



**ASHOKA**  
UNIVERSITY

# **Environmental Studies**

## **Annual Report – 2019-20**



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# Environmental Studies

Today, more than ever, our well-being and that of our fellow creatures depends on how we think and act upon the biophysical world we share. Fundamental changes in the earth's climate and oceans threaten basic survival. Rivers, forests and grasslands are shrinking. Cities are collapsing into chaos. Meanwhile millions of people still lack adequate food, water, energy and shelter. Environmental Studies (EVS) provides the concepts, methods and modes of analysis to understand and address this range of critical issues. By offering rigorous training that combines classroom teaching with field research, and by bringing together the humanities, social and natural sciences, EVS equips students with the intellectual and practical resources for achieving social and ecological justice.

The department's faculty members work on a variety of subjects—from wildlife conservation to sustainable food systems, urban planning to air pollution, collective action and environmental movements. They approach problems from a range of disciplinary perspectives—biology and ecology, cultural geography and history, sociology and anthropology. Their research draws on experimental methods, quantitative modelling, geographical information systems, field-based observation, ethnographic and archival methods. Much of this work is cross-disciplinary and collaborative. It speaks to wider scholarly and public debates, both Indian and global, about environmental issues and policies. Cutting-edge, empirically rich, and theoretically rigorous inquiry and teaching is the hallmark of Environmental Studies at Ashoka.



**Amita Baviskar**

Head, Environmental Studies

Professor, Environmental Studies and Sociology & Anthropology

# Teaching Courses

In addition to the Foundation Courses in Environmental Studies that each student is required to take, the department offers a wide range of courses. While some of these introduce students to a sub-field of the discipline, others provide more specialised training to advanced students. All the courses draw upon the research expertise of the instructors.

SPRING 2021			
SN	Title	LS Code	Faculty
1	Introduction to Earth Sciences	ES-2105	Iain Stewart, L. S. Shashidhara, Rahul Chopra
2	Theoretical Ecology	ES-4101	Meghna Agarwala
3	Exploring Life in the Neighbourhood Lab	ES-2301	Imroze Khan, Shivani Krishna
4	Ecology and Evolution Lab	ES-3301	Imroze Khan, Shivani Krishna
5	Field Methods in Ecology and Conservation Science	ES-3302	Divya Karnad
6	Ecology and Unrest	ES-3433 (old ES3406)	Aniket Aga
7	Environment and Social Exclusion	ES-3435 (old ES3405)	Mukul Sharma
8	Cities, Ecology and Equity	ES-3441 (old ES3404)	Amita Baviskar
9	Introduction to Political Ecology	ES -2431 (old ES2403)	Mitul Baruah
10	Nature and Nation	ES-3420 (old 3020)	Mahesh Rangarajan
11	Environment and Empire	ES-4420 (old 4001)	Mahesh Rangarajan
12	Political Ecology and Modes of Resistance	ES-2432	Mitul Baruah
13	Political Ecology of Food	ES-2442	Amita Baviskar
14	Environmental Economics	ES-3601	Eshita Gupta, Sakshi Satija
15	Introduction to Ecocriticism: Climate Fiction	ES-3701	Alexander Phillips, Chhavi Mathur

<b>MONSOON 2020</b>			
<b>SN</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>LSCODE</b>	<b>FACULTY</b>
1	Evolutionary Biology (Theory)	BIO-2010/ BIO-6010/ ES-3101-1	Imroze Khan
2	Ecology	BIO-3020/ BIO-6020/ ES-2101-1	Shivani Krishna
3	Plant Biology	BIO-3453/ BIO-6453/ ES-4301-1	Sougata Roy
4	Seminar: Human-Wildlife Conflict	ES-1001-1	Meghna Agarwala
5	GIS 1	ES-1901-1	Meghna Agarwala
6	Wildlife Conservation	ES-2102-1	Divya Karnad
7	Agriculture, Food and Sustainability	ES-2401/ SOA-2502/ POL-2022-1	Aniket Aga
8	Understanding Conflict and Cooperation over Natural Resources	ES-2402/ ECO-3702-1	Divya Karnad
9	Indian Environmental Politics	ES-2433/ POL-3052-1	Mukul Sharma
10	Decoding Genetically Modified Crops: The Global Politics of Agriculture and Biotechnology	ES-3411/ SOA-3502-1	Aniket Aga
11	The Right to Water	SOA-312/ ES-305-1	Mitul Baruah
<b>SPRING 2020</b>			
<b>SN</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>LSCODE</b>	<b>FACULTY</b>
1	Exploring Life in the Neighbourhood Lab	BIO-1002/ ES-2901-1	Imroze Khan, Shivani Krishna
2	Computational/Mathematical Biology	BIO-3008/ BIO-6013/ CS-2370/ ES-4102/ PSY-3018-1	Somdatta Sinha
3	Plant Biology	BIO-3453/ BIO-6453/ ES-4301-1	Sougata Roy
4	Environmental Economics	ECO-3700/ ES-3701-1	Esita Gupta, Sakshi Satija
5	Introduction to Ecocriticism: Climate Fiction	ENG-3038/ ENG-5038/ ES-3701-1	Alexander Phillips, Chhavi Mathur
6	Wildlife Conservation	ES-2102-1	Divya Karnad

