

**Proposed International, Interdisciplinary Seminar
at the University of Calcutta during
6-8 March 2006
as part of the Post-Centenary
Golden Jubilee celebration
on**

**Environment, Livelihood and
Development in South Asia: Historical Probing
in a comparative framework**

As part of the Post-centenary Golden Jubilee Celebration (150 years) of the University of Calcutta (along with the universities of Madras and Mumbai) beginning from January 2006 onwards, it has been decided to hold several academic programmes in the University. The organization of international seminars/workshops throughout the whole year of 2006-07 is one of them. The proposed seminar mentioned above, duly approved by the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, is one of them to be held under the central auspices of the University of Calcutta.

The proposed seminar on Environment, Livelihood and Development in colonial and contemporary South Asia comes in this order. Our focus is on South Asia from the social science perspectives, but we also welcome comparative regional studies on the theme and collaborations with the Environmental Science Departments, especially in their broader considerations with social science perspectives. Eminent speakers from various countries of Europe (Sweden and France) and Asia (Japan and Bangladesh), the United States and renowned scholars from various parts of India including those from Madras and Mumbai are expected to present papers and participate in the seminar. The papers, duly revised and edited, would be published through a leading publisher of India.

Livelihood issues of the marginalised people in the various segments of the present and past societies in India are our major concern, seen through the broader looking glasses of environment and development over time. Locating environmental problems and knowledge in both global and local fields, and interrogating the diverse narratives of development, the social science perspectives spans and problematises the historical trajectories of livelihoods with special reference to the marginalized and dwell on their contemporary social and cultural relevance. Political ecology identifies the site of conflict over environment, constantly focussing on issues of social equity and justice in the sphere of conflicts over natural resources, often raising questions on development ideology at large. Survival, livelihood and sustenance – all come to the fore as subjects of serious enquiry as a corollary.

Survival becomes a crucial issue in the wake of massive degradation of land, forests, water and air in rural and urban India in colonial and post-colonial era. The displacement of people's livelihood as a result of large-scale dam projects, mining of minerals as bauxite and uranium, extensive deforestation and uneven developments in mega-cities in contemporary period is our major concerns. Re-interpreting tribal livelihood systems in the wake of capitalist exploitation, relocating marginalized villagers for the protection of wildlife sanctuaries, legislating and managing against the erosion people's rights over forests, fisheries and other common properties, and the problem of rehabilitation of the marginalized in metropolitan development regimes may also be included as likely sub-themes in our proposed seminar. Finally comes the issue of sustenance, which brings a wide range of subjects like different kinds of ecological movements and politics and the broader problem of sustainable development.

The interdisciplinary nature of the research field further requires integrated studies that would link livelihood studies with analyses of state, environment, social change and development in the contemporary South Asia. The renewed field of political ecology would generate both empirical and analytical research from the fields of History, Political Science, Economics, Sociology, Cultural Anthropology and Philosophy to bring the political logic of environmental conflicts, the debates on livelihood and sustainable development, to the central focus of our proposed seminar.

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