

Panel 19: Indigenisation of Modernity in Indian Tribal Societies

Convener: Dr. Peter Berger, University of Groningen

Abstract: This panel investigates indigenous perspectives on modernity in tribal societies of India. Considerable differences can be discerned in the circumstances of tribal communities in relation to various aspects of modernity such as development agencies, tourism, political parties, as well as state institutions of education, police, administration and medical care, to name just a few. Two interrelated questions will be crucial. Firstly, what is 'modernity' from the local perspective, how is the notion constructed and is there a concept approaching our idea of modernity at all? According to Sahlins, indigenous cultures have their own visions of modernity. In a selective, active and creative process of indigenisation, aspects of modernity are integrated into particular cultural logics, which articulate specific values and goals. Thus, secondly, we want to examine how such features are incorporated and transfigured in relation to indigenous systems of ideas and values as they are articulated in ritual, economy, architecture or any other form of cultural expression. A relevant related question is how specific actors operate within this field.

The convenors invite contributions that are based on ethnographic fieldwork and approach the questions outlined above. In order to get a fresh and critical perspective on the material discussed the papers are discussed by two scholars working on similar questions but in regions other than India.

Discussants: Prof. Dr. Guido Sprenger (University of Münster)
Dr. Sabine Luning (Leiden University)

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