

Gour Mahavidyalaya Research Committee Lecture Series

Understanding Jangalmahal: A Critical Analysis of Jangalmal's Economy, Culture and Revolts

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Abstract:

The four districts of West Bengal --Purulia, Bankura, Jhargram and Paschim Medinipur are popularly known as Jangalmahal. This piece of land is very ancient. When most of India including parts of Bengal were still under water, Jangalmahal emerged as a landform. So, the life-style of the people of this area is also ancient. Presently around 30% scheduled tribe and scheduled cast people like Santhal,Munda,Sabar,Kora,Bagdi,Dhoba, 63% other backward class people like Kurmi,Bagal,Kamar, Kumar Tanti, 7% general cast people like Bramhin,Boidhya, Kayastha live here. The land is a part of Chotonagpur plateau and maximum part is covered by forest. So, the economic structure and economic progress is different here from other parts of Bengal. In ancient period the economy totally depended on forest. It was a self-sustained economy. In 1865 British government introduced The Indian Forest Act. This is the first time the inhabitants of Jangalmahal lost their rights over forest, which was enjoyed by them from the ancient time. Since British period the loss of rights of the people over their forest decreased and it continues even today. After independence, central and state governments made several action plans to improve Jangalmahal's economy. But it was not effective. As a result the people of Jangalmahal live a hard life of struggle and poverty. They have raised their voices against the poor economy again and again. Many times the life struggle diverted into revolts such as Santhal revolt, Lodha revolt, Chuwar revolt, Jharkhand movement, Maoist movement etc.

The present paper aims to unmask the poor economy of Jangalmahal. Forest based economy, cultivation based economy and government action plans have been discussed. In this process the paper will look into the faults in the current approach to Jangalmahal and would suggest few points which might be relevant for addressing the pressing issues in Jangalmahal.

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12:00-1:00 pm

Seminar Hall, Gour Mahavidyalaya