7	Introduction to Earth Sciences	ES-2105/ BIO-2033-1	Iain Stewart, L. S. Shashidhara, Rahul Chopra
8	Agriculture, Food and Sustainability	ES-2401/ SOA-2502/ POL-2022-1	Aniket Aga
9	Environment and Social Exclusion	ES-3405/ POL-3049-1	Mukul Sharma
10	Ecology and Unrest	ES-3406/ SOA-3503-1	Aniket Aga
11	Field Methods in Ecology and Conservation Science	ES-3902/ BIO-3023-1	Divya Karnad
12	Environment and Empire in the Early Modern World	HIS-4505/ ES-4001-1	Grishma Purewal, Pratyay Nath
13	Cities, Ecology and Equity	SOA-3207/ ES-3404-1	Amita Baviskar

# Undergraduate Minor in Environmental Studies

The minor programme at Ashoka trains future scholars and professionals to be rigorous analysts and effective communicators who can understand and address the complexity of environmental issues and interventions.

**Requirements:** Students must take at least six courses in EVS, for a total of 24 credits. Of the 6 required courses, at least 2 have to be in a different stream from what the student intends to focus on. That is, a student must take either 4 social sciences and humanities courses and 2 biophysical sciences courses, or 2 social sciences and humanities courses and 4 biophysical sciences courses. These may include courses offered by other departments that are cross-listed with EVS.

For a **Concentration** in EVS, students are required to take at least 4 courses offered by the Environmental Studies department or cross-listed with it.

## Ashoka Scholars Programme Honours Thesis

**Eligibility:** Ashoka Scholar's Programme (ASP) students intending to write a thesis must have taken at least 6 courses offered by, or cross-listed with, EVS. They should also have taken at least one methods course related to their field of interest.

**Timeline:** Students should identify a potential supervisor by December in Year 3 to discuss thesis prerequisites and draft a research proposal. The preliminary proposal (1000 words) should be submitted by 31 May. The final proposal to be presented at the start of Monsoon term.

The summer between semesters 6 and 7 should be used for preliminary fieldwork. The research proposal should be defended in August in Year 4.

The final thesis should be no more than 15,000 words and cover 8 credits (4 each semester). The thesis will be evaluated by the faculty advisor and, potentially, another Ashoka faculty member. The thesis should be submitted by the beginning of April.

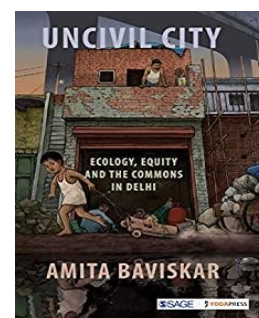
# Research and Outreach

## Publications

### Books

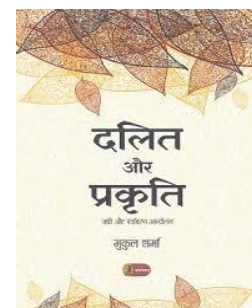
#### Amita Baviskar

*Uncivil City: Ecology, Equity and the Commons in Delhi* (2020), Delhi: Yoda Press & Sage Publications.



#### Mukul Sharma

*Dalit aur Prakriti: Jati aur Paryavaran Aandolan (Dalit and Nature: Caste and Environment Movements)* (2020), Delhi: Vani Prakashan.



### Journal articles and book chapters

**Aniket Aga** and Choudhury C. 2020. Manufacturing Consent: Mining, Bureaucratic Sabotage, and the Forest Rights Act in India. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 31 (2): 70-90.

**Meghna Agarwala**, DeFries, R., Baquie, S., Choksi, P., Dogra, N., Preetha, G.S., Khanwilkar, S., Mondal, P., Nagendra, H., Urpelainen, J. 2020. Post-lockdown Spread of COVID-19 from Cities to Vulnerable Forest-fringe Villages in Central India. *Current Science* 119: 52-58.

**Meghna Agarwala**, DeFries, R., Qureshi, Q., Jhala, Y.V. 2019. Threats to Coexistence of Humans and Forests in Central India. In *Nature Conservation in the New Economy: People, Wildlife and the Law in India*, edited by K. Sivaramakrishnan and Ghazala Shahabuddin, 108-134. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

**Divya Karnad**, Sutaria, D., & Jabado, R. W. 2020. Local Drivers of Declining Shark Fisheries in India. *Ambio* 49 (2): 616-627.

**Divya Karnad** and Martin, K. S. 2020. Assembling Marine Spatial Planning in the Global South: International Agencies and the Fate of Fishing Communities in India. *Maritime Studies* 1-13.

