

Anthropology and Tribes of India: Livelihood Perspectives

DipankarChatterjee

Abstract:

The tribal population is found in almost all parts of the world. India has the largest concentration of tribal population. Total population of Scheduled Tribes accounts for 8.2% of the total population of the country. Historically, the discipline of anthropology has been engaged in studying tribal communities. The primary means of understanding their situation has been through the rubric of deprivation-social, economic, political, cultural and institutional. While this approach continues to be useful, it runs the danger of reducing the subject of its study to merely the victims of the larger processes. In other words, there is a tendency to locate the tribal communities as totally lacking agency. Sustainable Livelihoods approach recognises the importance of ability to access resources and entitlements, reduce risk and vulnerability, and exercise voice. It, therefore, emphasises that the poor do have assets, options and strategies, and that they are decision takers. One of the important features of livelihoods approach is that it focuses upon people's assets (physical, natural, financial, human, social and political capitals). It also looks at how people utilize these assets and negotiate their problems. The present lecture will focus on method of analysing livelihood system of the tribal communities in terms of assets rather than a problem.

About the Speaker:

DipankarChatterjee, Ph.D. (Anthropology) is holding the post of Head, Dept. of IRTDM, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute (Deemed University). He did his doctoral thesis on transhumant Gujar community of Himachal Pradesh. Besides participating in many national and international seminars and conferences he has published nearly 40 articles in national and international journals. He is the author of two books related to tribal livelihood and identity. He is also an Assistant Editor of the journal *South Asian Anthropologist*.