Chotanagpur', *The Indian Historical Review*, XXXIII, Vol.1:44, 2006.

Dasgupta, S., "'Heathen aboriginals'", "'Christian tribes'" and "'Animistic Races'": Missionary Narratives on the Oraons of Chhotanagpur in Colonial India', *Modern Asian Studies*, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 50: 2, March 2016.

Devalle, S.B.C., *Discourses of Ethnicity: Culture and Protest in Jharkhand*, New Delhi, 1992.

Guha, S., *Environment and Ethnicity, 1200-1901*, Cambridge, 1999.

Guha, S., 'States, Tribes, Castes A Historical Re-exploration in Comparative Perspective', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. L:46 and 47, November 21, 2015.

Hembrom, R., The Santals and the Bodding Paradox, *Norsk Tidsskrift For Misjonsvitenskap*, Vol. 3, 2017.

Middleton, T., *The Demands of Recognition: State Anthropology and Ethnopolitics in Darjeeling*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2016.

Middleton, T, 'Across the Interface of State Ethnography: Rethinking Ethnology and its Subjects in Multicultural India', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 38:2, 2011.

Padel, F., *The Sacrifice of Human Being: British Rule and the Konds of Orissa*, Delhi, 2001.

Samarendra, P., 'Anthropological Knowledge and Statistical Frame: Caste in the Census in Colonial India', in Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar eds, *Caste in Modern India, A Reader*, Vol. 1, Ranikhet, 2014.

Sundar, N., *Subalterns and Sovereigns: An Anthropological History of Bastar, 1854-1996*, Delhi, 1997.

Sivaramakrishnan, K., *Modern Forests*, Stanford, 1999.

Skaria, A., 'Shades of wildness: Tribe, caste and gender in Western India', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 56:3, 1997.

Thapar, R., 'The Image of the Barbarian in Early India', *Comparative Studies in History and Society*, Vol. 13: 4, October 1971.

#### **Topic 4**

Agrawal, A. and K. Sivaramakrishnan eds., *Social Nature: Resources, Representations, and Rule in India*, New Delhi, 2001: Introduction and selected articles.

Arnold, D and R Guha eds., *Nature, Culture, Imperialism: Essays on the Environmental History of South Asia*, Oxford, 1995: Introduction and selected articles.

Beteille, A., *Six essays in Comparative Sociology*, New Delhi, 1974: Selected essays.

Dasgupta, S., 'The Journey of an Anthropologist in Chhotanagpur', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 41: 2, 2003.

Grove, Damodaran and Sangawan, *Nature and the Orient: The environmental history of South and South East Asia*, Delhi, 2000: Introduction and selected essays.

Guha, R., *Savaging the Civilized*, New Delhi, 1999.

Guha, R 'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India' in Guha, Ranajit ed., *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, New Delhi, 1984.

.....*Elements of Peasant Insurgency*, Delhi, 1984.

Guha, S., *Environment and Ethnicity, 1200-1901*, Cambridge, 1999.

Hardiman, D, *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India*, Delhi, 1987.

Ghurye, G.S., *The Aborigines – 'So-Called' and their Future*, Poona, 1943.

Prasad, A, *Against Ecological Romanticism: Verrier Elwin and the Making of an Anti-Modern Tribal Identity*, Delhi, 2003.

Sivaramakrishnan, K., 'Imagining the Past in Present Politics: Colonialism and Forestry in India', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 37:1, 1995.

Rangarajan, M. and K. Sivaramakrishnan eds., *India's Environmental History: Colonialism, Modernity and the Nation*, Vols. 1 and 2, Ranikhet, 2012.

Singh, K.S., *Dust, Storm and Hanging Mist: A Study of Birsa Munda and his Movement in Chota Nagpur, 1874-1911*, Calcutta, 1966.

Tewari, Saagar, '*Debating Tribe and Nation: Hutton, Thakkar, Ambedkar and Elwin (1920s-1940s)*', New Series, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 2017.

Uberoi, Sundar and Deshpande eds., *Anthropology in the East: Founders of Indian Sociology and Anthropology*, New Delhi, 2007: Introduction and Selected articles.

## **Topic 5**

Arnold, David, and Ramchandra Guha eds., *Nature, Culture, Imperialism: Essays on the Environmental History of South Asia*, Oxford, 1995: Selected articles.

Beteille, A, *Six essays in Comparative Sociology*, New York, 1976: Selected essays.

Banerjee, Prathama, *The Politics of Time*, New Delhi, 2006

Bates, C. and Marina Carter, 'Tribal Migration in India and Beyond', in Gyan Prakash ed., *The World of the Rural Labourer in Colonial India*, Delhi, 1992.