**Mukul Sharma**. 2020. The Killing of Maya in a Lake: Caste, Nature, and Culture. *MARG* 71 (3): 28-35.



## Articles in the media

**Aniket Aga**, “Sowing the seeds of climate change in Odisha,” *People’s Archive of Rural India*, edited by P. Sainath, October 4, 2019 (with Chitragada Choudhury). Available in English and other Indian languages. <https://ruralindiaonline.org/articles/sowing-the-seeds-of-climate-crisis-in-odisha/>

**Aniket Aga**, “Cotton has now become a headache’,” *People’s Archive of Rural India*, edited by P. Sainath, October 7, 2019 (with Chitragada Choudhury). Available in English and other Indian languages. <https://ruralindiaonline.org/articles/cotton-has-now-become-a-headache>

**Aniket Aga**, “In memoriam: Sociologist and activist Abhay Xaxa,” *The India Forum*, April 3, 2020 (with Chitragada Choudhury). <https://www.theindiaforum.in/article/memorial-sociologist-activist-abhay-xaxa>

**Aniket Aga**, “We too yearn for peace’: Voices from a land under siege for a month,” *The Wire*, September 3, 2019 (with Chitragada Choudhury). <https://thewire.in/rights/we-too-yearn-for-peace-voices-from-a-land-under-siege-for-a-month>

**Aniket Aga**, “RTI reveals Union Minister lied to Parliament about hit to Tourism in J&K,” *The Wire*, January 3, 2020 (with Chitragada Choudhury). Available also in Hindi and Urdu. <https://thewire.in/government/rti-reveals-union-minister-lied-to-parliament-about-hit-to-tourism-in-jk>

**Aniket Aga**, “India’s pandemic response is a caste atrocity,” *NDTV*, May 27, 2020. <https://www.ndtv.com/opinion/india-s-pandemic-response-is-a-caste-atrocity-2236094>

**Amita Baviskar**, “Business as usual,” *India Today*, 2 May, 2020. <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/up-front/story/20200511-business-as-usual-1673375-2020-05-02>

**Amita Baviskar**, “The elegance of a desert,” *India Today*, August 8, 2020. <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/leisure/story/20200817-the-elegance-of-a-desert-1708771-2020-08-08>

**Divya Karnad**, “Dishing the dirt on fins,” *DNA*, 19 September 2019. <https://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/column-dishing-the-dirt-on-fins-2790807>

**Divya Karnad**, “Beginning a new conservation,” *Indian Express*, 27 October 2019.  
<https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/books/nature-conservation-in-the-new-economy-book-review-6089690/>

**Mahesh Rangarajan**

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/nature-conversation-economy-a-book-chronicles-india-s-balancing-act-119082301578\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/nature-conversation-economy-a-book-chronicles-india-s-balancing-act-119082301578_1.html)

**Mukul Sharma**, “Caste, Nature and their Presence in a New India,” *Indian Express*, 19 April 2020.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/dalits-caste-savarnas-india-swachh-bharat-misson-6368655/>

## Projects and grants

**Aniket Aga**

*Engaged Anthropology Grant, Wenner-Gren Foundation, USA*

**What Farmers Really Want?: Taking Agrarian Realities to Biotechnologists, Policymakers and the Wider Indian Public**

Research highlights the deep gulf between how farmers experienced agriculture and how biotechnology researchers and elite policymakers imagined it. This project fosters an informed conversation on agrarian crisis among people with the power to shape policy and research agenda, and creates an archive of farmers’ voices, for them and the broader Indian public.

**Meghna Agarwala**

**Understanding the Determinants of the Crop Burning Problem in North India and its Long-term Impacts**

*Azim Premji University Grants*

This multi-disciplinary project brings together economics and environmental science to analyse the drivers of crop residue burning across India, by specifically testing the impacts of machinery, legislation and political cycles on the incidence of crop residue burning. (Co-PIs: Aparajita Dasgupta, Economics Department, Ashoka University; Shampa Bhattacharya, Economics Department, Shiv Nadar University)

**Temporal Role of Crop Residue Burning in Delhi’s Air Pollution**

*Azim Premji Centre for Urban Ecological Sustainability*

This study combines information from remote sensing products and bottom-up activity data to predict surface PM<sub>2.5</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, O<sub>3</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, and satellite AOD. Particularly, it analyses temporal differences in pollutant sources, particularly in periods of high pollution load.

## **Amita Baviskar**

### **Food Practices in Western India: Environment, Production and Consumption**

Ideas about citizenship and belonging, collective identities and individual tastes, shape trends in food consumption. This study traces changing food practices in post-Independence India in the context of the political economy of agriculture since the Green Revolution. It delineates the widening circuits of food as a commodity form within the home and outside, spanned by the growth of processed foods and the practice of ‘eating out’. The study juxtaposes changes in affluent and middle-class consumption with the persistence of hunger and malnutrition among the poor.

