



Twilight Zomia of the Nation State: The Vagabond in the South Asian Imagination

Talk by
Dr. Avishek Ray

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In administering territorial borders, the postcolonial nation-building apparatus, in the context of South Asia, intervened with indigenous practices of nomadism. The 'colonial episteme' could not make sense of certain vernacular practices of mobility, when approached from the perspective of instrumental rationality and viewed through 'imperial eyes'. Distinguishing the 'good traveller' from the 'bad traveller' became a colonial agenda, and within the remit of this taxonomic practice, the category 'vagabond' would be 'invented' and deployed as catch-all to indiscriminately cast out travellers and itinerants who posed an enigma for the colonial episteme. This talk unpacks the heuristic category 'vagabond' and highlights the convergence between the politics of itinerancy and that of dissent in the context of South Asia.

Avishek Ray teaches at the National Institute of Technology Silchar. He obtained his PhD In Cultural Studies from Trent University (Canada). He is the author of *The Vagabond in the South Asian Imagination: Representation, Agency & Resilience* (Routledge, 2021) and co-editor of *Nation, Nationalism and the Public Sphere: Religious Politics in India* (SAGE, 2020). In 2021, he was awarded a Fulbright-Nehru Academic and Professional Excellence Fellowship.

