

January- March 2025



## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Greetings from the Foundation for Agrarian Studies!

The year 2025 began with excitement and renewed energy. We hosted our 8th Retreat—an opportunity to celebrate togetherness; reflect on our activities; and assess our successes, limitations, and failures, including persistent challenges. The Retreat also served as a platform to receive feedback from peers, seniors, and collaborators. Most importantly, it provided key inputs for developing a concrete plan for the year ahead and a broader long-term strategy.

Research at the Foundation continues steadily. The analysis of household survey data from two villages in Uttar Pradesh under the Project on Agrarian Relations in India (PARI) has been completed. As part of the project, an in-house workshop was conducted to discuss the findings.

Two new research projects have been initiated in collaboration with Monash University, Australia, focusing on agricultural innovation in North, and South India. Funded by Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research- Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (CGIAR-SPIA), these projects examine the adoption, and impact of innovations in crop improvement, livestock, fisheries, and resource management.

Our engagement with young scholars continues through the Young Scholars' Online Seminar Series, with two seminars held this quarter. Additionally, multiple in-house seminars provided a platform for researchers to present their work. Scholars have also actively participated in national and international conferences, contributing to ongoing discussions in the field.

We are gearing up for a busy year, with an international conference on agrarian change scheduled for November 6–9, 2025, which will take stock of current thinking and scholarship in the field. We look forward to a productive and exciting year ahead.

Sandipan Baksi  
Director, Foundation for Agrarian Studies

# RESEARCH

## »»» THE DYNAMICS OF AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION IN INDIA

The Foundation for Agrarian Studies (FAS), in collaboration with Monash University, Australia, has initiated two research projects —“Dynamics of Agricultural Innovation in North India” and “Dynamics of Agricultural Innovation in South India”—funded by the CGIAR-SPIA.

These projects aim to study CGIAR-related innovations in India, their adoption, and their implications. The team is currently in the first component, the stocktaking exercise, which involves comprehensively documenting the innovations undertaken by all CGIAR research centres in India over the past 20 years.





# RESEARCH

## >>> SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF CLASSES FROM UP SURVEY DATA

The Foundation [re-surveyed two villages of Uttar Pradesh](#) — Mahatwar (Eastern Uttar Pradesh) and Harevli (Western Uttar Pradesh)—in June 2023. These villages were first studied by the Foundation in 2006. With data processing now complete, our researchers presented their analysis of socio-economic changes over the two survey periods at a workshop conducted by the Foundation. The team is currently finalising the manuscripts for the first series of publications based on the findings from the study.



# PUBLICATIONS BY FAS TEAM MEMBERS

## >>> "STRENGTHENING THE MILLET ECONOMY: LESSONS FROM A SOUTH INDIAN CASE STUDY"

Madhura Swaminathan, Trustee at the Foundation, along with scientists from the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, published an article in *Food Security*.

The paper highlights the nutritional and ecological benefits of millets, which are nutrient-rich, drought-resistant, and suitable for cultivation in semi-arid regions with poor soil. Despite these advantages, millet cultivation in India has significantly declined, with production at less than 20 million tonnes compared to over 200 million tonnes of cereals. It examines interventions by the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in the Kolli Hills block of Tamil Nadu, presenting evidence of their impact in reversing this decline.



# PUBLICATIONS BY FAS TEAM MEMBERS

## >>> "AGRARIAN CLASSES IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA: ILLUSTRATIONS FROM A SOUTH INDIAN VILLAGE"

Through a blog published in *The Journal of Agrarian Change*, Madhura Swaminathan, Trustee at the Foundation, examined the development of capitalism in the countryside and the accompanying changes in class structures.

Drawing on detailed empirical evidence from village studies conducted by the Foundation, the blog focuses specifically on the shifts in agrarian relations in Palakurichi, a village in the Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu. The insights discussed contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolving socio-economic dynamics in rural India.

**Agrarian Questions**  
The Journal of Agrarian Change

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## Agrarian Classes in Contemporary India: Illustrations from a South Indian Village

February 15, 2025

Madhura Swaminathan



## >>> EIGHTH ANNUAL RETREAT OF THE FOUNDATION FOR AGRARIAN STUDIES

The eighth Retreat of FAS was held at Mookanana Resort, Sakleshpur, Karnataka, from March 1–3, 2025. The event featured presentations on the working of FAS in 2024, with department heads, project leads, and researchers sharing insights from their work. Discussions covered research, academic events, and future plans, including an upcoming international conference on agrarian change.