### **Living with Heat: The Quest for Thermal Comfort in Delhi**

This project explores how Asian city dwellers have coped with the quotidian discomforts of life in a hot environment, examining how heat exposure intersects with poverty and vulnerability in dwellings and workplaces. It combines archival research with oral history testimony to document practical solutions to the problem of heat. The aim is to use the past as a resource for architects, policymakers and others who are planning for a hotter future. This project is in partnership with the National University of Singapore.

## **Divya Karnad**

### **India’s Fisheries and Impacts on Shark Conservation**

*Future for Nature Award*

This research examines landings and trade of elasmobranchs (sharks and rays) in the unique, targeted elasmobranch fisheries of Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh. Targeted elasmobranch fisheries are relatively rare in India, because they require fishermen with specialised skills and specialised gear. Using field observations, morphometric measurements, qualitative interviews and ethnographic research this research traces the drivers, species and people of these fisheries.

### **Impacts of Perceptions of the Climate Apocalypse on the Relationship between Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture**

*SRM University*

Given the context of climate change causing severe disruptions in the oceans, what is the future of seafood? The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, as well as the Indian government, have popularised aquaculture as the solution to potential seafood shortages in the future. However, recent reports suggest that aquaculture in India is highly dependent on marine seafood for feed. In this research, I ask how various actors in fisheries, seafood trade, aquaculture and seafood consumption perceive linkages between seafood, aquaculture and climate. I also examine their contributions to accelerating climate impacts on these industries.

# Presentations

## **Aniket Aga**

‘Beyond Productivity and Populism: Reimagining India’s Agricultural and Rural Policies’, organised by the Network of Rural and Agrarian Studies, IIT Delhi, New Delhi. 26 September, 2019.

Co-organiser – Data Security Workshop for journalists, frontline rights defenders, and researchers – December 2019 – sponsored by Foundation for Media Professionals.

Conference on Universal Ethics for the 21st Century: Towards a common understanding, organised by the Samyeling Tibetan Settlement Office, Majnu ka Tila and Tibet House, New Delhi. 2 February, 2020.

National Seminar on the Environment as Meta-narrative, Session on Bureaucratic epistemes and regulatory disputes: GM crops between science and legal-administration, organised by the Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics. 5 March, 2020.

## **Meghna Agarwala**

Annual CECFEE meeting (ISI-Delhi’s Environmental Conference) in Tezpur, Assam. November 2019.

## **Amita Baviskar**

‘Interview: At the Intersection of Environmental Justice and Public Space’ on Architecture Talk. 29 January, 2020. <https://www.architecturetalk.org/home/60>

‘Urban Inequities’, panel discussion at the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival, Mumbai. 7 February, 2020.

‘Uncivil City: Ecology, Equity and the Commons in Delhi’, lecture at the India International Centre, Delhi. 29 February, 2020.

National seminar on ‘The Environment as Metanarrative’ at the Department of Sociology, University of Delhi. 5 March, 2020. Discussant.

‘Voices for the Vista: Questioning the Central Vista Redevelopment’, panel discussion at the Constitution Club. 6 March, 2020.

‘Urban Inequality and Environmental Politics’, First annual public lecture of the Research Committee on Urban Studies, Indian Sociological Society and the Department of Sociology, Jamia Millia Islamia. 10 March, 2020.

‘Interview: Central Vista Project: Based on Imperialist Idea?’ on News Click, 15 March, 2020. <https://www.newsclick.in/Central-Vista-Project-Based-Imperialist-Idea>

‘Interview: The Bastion Dialogues’, 9 April, 2020. <https://thebastion.co.in/interviews/the-bastion-dialogues-dr-amita-baviskar/>

‘Home Work: The Pandemic and the Household’, panel discussion organised by the Bangalore International Centre. 8 May, 2020.

‘Interview: Belong Book Club, 19 June, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaWgLL6USRk>

## **Divya Karnad**

‘Eating Seafood Right’, Madras Gymkhana Club, Chennai. 24 August, 2019.

‘Beyond Productivity and Populism: Reimagining India’s Seafood and Fisheries Policies’, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. 26 September, 2019.

5th Annual CECFEE Research & Policy Workshop, Tezpur University. 10-11 November, 2020.

Consultative workshop on ‘Threatened and Protected Elasmobranchs of India’, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi. 4–6 February, 2020.

‘How to Save the Oceans One Bite at a Time’, Department of Management Studies, MES College of Arts and Commerce, Goa. 11 March, 2020.

‘Marine Conservation and Sustainable Fisheries’, National Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhubaneswar. 8 June, 2020.

‘What Lessons can be Learned from Community-led Initiatives – and more generally by civil society – in the management and preservation of protected areas?’ Monaco Blue Initiative Digital Edition, Monte Carlo. 9 June, 2020.

## **Mukul Sharma**

‘Anti-Caste Ecological Politics’, DIALOGICS. 13 May, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4juIc0B9OsA>

‘Green Democracy and Ambedkar: Relevance of Ambedkar's Ideas for Indian Environmentalism’, Ambedkar Study Centre and Nisarga Mitra (Eco-Club), Seshadripuram Degree College, Bengaluru. 20 July, 2020.