Dasgupta, Sangeeta, 'Reordering a World: The Tana Bhagat Movement 1914-1919', *Studies in History*, NS, 1999.

Ghosh, K. 'A Market for Aboriginality: Primitivism and Race Classification in the Indentured Market of Colonial India' in G. Bhadra, G. Prakash and S. Tharu eds., *Subaltern Studies X*, New Delhi, 1999.

Mohapatra, P., 'Coolies and Colliers: A Study of the Agrarian Context of Labour Migration from Chotanagpur, 1880-1920', *Studies in History*, Vol. 1:2, 1985.

Padel, F. and Das, S., *Out of this earth: East India Adivasis and the Aluminium Cartel*, New Delhi, 2010.

Padel, F., *Sacrificing People: Invasions of a Tribal Landscape*, New Delhi, 2009.

Sivaramakrishnan, K., 'Imagining the Past in Present Politics: Colonialism and Forestry in India', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 37:1, 1995.

## **Topic 6**

Banerjee, Prathama, 'Writing the Adivasi: Some Historiographical Notes', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 53:1, January-March 2016, pp. 131-53.

Banerjee, P., *The Politics of Time*, New Delhi, 2006.

Bates C. and A. Shah, *Savage Attack: Tribal Insurgency in India*, New Delhi, 2014.

Beteille, A., 'On the Concept of Tribe' in *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 32:4, 1980.

Beteille, A., 'The Idea of Indigenous People,' *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 39:2, 1998.

Béteille, A., 'The Concept of Tribe with Special Reference to India', *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 27:2, 1986.

Chakrabarty, D, 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts', in his *Provincializing Europe*, Princeton, 2000.

Chakrabarty, D., 'History and the Politics of Recognition', in Keith Jenkins, Sue Morgan, and Alan Munslow eds., *Manifestos for History*, London and New York, 2007.

Chandra, U., 'Flaming Fields and Forest Fires: Agrarian Transformations and the Making of Birsa Munda's Rebellion', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vo. 53:1, Special Issue, January-March 2016.

Dasgupta, S., 'Mapping Histories: Many Narratives of Tana Pasts', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 53:1, Special Issue, January – March 2016.

Dasgupta, S. 'Adivasi Studies: From a Historian's perspective, *History Compass*, September 2018.

Das Gupta, S. and Basu R.S. eds. *Narratives from the Margins, Aspects of Adivasi History in India*, Delhi, 2014: Selected essays.

Guha, R., 'The Prose of Counter-Insurgency' in Guha, Ranajit (ed.), *Subaltern Studies II: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, New Delhi, 1984.

Hardiman, H., *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India*, Delhi, 1987.

Sarkar, T., 'Jitu Santal's Movement in Malda: A Study in Tribal Protest' in Ranajit Guha, ed *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Delhi, 1985.

Sarkar, T., 'Rebellion as Modern Self Fashioning: A Santal Movement in Colonial Bengal' in D.J. Rycroft and S Dasgupta eds., D.J. Rycroft and S Dasgupta (eds.), *The Politics of Belonging in India: Becoming Adivasi*, London, 1911.

Sarkar, T., 'View from Outside the Field: An Afterword', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 53:1, 2016.

Singh, K.S., *Dust, Storm and Hanging Mist: A Study of Birsa Munda and his Movement in Chota Nagpur, 1874-1911*, Calcutta, 1966.

Rycroft, D.J. and S. Dasgupta eds, 'The Politics of Belonging in India' in D.J. Rycroft and S Dasgupta eds., *The Politics of Belonging in India: Becoming Adivasi*, London, 1911.

Ghosh, K., 'Between Global Flows and Local Dams: Indigenusness, Locality, and the Transnational Sphere in Jharkhand, India', *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 21:4, 2006.

Karlsson, B.G., 'Anthropology and the Indigenous Slot: Claims to and debates about Indigenous peoples' Status in India', *Critique of Anthropology*, Vol. 23, 2003.

Karlsson B.G. and T. Subba (eds.), *Indigeneity in India*, London, 2006: selected essays.

Shah, A., *In the Shadows of the State*, New Delhi, 2010.

Van Schendel, W., 'The Dangers of Belonging: Tribes, Indigenous Peoples and Homelands in South Asia' in D.J. Rycroft and S Dasgupta eds., *The Politics of Belonging in India: Becoming Adivasi*, London, 1911.

Xaxa, X., 'Tribes as Indigenous People of India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34:51, 1999.

### **Method of evaluation**

Credits: 4

50 % of the grade will be awarded on the basis of two tutorials of 2000 words each, and 50 % of the grade will be awarded on the basis of the end-semester examination.