The Retreat included a SWOT analysis, team-building activities, and interactive games. It was an opportunity to reflect on our work, receive feedback, and strengthen collaboration. We thank everyone who participated in making it a success.





## >>> THE DYNAMICS OF AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION IN NORTH AND SOUTH INDIA- INAUGURAL EVENT

The Foundation, in collaboration with the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Bangalore Centre, organised the inaugural event for two CGIAR-SPIA-funded projects, [“The Dynamics of Agricultural Innovation in North India”](#) and [“The Dynamics of Agricultural Innovation in South India”](#), on March 7, 2025.

These projects, jointly undertaken by FAS and Monash University, Australia, were inaugurated by Professor B. S. Daya Sagar and chaired by Professor Madhura Swaminathan. The event was attended by more than 25 participants, including a number of experts and young scholars of Indian agriculture and rural India.

The FAS team associated with the project, including Sandipan Baksi, Tapas Modak, Ajil M. Kristy Saikia, Harshan T. P., Sai Chandan Kotu, and Daya Susan Thomas, presented various activities planned and undertaken as part of the project.

Senior scholars and experts offered critical feedback on the presentations, which helped gain new perspectives on the possibilities under the project as well as the challenges it may face.



## >>> WORKSHOP ON THE UTTAR PRADESH SURVEYS UNDER THE PROJECT ON AGRARIAN RELATIONS IN INDIA

The Foundation conducted a workshop on February 15, 2025, to discuss the results from the Uttar Pradesh surveys under the Project on Agrarian Relations in India. Scholars presented their preliminary findings, exploring various social and economic aspects of the survey villages.

The workshop covered a wide range of topics, such as socio-economic differentiation in the villages, changes in household incomes, changes in land ownership patterns and mobility, the economics of farming, livestock economy, changing educational profiles, housing and living standards, and credit.



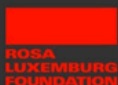


## ***YOUNG SCHOLARS' ONLINE SEMINAR SERIES***

### **>>> CLAIMING CASTE: LAND, WATER, AND HIERARCHY IN NORTH INDIA, C. 1660-1950**

The sixth seminar of the [FAS Young Scholars' Online Seminar Series 2024-25](#) was presented by Brian T. Cannon, Lecturer, Critical Writing Program, University of Pennsylvania, on Friday, February 28, 2025, at 4.30 PM IST.

Brian's study explores how regimes of land-keeping in early modern and colonial desert India engendered and sustained hierarchical social and economic relationships by controlling access to land, water, and other natural resources. Employing a host of descriptive and statistical material from Marwari, Hindi, and British colonial archives, it demonstrates how ownership of and access to sources of land and water persistently shaped claims to and contests over caste status over three long centuries. The work challenges the historiographical consensus that primarily views caste as a social phenomenon and argues for a materially-grounded perspective of caste.



FAS Young Scholars' Seminars

### **FAS Young Scholars' Online Seminar Series 2024-25**

Seminar 6

### **CLAIMING CASTE: LAND, WATER, AND HIERARCHY IN NORTH INDIA, 1660-1950**



**Friday  
February 28, 2025**



**From 4:30 PM IST**

**Brian T. Cannon,**  
Lecturer,  
Critical Writing Program,  
University of Pennsylvania



## >>> DECENTRALISATION, GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION AND AGRARIAN LIVELIHOODS IN RURAL TAMIL NADU

The seventh seminar of the [FAS Young Scholars' Online Seminar Series 2024–25](#) was presented by Vani Swarupa Murali, Instructor, South Asian Studies Programme, National University of Singapore, on Friday, March 28, 2025, at 4 PM IST.

Vani's study examines the structural and institutional challenges in the decentralisation of agricultural policy in Tamil Nadu, situating it in the context of climate change. It explores how bureaucratic fragmentation, administrative burdens, and competing jurisdictions hinder policy implementation and how these barriers shape farmers' reluctance to engage with existing government policies. By highlighting disparities in access and adoption, particularly in groundwater conservation schemes, the study sheds light on the growing agrarian inequality and the uneven capacity of farmers to adapt to climate challenges.



FAS Young Scholars' Seminars

### FAS Young Scholars' Online Seminar Series 2024-25

Seminar 7

## DECENTRALISATION, GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION AND AGRARIAN LIVELIHOODS IN RURAL TAMIL NADU



Friday  
March 28, 2025



From 4:00 PM IST

Vani Swarupa Murali,  
Instructor,  
South Asian Studies Programme,  
National University of Singapore





## *IN-HOUSE SEMINAR*

### »»» WELLBEING OF TRIBALS IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR; & THE ECONOMICS OF APPLE PRODUCTION IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Dr. Mehak Majeed, Assistant Professor in Economics at the Islamic University of Science and Technology, and Dr. Zahid Gulzar Rather, Assistant Professor in Economics at Government Degree College, Bijbihara, presented their research at an in-house seminar at the Foundation on January 23, 2025.