# Featured in the Media

## Divya Karnad

<https://www.dtnext.in/News/City/2020/02/13025900/1214827/Identify-new-fish-species-at-curated-walks-inside-vpf>

<https://www.livemint.com/mint-lounge/features/monsoon-catch-1568367791351.html>

<https://www.thehindu.com/society/nose-for-fish/article30782945.ece>

<https://thewire.in/environment/can-a-village-specialised-in-shark-fishing-have-lessons-for-indias-fisheries>

<https://qz.com/india/1780065/rampant-overfishing-threatens-to-wipe-out-indias-marine-stock/>

<https://www.dtnext.in/News/City/2020/02/10002141/1214232/Documentary-delves-into-need-for-sustainable-fishing.vpf>

<https://scroll.in/article/948677/in-karnataka-and-andhra-pradesh-the-lucrative-fish-feed-industry-is-killing-traditional-fisheries>

<https://www.devex.com/news/southern-india-s-fishing-fleets-tell-a-tale-of-staggering-tsunami-aid-money-96274>

<https://weather.com/en-IN/india/news/news/2019-08-20-bioluminescent-algae-make-comeback-chennai-beaches>

<https://elle.in/article/sara-mahdi-divya-karnad/>

## Meghna Agarwala

<https://www.currentconservation.org/issues/nature-conservation-in-a-changing-economy/>

## Amita Baviskar

<https://www.indiatoday.in/mail-today/story/lockdown-and-climate-change-1685970-2020-06-05>

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/covid-19-outbreak-curbs-in-delhi-won-t-be-cased-from-today/story-K3n2BLwyQpCpmX1d0O1UfO.html>

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi-news/first-time-offenders-get-a-chance-at-life-and-livelihood-courtesy-police-yuva-scheme/story-B5fx1ZfYDQqlHvwaQS7dJ.html>

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi-news/social-distancing-the-new-normal/story-gFK7yAS0K9l2szWWEuF98O.html>

# Awards

## Future for Nature Award 2019

**Divya Karnad** was presented this prestigious nature conservation prize during the Future For Nature Awards Event at Royal Burgers' Zoo, Arnhem, Netherlands, along with **Fernanda Abra (Brazil)** and **Olivier Nsengimana (Rwanda)**. Divya was recognised for successfully reducing the unwanted bycatch of endangered sharks along the Coromandel coast of India. She was chosen by an international jury of experts from one hundred and twenty-five young and talented nature conservationists from all over the world. His Royal Highness King Willem-Alexander was the Guest of Honour at the award ceremony.



## Ananya Karol Rao

was awarded the 2020 Prize for Best Performance in Environmental Studies.

# Appointments

## **Amita Baviskar**

*Head of the Department of Environmental Studies  
Professor of Environmental Studies and Sociology & Anthropology,  
Ashoka University  
Ph.D. Cornell University*



## **Mukul Sharma**

*Professor, Environmental Studies  
Ashoka University  
Ph.D. Delhi University*



## **Teaching Fellows 2019-20**

Sonali Bawa  
Nivedita Bose  
Annie James  
Praveena Mahala  
Aishwarya Padmaraj  
Arunopol Seal  
Sweeta Sumant

## **EVS Fellowships 2019-20**

Tanvi GS  
Divasjyoti Parashar  
Herman Ramesh  
Yashant Sharma



# Events

## Talks

***Climate Change, Forest Degradation and the Future of Himalayan Biodiversity***

Umesh Srinivasan, Associate Research Scholar, Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs, Princeton University

Thursday, 8 August 2019

***REDD+ and Aggravating Conflicts over Land: Locating the Politics of Incentivisation of Conservation in South India***

Suhas R. Bhasme, Postdoctoral Research fellow, ATREE

Thursday, 8 August 2019

***Assembly of Ecological Communities: Lessons from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands***

Harikrishna Surendran, Consultant Scientist, Metastring Foundation, Bangalore

Thursday, 8 August 2019

***Commodities, Ecology, & the Question of Labour: Two Histories from India***

Arnab Dey, Associate Professor of History, State University of New York (SUNY)

