**Lingua Indica**:

The Shaping of Languages in the Indian Subcontinent

Prof. Peggy Mohan

**Course Description**

This is a course on the making of languages in the Indian subcontinent – how they emerged, and how they were shaped by powerful groups of migrants who moved across the north and down the western coast. According to geneticists, the major migrations after the arrival of the First Indians 65,000 years ago were all male-driven*,* menwho interbred with First Indian women, mixing the language streams in a characteristic way. This course will thus examine the evidence offered by geneticists, historians, archaeologists, and linguists to track who met whom, when, and how this created new communities in South Asia.

We will examine models of how languages mix, going on to look at different situations in the subcontinent where, over the ages, local elites and ‘little people’ came to terms in with new power structures which called for adjustments, creating prakrits as well as more radically mixed varieties. This will mean stretching our minds back to imagine how things might have been before the early empires appeared, spreading local prakrits across the north of this land. We will also see how that gave way to the connected web of languages we have today, with the influence of those early prakrits continuing to spread into India like slowly cooling lava. We will then go on to think about English, the newest player in Indian language power structure, and how this links to the other end of the life cycle: Indian languages threatened as their speaker communities move on to new languages.

**Weekly Topics**

Week One:

The basic model, and First Indians as a linguistic group

Week Two:

The Zagros farmer migration and the reconstruction an Indus Valley language

Week Three:

The Austro-Asiatic migration into the early Munda language region

Week Four:

The Dravidian settlement of South India and emergence of southern Dravidian languages

Week Five:

The Vedic migration into the Indus Valley region and the spread of Sanskrit and prakrits

Week Six:

The Māgadhan language zone

Week Seven:

The Delhi Sultanate and the emergence of the modern North Indian languages

Week Eight:

The emergence of Dakkhini in the Deccan

Week Nine:

The Ahom migration in the Northeast and Assamese

Week Ten:

The emergence of Nepali

Week Eleven:

The emergence of Nagamese in the Northeast

Week Twelve:

The arrival of the British and the spread of the English language in South Asia