

GUJARAT'S GAIN & BENGAL'S LOSS?

“Development,” Land Acquisition in India, and the Tata Nano Project:

A Comparison of Singur with Sanand

by Devparna Roy, Ph.D.

Tata Nano Car



Ratan Tata and Tata Nano Car



Political Map of India



Three Questions

- Why is it that there was a successful peasant-led resistance in Singur and no such resistance in Sanand?
- What kind of actors were the Singur peasants: were they agrarian bourgeoisie or were they small and middle peasants?
- What lessons do Singur and Sanand hold for Indian democracy and development?

Comparison of Political Regimes in Gujarat and West Bengal

- Ideologically, BJP and CPM are at opposite ends of the political spectrum.
- But there are many similarities between them.

Comparison of Political Regimes in Gujarat and West Bengal

- First, party organization: disciplined, cadre-based parties.
- Second, longevity of political regimes: BJP ruling Gujarat since 1998, CPM ruling Bengal since 1977.

Comparison of Political Regimes in Gujarat and West Bengal

Third, despite political rhetoric, both parties have reincarnated themselves:

- BJP: Hindutva + development
- CPM: communism + development

Comparison of Political Regimes in Gujarat and West Bengal

- Both BJP and CPM are in tune with neoliberal globalization:
- “Development is above politics.”

Comparison of Political Regimes in Gujarat and West Bengal

- GUJARAT

- Depoliticization of Development
- Ruling party's hegemony over rural areas
- "Vikas Purush Modi" (Man for Development)

- WEST BENGAL

- Depoliticization of Development
- Ruling party's hegemony over rural areas
- "Brand Buddha" combines communism with "development"

Gujarat and West Bengal Chief Ministers

- “Vikas Purush Modi”



- “Brand Buddha”



“Brand Buddha” with Ratan Tata



- The Game of Development: Bengal loses?

“Vikas Purush” Modi with Ratan Tata

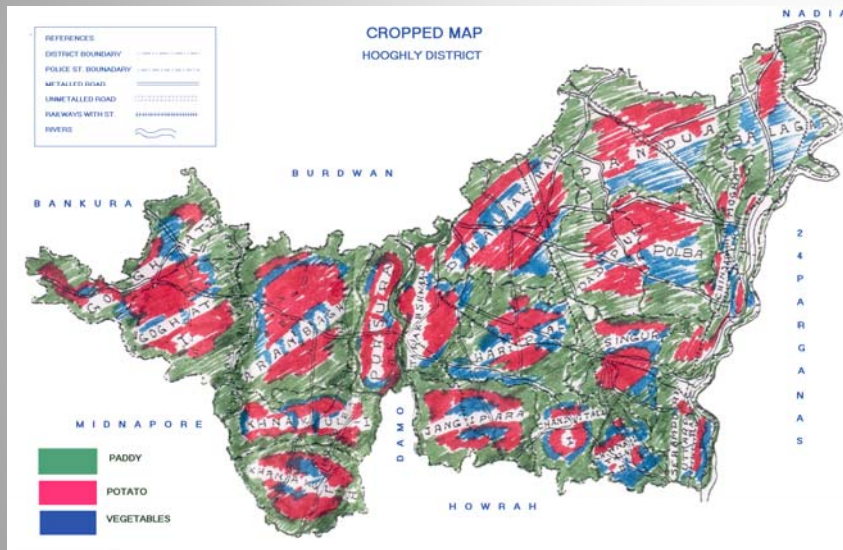


- The Game of Development: Gujarat wins?

Singur Resistance

- 997 acres of land obtained from five villages of Singur block:
- Agriculturalists who voluntarily gave land (334 acres): 264.
- Agriculturalists who resisted giving land: 996 (600 acres).

Singur Block



- Main crops: rice, potatoes, jute, vegetables.
- Some are farmers, practicing agriculture for profit and accumulation.
- Sharecroppers and landless laborers too exist.

Why Singur peasants were able to organize a successful resistance?

- First: legacy of 1940s Tebhaga Movement
- Second: relatively fragile hegemony of CPM.
Singur: stronghold of Trinamool Congress

Why Singur peasants were able to organize a successful resistance?

Coalition of peasants with:

- opposition political parties (TMC, SUCI)
- urban intellectuals and journalists
- activists and NGOs (NAPM).

Singur Resistance

- Initially, news about Tata factory was received with enthusiasm.
- But when details of land acquisition became known, peasants organized themselves.
- SKJRC proved 80% of land targeted for expropriation was multicrop.