Friday, 9 August 2019

***Ecology, Equity and the Commons: The Case of Clean Air in Delhi***

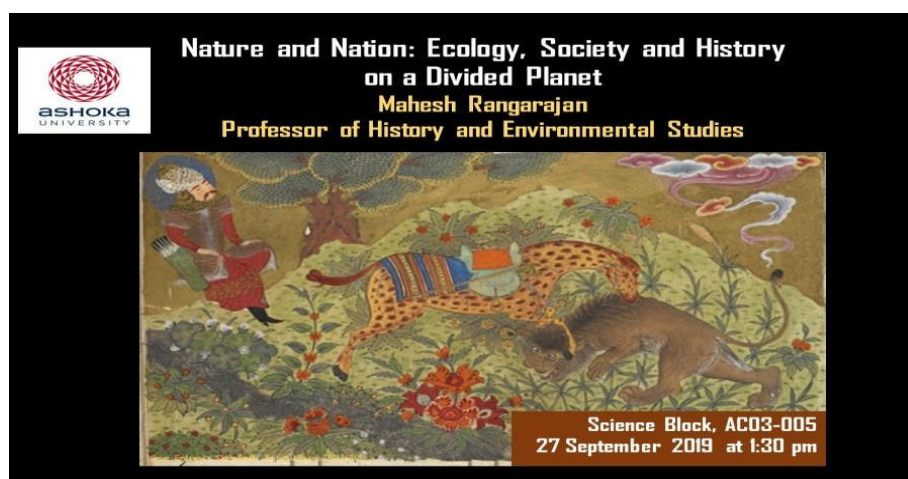
Amita Baviskar, Professor of Sociology, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi

Friday, 9 August 2019

***Sacred Groves: Environment, Religion & Politics in Tribal India***

Mukul Sharma, Indian Institute of Mass Communication, Delhi

Friday, 9 August 2019



## EVS Colloquium Series 2019-20

### *Punctuated Violence and the Gender of Value*

Priti Ramamurthy, Professor, University of Washington

Tuesday, 17 September 2019

### *The Triumph of Animal History?*

Philip Howell, University Senior Lecturer, University of Cambridge

Monday, 23 September 2019

### *Understanding Land, Forests and Adivasis?*

Gladson Dungdung, Founder, Adivasi Publications

Wednesday, 25 September 2019

### *The Energy Transition in Europe: National Renewable Support in an International Electricity Market*

Kaveri Iyechettira, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University

Tuesday, 1 October 2019

### Colonialism and Environment in India, 1800-1947

Velayutham Saravanan, Director, Jawaharlal Nehru Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia

Monday, 14 October 2019

### Why Blue Carbon and Coastal Ecosystems Matter in Our Fight against Climate Change

Rupesh K Bhomia, University of Florida

Wednesday, 23 October 2019

### *People and Forests: How Small Cuts with a Sickle can Change a Himalayan Landscape*

Rajesh Thadani, Forest Ecologist & Entrepreneur

Wednesday, 13 November 2019

### *The Biogeographical History of African Baobabs in the Indian Subcontinent*

Haripriya Rangan, Associate Professor, Australia-India Institute, University of Melbourne

Tuesday, 19 November 2019

### *Out of the Forest: People, Products, their Markets and their Commodified Afterlife in Uttar Bastar*

Arunopol Seal

Monday, 10 February 2020



# Faculty

## [Amita Baviskar](#)

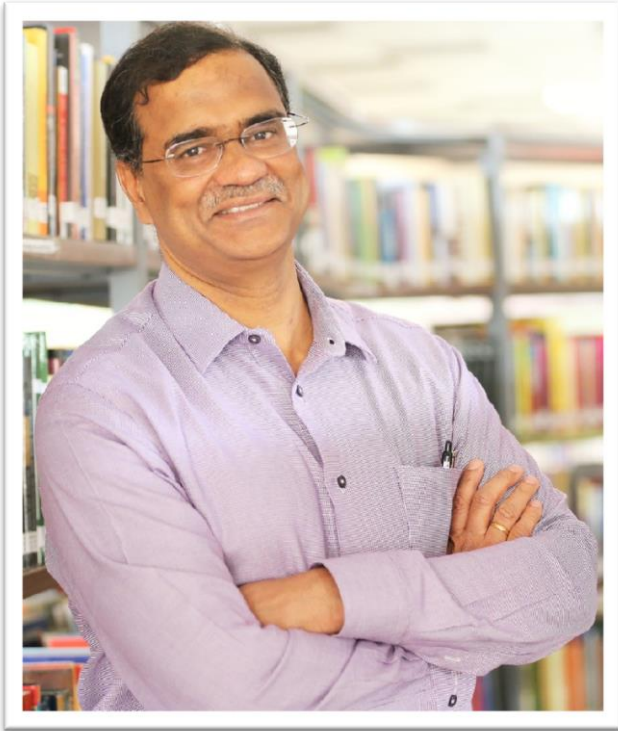
*Head of the Department of Environmental Studies  
Professor of Environmental Studies and Sociology & Anthropology  
Ph.D. (Cornell)*

Amita Baviskar is a Professor of Environmental Studies and Sociology & Anthropology. Her research and teaching address the cultural politics of environment and development in rural and urban India. She focuses on the role of social inequality and identities in natural resource conflicts. Currently, she is working on the politics of food and changing agrarian environments in Madhya Pradesh and studying the social experience of air pollution in Delhi. After studying Economics and Sociology at the University of Delhi, she received a PhD in Development Sociology from Cornell University. Besides working at the Department of Sociology, University of Delhi, and at the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, she has been a visiting scholar at several universities including Stanford, Cornell, Yale, SciencesPo, University of California at Berkeley and the University of Cape Town.