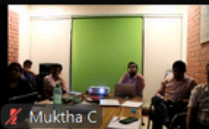
Dr. Mehak Majeed's paper, "Economic Wellbeing of Tribals in Jammu and Kashmir", examined the changing livelihoods of the Gujjar community, highlighting their shift from a nomadic lifestyle to settled occupations. Dr. Zahid Gulzar Rather's paper, The Economics of Apple Production in Jammu and Kashmir, discussed the expansion of apple cultivation in the region, the stagnation in productivity, and the need for better cold storage facilities to stabilise prices.



## >>> REVIVAL OR STATISTICAL SMOKE? THE RISE OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN RURAL INDIA

Dr. Bheemeshwar Reddy, Associate Professor of Economics at the Birla Institute of Technology and Sciences, Hyderabad, presented his study, "Revival or Statistical Smoke? The Rise of Women's Employment in Rural India", in an in-house seminar organised by the Foundation on February 3, 2025.

His research examines the apparent rise in the Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLPR) in recent years, as reported in official labour force surveys. The paper argues that this increase may be attributed to changes in the instructions given to enumerators rather than a genuine rise in women's employment.





## >>> TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS IN SMALL AND MEDIUM MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES IN INDIA

Abhinav Surya, PhD scholar at the Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, and a collaborator of the Foundation, presented his study, “Technical and Technological Progress in Small and Medium Manufacturing Industries in India”, in an in-house seminar organised by the Foundation on March 12, 2025.

His study examines the evolving organisation of production in India’s SMEs, focusing on technological progress, capital accumulation, contractualisation, and labour processes over the last two decades.



# FAS AT CONFERENCES

## >>> ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE INDIAN SOCIETY OF LABOUR ECONOMICS

Three of our researchers, Arindam Das, Joint-Director; Sethu C. A., Senior Research Assistant; and Sai Chandan Kotu, Research Assistant, participated in the 65th Annual Conference of the Indian Society of Labour Economics (ISLE) from January 9–11, 2025. Organised by ISEC, Bengaluru, in collaboration with the Karnataka Department of Labour.

The FAS team presented three papers: Accounting for Wage Inequality in India: 1983 to 2021-22 by Arindam Das; Deepening Distress in India's Informal Economy by Sai Chandan Kotu, C. A. Sethu, and Kulvinder Singh (Ashoka University); and Farm Technology and Agrarian Inequalities by Tapas S. Modak, Sai Chandan Kotu, and Sandipan Baksi.

## VISITORS

### >>> *DR. AYA IKEGAME AND DR. CRISPIN BATES-KYOTO UNIVERSITY*

Dr. Aya Ikegame, Professor at the University of Kyoto, and Dr. Crispin Bates, Professor at the University of Edinburgh and Honourary Professor at Kyoto University, visited the Foundation's office in Bengaluru on Monday, January 6, 2025.

During their visit, the FAS team introduced them to the Foundation's research projects and discussed the scope of joint initiatives with the organisation in the future.



## **>>> DR. MEHAK MAJEED AND DR. ZAHID GULZAR RATHER**

Dr. Mehak Majeed, Assistant Professor in Economics at the Islamic University of Science and Technology, and Dr. Zahid Gulzar Rather, Assistant Professor in Economics at Government Degree College, Bijbihara, visited the Foundation's office on Thursday, January 23, 2025.

During their visit, the FAS team introduced them to the Foundation's research projects, including the village studies database from the Project on Agrarian Relations in India (PARI), and discussed possibilities for future collaborations.

## **>>> FACULTY MEMBERS- ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT- CHRIST UNIVERSITY**

Faculty members from the Department of Economics at Christ University, Bangalore Main Campus, visited FAS for an interactive session on March 13, 2025. The delegation included Dr. Deepa V.K., Dr. Divya Pradeep, Dr. Harilal Madhavan, Mr. Sankar Varma K.C., and Dr. Deepak Johnson, a collaborator with the Foundation.

The FAS team introduced them to the Foundation's research projects and the village studies database from the Project on Agrarian Relations in India (PARI), followed by a discussion on key research themes and potential collaborations.