Why Singur peasants were able to create a successful resistance?

- Third, coeval struggle against chemical SEZ in Nandigram.
- Successful Nandigram struggle.

Why Singur peasants were able to create a successful resistance?

- Intersectorality of peasants unwilling to hand over land with the politicization of the resistance led to its success.

Singur Protesters



Trinamool Chief Mamata Bannerjee



Mamata addressing rally in WB



Other Singur activists: writer Mahasweta Devi



Other Singur activists: Medha Patkar of NAPM



Why No Peasant Resistance in Sanand?

- State agricultural university had about 1000 acres of land in Sanand.
- This land was acquired by Gujarat government and transferred to Tata.

Why No Peasant Resistance in Sanand?

- Gujarat government now in process of acquiring 5,000 acres of farmland for industrial estate.
- Sanand peasants have started protesting.

Farmers protesting against Sanand GIDC (January 2010)



Second Question

- What kind of actors were the unwilling Singur peasants?
- They were small and middle peasants, not agrarian bourgeoisie.

Characterization of Singur Peasants

- The Bengal government was not favoring urban bourgeoisie over rural bourgeoisie.
- The government was dispossessing small and middle farmers.

Third Question

- What are the lessons of the Singur and Sanand episodes for Indian democracy and development?

Three Answers

- First lesson:
- Subnational state governments of all political stripes attempt to foist corporate-led industrialization model on rural populations.

Three Answers

- Second Lesson:
- Protests of Singur type will lead to creation of effective democracy i.e., robust civil society (not just strong state alone).

Three Answers

- Third Lesson:
- Organization by peasants and activists not enough.
- Opposition political party intervention and media support necessary for success.

Singur Resistance

- Singur resistance has led to questioning as to:
- What “development” means for peasants;
- Whether “agriculture-to-industry” trope is optimum solution for Indians;
- What “corporate-led industrialization” can offer peasants.

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Singur Today

- Tata scrapped project but continues to lease the land.
- Land not returned to farmers; not good for anything else except industry.

Singur Counter-Movement



Tata Factory at Sanand

- Gujarat emerging as “auto-hub.”



Changing Sanand Landscape?



Who won? Who lost?

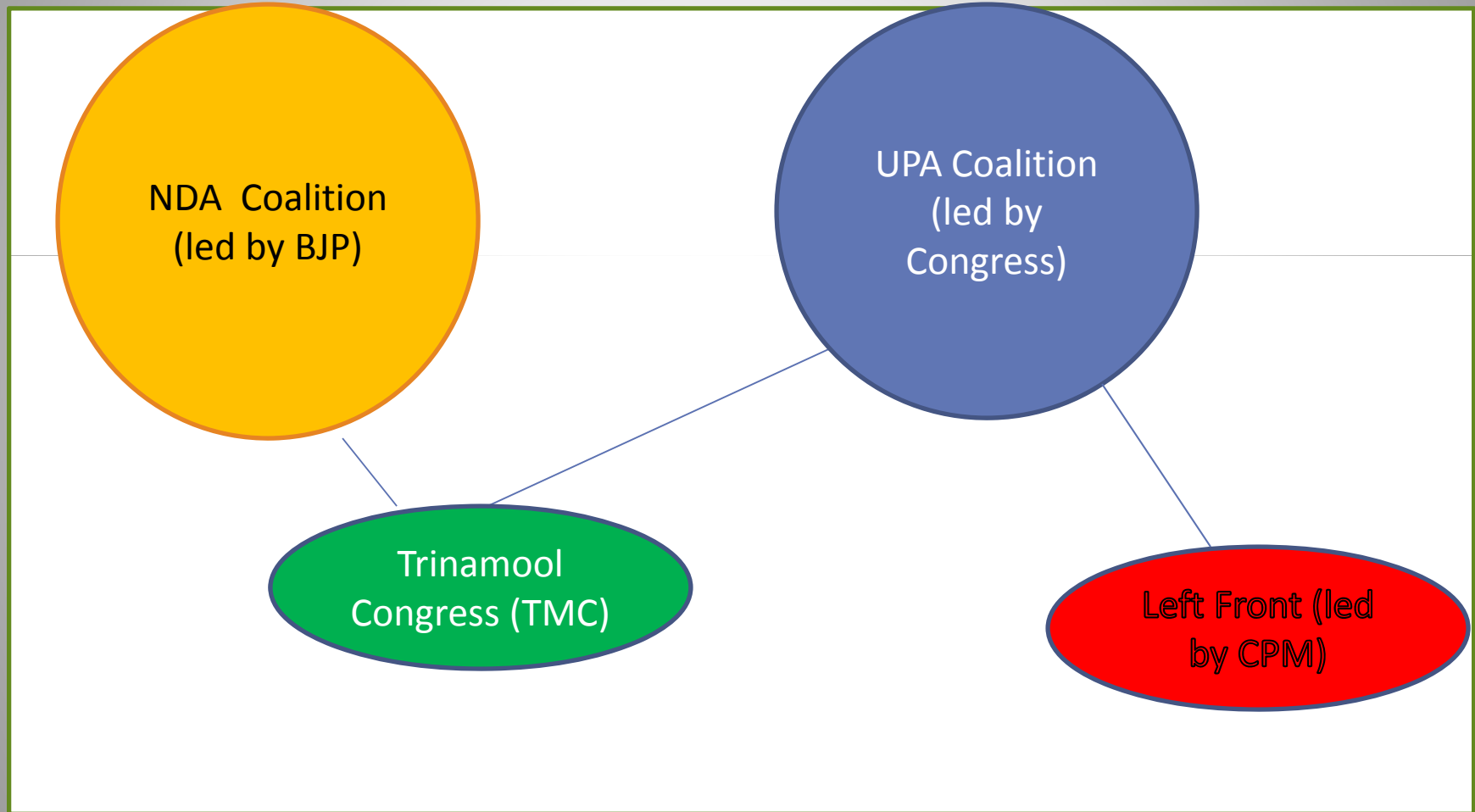
- Singur:
- CPM and Left Front: Loser
- TMC: Winner
- NAPM and other NGOs: Winners
- Peasants: ???