Her first book *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley* and other writings explore the themes of resource rights, popular resistance and discourses of environmentalism. Her recent publications include the edited books *Elite and Everyman: The Cultural Politics of the Indian Middle Classes* (with Raka Ray) and *First Garden of the Republic: Nature on the President's Estate*. In January 2020, she published *Uncivil City: Ecology, Equity and the Commons in Delhi*.

Her contributions to developing the field of environmental sociology in India and to the study of social movements have been recognised by her peers. She was awarded the 2005 Malcolm Adiseshiah Award for Distinguished Contributions to Development Studies, the 2008 VKRV Rao Prize for Social Science Research, and the 2010 Infosys Prize for Social Sciences.



### **Mahesh Rangarajan**

*Head of the Department of History  
Professor of History and  
Environmental Studies  
Ph.D. (Oxford)*

Mahesh Rangarajan has been Professor in Modern Indian History at University of Delhi (2007-2011) and also taught at the universities of Cornell and Jadavpur and at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru. He has also served as Director of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi (2011-2015). He has a BA in History from Hindu College, University of Delhi and an MA (Balliol College) and D.Phil (Nuffield College), both from Oxford University. He was a Rhodes Scholar (1986-89). He worked as Assistant

Editor with *The Telegraph*, Kolkata (1993-94) and has been a Junior Fellow of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (1994-99). He served as Corresponding Editor, *Environment and History* (1996-2000) and was also on the Editorial Board of *Conservation and Society* (2003-2009). Rangarajan is the author of *Fencing the Forest: Conservation and Ecological Change in India's Central Provinces, 1860-1914* (1996), *India's Wildlife History: An Introduction* (2001), and *Nature and Nation: Essays on Environmental History* (2015). He edited the books *Environmental Issues in India: A Reader* (2007) and *The Oxford Anthology of Indian Wildlife*, 2 volumes (1999). He has co-edited *People, Parks and Wildlife: Towards Coexistence* (2000), *Battles over Nature: Science and the Politics of Conservation* (2003), *Making Conservation Work: Securing Biodiversity in this New Century* (2007), *Environmental History: As if Nature Existed* (2010), *India's Environmental History*, 2 volumes (2012), *Selected Works of C. Rajagopalachari, Vol. 1, 1907-1921* (2013), *Selected Works of C. Rajagopalachari, Vol. 2, 1921-22* (2014), *Nature without Borders* (2014), *Shifting Ground: People, Animals and Mobility in India's Environmental History* (2014) and *At Nature's Edge: The Global Present and Long-Term History* (2018).

## Mukul Sharma

*Professor, Environmental Studies*

*Ph.D. (Delhi)*

Mukul Sharma has worked in the academic, development and media sectors since 1984. Before joining Ashoka, he was the Professor and Head, Department of Development Communication, and Dean, Academics, at the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi (2014-2019). His formal academic qualification is in Political Science. He has published sixteen books and booklets in English and Hindi, the latest being *Dalit aur Prakriti: Jati aur Bhartiya Paryavarn Aandolan* (Delhi: Vani Prakashan, 2020, in Hindi), *Caste & Nature: Dalits and Indian Environmental Politics* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017), *Green and Saffron: Hindu Nationalism and Indian Environmental Politics* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2012), and *Human Rights in a Globalised World: An Indian Diary* (Delhi: Sage, 2010). He has been a research fellow in several universities and institutions, including Mahidol University, Bangkok (2010), United States Institute of Peace, Washington DC (2002-2004), SEPHIS scholar, International Institute of Social History, The Netherlands (1999-2003), London School of Economic and Political Science (2000) and University of Oxford (1998).



Mukul worked as a Special Correspondent in *Navbharat Times*, Delhi (1983-1998), and received 12 national-international awards for his environmental, rural and human rights journalism. After that, he has been the Director of Amnesty International and Heinrich Boell Foundation in India, the South Asia Director of Climate Parliament and the Asia Campaign, Advocacy and Policy Director of ActionAid International. His research interests lie in examining the relations between nature, culture, politics, policy and power. He focuses on the interweaving of ecology, religion, politics and media in the making of environmental politics in India and South Asia.

He is also interested in legislative and policy aspects of renewable energy in mitigating climate change. He is presently working on religion, sacrality and environmental politics in South Asia.

## Aniket Aga

*Associate Professor of Environmental Studies,  
Ph.D. (Yale)*

Aniket is interested in science and technology studies, democratic politics, and agrarian studies. His research examines the ongoing controversy over genetically modified (GM) food crops in India. More broadly, he works on questions of environmental justice, food democracy, and sustainable agriculture, with a focus on Maharashtra.



