



**Prof. Ashish Avikunthak**

**Title of the Talk:** Bureaucratic Archaeology: State, Science, and Past in Postcolonial India (2021)

**Brief Bio:** Dr Ashish Avikunthak is an Associate Professor of Film/Media at the Harrington School of Communication and Media, the University of Rhode Island. He is a filmmaker and a cultural anthropologist. His scholarly works have been published in the Journal of Social Archaeology, Journal of Material Culture, Contributions to Indian Sociology and The Indian Economic and Social History Review among other publications. He has a Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from Stanford University and before coming to URI, he had taught at Yale University.

**Abstract for the Talk:**

Bureaucratic Archaeology: State, Science, and Past in Postcolonial India, is a multi-faceted ethnography of quotidian practices of archaeology, bureaucracy and science in postcolonial India, concentrating on the workings of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). This book uncovers an endemic link between micro-practice of archaeology in the trenches of the ASI to the manufacture of archaeological knowledge, wielded in the making of political and religious identity and summoned as indelible evidence in the juridical adjudication in the highest courts of India. This book is a rare ethnography of the daily practice of a postcolonial bureaucracy from within rather than from the outside. It meticulously uncovers the social, cultural, political and epistemological ecology of ASI archaeologists to show how postcolonial state assembles and produces knowledge. This is the first book length monograph on the workings of archaeology in a non-western world, which meticulously shows how theory of archaeological practice deviates, transforms and generates knowledge outside the Euro-American epistemological tradition.