Who won? Who lost?

- Sanand:
- BJP: Winner
- Peasants (for GIDC estate): Short-term winners but long-term losers?

- Thank you for listening to me patiently!

Center and State: the Changing Partners



Politics at the Center

- 1998: National Democratic Alliance (led by BJP) forms govt.
- 1998-2004: NDA rules country
- 2004: United Progressive Alliance (led by Congress) forms govt.
- 2004-2009: UPA rules country
- 2009 elections: UPA forms govt.

Two Major Alliances at Center

- NDA
 - Led by BJP
 - Center-Right
 - Never supported by CPM and Left
 - Supported by Trinamool Congress from 2004 to 2007
- UPA
 - Led by Congress
 - Center-Left
 - Supported by CPM and Left Front from 2004 to 2008
 - Supported by Trinamool Congress from 2008 onwards

Choice at Center: NDA vs. UPA



Bengal CM and Chief Contender

- CM Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee



- TMC chief Mamata Bannerjee



Politics in West Bengal

- State ruled by CPM-led Left Front coalition continuously since 1977 = the “Red” state of India!
- Two chief ministers from 1977 till present:
Jyoti Basu (CM from 1977 to 1999)
Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee (CM from 2000)

Achievements of Left Front Rule in WB

- Land Reform (Operation Barga)
- Panchayati Raj reforms
- No “communal” (Hindu-Muslim) or “caste” riots
- Agricultural growth of 2.5%

