

**Speaker:**

Sudipta Sarangi (Virginia Tech)

**Date and Time:**

Aug 6th, 2025 (Wednesday); 3:30 PM

**Venue:**

Room 401, 4th floor, A91 Eco Hub Building, Department of Economics, IIT Bombay

**Title:**

**People from Historically Rice-Farming Cultures Perform Better on Exams**

**Abstract:**

Why do some societies have better educational outcomes than others? Genes play a role, but we ask whether cultures' history of farming matters too. Rice farming required more work than other major crops, and rice cultures developed customs emphasizing hard work. We found that people from rice-farming cultures performed better on standardized tests. We found that people from rice-farming areas endorsed the value of hard work and perseverance more. This was true comparing countries around the world, counties within China, and people in the US with immigrant parents from different countries. Rice farming even explained differences in success in China's imperial exam system stretching back to the 1300s. The results suggest farming legacies shape educational outcomes in the modern day.

**About the speaker:**

Sudipta Sarangi is Professor & Department Head at the Department of Economics, Virginia Tech. His research interests range from network theory, experimental and behavioral economics to development economics. Prior to joining Virginia Tech, he was a Distinguished Professor of Business Administration at Louisiana State University and a Program Director at the National Science Foundation. He has been a consultant to organizations like the World Bank and FAO. Besides publishing in a wide range of journals, he currently serves on various editorial boards including journals like *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, *Journal of Public Economic Theory*, *Oxford Open Economics* and *Economic Modelling*. While he has published a number of academic books, his book *The Economics of Small Things* which explains economics using everyday phenomena aimed at non-economists was released by Penguin India in 2020. Most recently, he spent the 2023-24 academic year at the Collegium de Lyon as a Fellow of the French Institutes for Advanced Study.