Aniket holds a PhD in Anthropology from Yale University. His doctoral thesis was awarded the 2016 Sardar Patel Best Dissertation Prize. This award, conferred by the University of California, Los Angeles, goes to the best doctoral dissertation in the U.S.A. on any aspect of modern India across the fields of humanities, social sciences, fine arts and education. He also holds a B. Tech (Electronics & Electrical Communication Engineering) from IIT Kharagpur, and an MS (Business Research) from the University of Southern California. Before joining Ashoka University, He was an Assistant Professor, School for Environment and Sustainability, and Junior Fellow, Michigan Society of Fellows, at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor. He has previously worked with McKinsey & Company India and Texas Instruments India.

## Meghna Agarwala

*Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies  
Ph.D. (Columbia)*

Meghna Agarwala received her PhD in Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Biology from Columbia University, and an MS from Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. She also studied Environmental Sciences at JNU, New Delhi. Before joining Ashoka University, she was a post-doctoral research scientist at Earth Institute, Columbia University and Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Bogor, Indonesia. The focus of her work is ecology, conservation biology, and remote sensing.





### **Divya Karnad**

*Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies*

*Ph.D. (Rutgers)*

Divya Karnad received her PhD in Geography from Rutgers University, USA, and completed a Masters in Wildlife Biology and Conservation from the Post Graduate Programme run by the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Centre for Wildlife Studies and Wildlife Conservation Society-India. Prior to joining Ashoka University, she consulted with the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organization and founded InSeason Fish, a sustainable seafood initiative. The focus of her work is marine conservation, fisheries management, geography, and common property theory.



### **Rahul Chopra**

*Visiting Professor of Environmental Studies*

*Ph.D. (Chicago)*

Rahul Chopra is the coordinator of a global climate change education project of the International Science Council that aims to integrate climate change education in the curriculum across the world. He is also the coordinator and convener of the National Resource Center on Climate Change at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Pune, an initiative of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India. He is the former founding chair of the Centre for Earth and Environment at FLAME University, Pune and was an Associate Professor of Environmental Studies there. His interests are multidisciplinary and include curriculum development in Earth and Environmental Studies; the use of satellite derived remotely sensed and in-situ data to evaluate our changing environment; historical GIS and the spatial humanities; field based geological and environmental studies, and the use of high resolution chemical analyses instruments and data to

study various earth and environmental processes. He received his Ph.D. in Geophysical Sciences from the University of Chicago, USA.

## **Iain Stewart**

### *Visiting Professor of Environmental Studies*

Iain Stewart is a professor of Geoscience Communication at the University of Plymouth and Director of its Sustainable Earth Institute. His long-standing research interests are in geological hazards, Earth science for sustainable development, and climate change. His geo-communication expertise has been built on a 15-year partnership with BBC television presenting major natural history documentary series, such as 'Earth: The Power of the Planet'; 'Earth: The Climate Wars'; 'How Earth Made Us', 'How To Grow A Planet', 'Rise of the Continents' and 'Planet Oil'. He is actively involved in public engagement, not least through his current roles as President of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and the Devon Wildlife Trust, and Patron of the English Riviera UNESCO Global GeoPark. That public service to geographical and geo-environmental education has been recognised with an MBE, awards from numerous international geoscience organisations, and his designation as a UNESCO Chair in Geoscience and Society. He leads the UNESCO international geoscience programme (IGCP) project on 'Geology for Sustainable Development'.





## Student Representatives

### Pratiti (2019-20)

I am now a rising 4th year in the History department, and an EVS concentration (hopefully can manage to complete the minor). I am passionate about environmental history and environmental aesthetics and literature. I was the student representative for the EVS department to the Academic Advisory Board in the year 2019-2020. This position not just helped me academically understand the nuances of environmental studies and what it constitutes, but also gave me a space to develop my leadership skills, and work in tandem with the department. The experience has been extremely fulfilling and has helped me grow as a person and a student.



### Chaitanya Suraj (2020-21)

I am a rising third-year undergraduate student at Ashoka. I am pursuing a major in Political Science with a minor in Environmental Studies. I am the Student Representative of the department for 2020-21. I have been interested in the environmental issues related to agriculture and wildlife since I was in school, but I never thought I could study them in an academic capacity, especially because I do not have a background in the natural sciences. I always saw environment as a subject of the natural sciences. Only after I joined Ashoka did I learn that this is not true. Knowing that I could study EVS without being a science student really excited me. My motivation behind studying EVS has been to explore the relations between human society and politics, and the natural environment. I have done EVS courses related to agriculture, evolution, environmental history, development and unrest, and research methods. My chief interests in EVS lie in wildlife conservation and environmental governance. Taking EVS courses has really altered my views towards the ideas of society, civilisation and development. It broadened my idea of the world and helped me understand socio-political phenomena through a unique lens. I am currently a research intern with the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. I work under the Transboundary Rivers, Ecologies and Development Studies (TREADS) project headed by Dr Srinivas Chokkakula. I was a fellow with the Study of the US Institute for Youth, Education and Closing the Skills Gap in the summer of 2019, at the Foundation for International Understanding Through Students in Seattle. I am also an amateur birdwatcher, and I wish to publish a children's handbook on Indian birds some day.





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