Agrarian India: Past and Present
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Syllabus

This course will use interdisciplinary texts to give students a historical overview of agrarian India starting from the pre-colonial period, colonial impact and recurring famines to the community development programs and land reforms after independence. It will explore various dimensions of development in agriculture including the advent of the agricultural sciences and the birth of the agricultural extension system, the myth of the ignorant farmer and the idea of the self-sufficient village. It will then analyse the advent of the green revolution, and its consequences, especially the neglect of rainfed / dryland regions and the rise of farmers’ movements. New technologies in agriculture, the role of agribusiness and the linkages between the market and the state in contemporary agriculture will be discussed. The growing social and geographical disparity with ecological distress and the threat of climate change, farmer suicides, and debt spirals on the one hand, and a risky but rewarding cash crop economy on the other, will also be explored. The course will end with a discussion on the aspirations of rural youth, opportunities for livelihoods, and gender and caste dimensions of the growing urbanization of rural centres.

List of Required Readings

Pre-Colonial India and Colonial Transformations


Independent India: Community Development, Land Reforms


Hunger and the Green Revolution


Liberalisation and the New Market Economy


Additional Readings (Suggestions)