Chief Minister Bhattacharjee and Ratan Tata

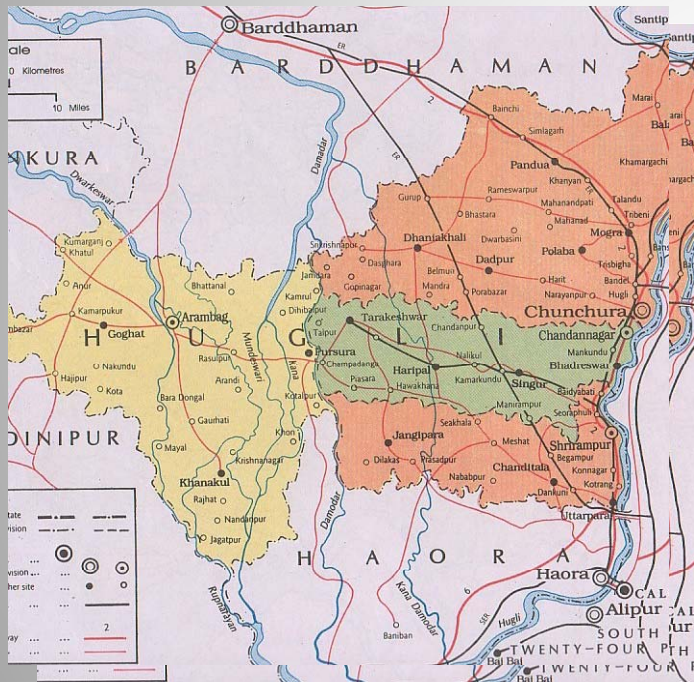


Political Map of West Bengal



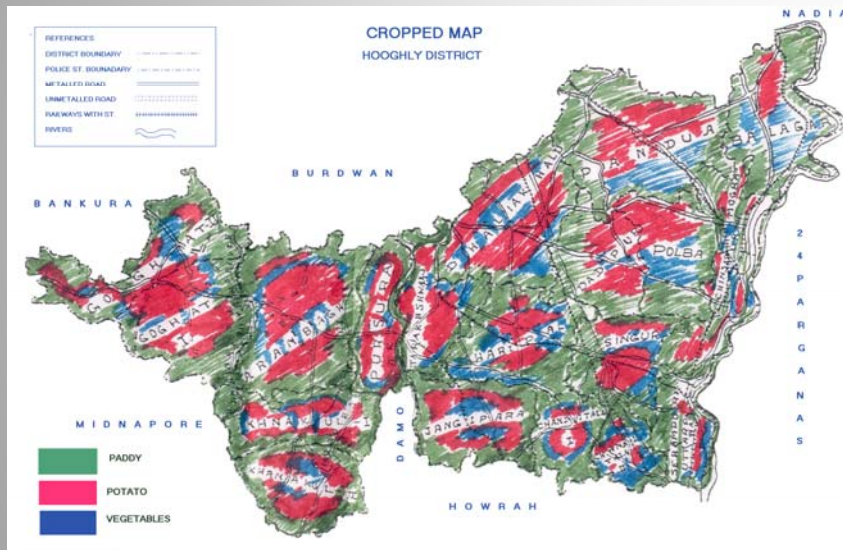
- Population (2001): 45 million
- Urban: 15 million
- Rural: 30 million
- Highest population density in country

Map of Hooghly District



- Hooghly district is subdivided into many divisions.
- Singur community development block consists of one municipality (Singur census town) and 16 villages (each with its own gram panchayat).

Singur



- Main crops: rice, potatoes, jute, vegetables.
- Many are farmers, practicing agriculture for profit and accumulation.
- Sharecroppers and landless laborers too exist.

Chronology of events: Singur resistance

- May 16, 2006: Bhattacharjee becomes CM of WB for second consecutive term. That day, Ratan Tata announces Singur project.
- May 25: Tata officials visit Singur. Villagers protest. Resistance begins.

Chronology of events: Singur resistance

- December 2006: Tapasi Mallick murder
- October 2008: Tata announces shift from Singur to Sanand (Gujarat) citing violence as problem.

Tata Nano Project at Singur

- 997 acres of land were obtained from five villages of Singur block:
- Agriculturalists who had voluntarily given land (334 acres): 264.
- Agriculturalists who resisted giving land for the project: 996 (600 acres).

Demands of Protestors

- Farmers: “More compensation”
- Political Parties: TMC: “Against forced acquisition of land”; SUCI: “Against industrialization”
- NeoGandhian Environmentalists (CSOs): “Against industrialization”
- Four different narratives

Were the goals met?

- Tata scrapped project but continues to lease the land.
- Land not returned to farmers; not good for anything else except industry







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Why Singur resistance was successful?

- Role of political society (TMC, SUCI etc.)
- Role of civil society organizations (neoGandhians, environmentalists etc.)
- Role of Nandigram resistance
- Anti-incumbency factor
- History of peasant struggle in Singur (Tebhaga)
- Fear of violence

Counter-movement







AHMEDABAD DISTRICT



Map not to Scale

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(Updated on 2nd November 2010)

Chronology of Events in Sanand

- October 2008: Land acquired by Gujarat Govt. transferred by GAU to Gujarat govt. This land was originally owned by farmers who had given the land to pashupalan samiti. Land prices shoot up. Farmers become millionaires.
- June 2010: first Nano car rolls out of factory.
- January 2009: state govt wants to get 5,000 acres of land for GIDC estate surrounding Tata Nano site.

Tata Factory at Sanand



Farmers protest at Sanand (Jan. 2010)





