

Populism and Identity Politics: The Case of Purulia, West Bengal

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In populist political ideas, the people's identity gradually received importance. In the idea of populism, various types of shared identities among different groups of people are incorporated. During Mamata Banerjee's rule in West Bengal, various populist programmes such as, distribution of cycles to students, distribution of rice at Rs. 2/kg, schemes for peasants, folk artists, artisans, fisherfolk have been introduced. The introduction of Santali language in the primary level, donations for the Manjhithans of the Santals, patronage of Kurmali language, recognition of Kurmi Mahato artists encouraged the identities of Adivasis and caste groups, which intern paved the way for the rise of identity politics. Due to the weakness in the implementation of the populist programme, vernacular elites became richer and the Hinduwta forces of populism successfully mobilised the Adivasis and caste groups who are 'becoming Adivasi'. Thus, this paper seeks to explore the complexities and limitations populist politics and the emergence of identities of different social groups in Purulia.