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Comparative Analysis of Singur And Nandigram Movement Through The Lense of Land Politics

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Abstract:

The tendency of economic growth with industrialization using the forcible land acquisition policy has started a bloody movement in the Indian state of West Bengal. Singur and Nandigram movement tried to express when the livelihood and source of income of the peasants is agriculture in a trigger mouth condition for the result of acquisition, and then they can go for its extreme level. This paper tried to establish that how land acquisition policy occurred in the two places and as a result the local movement spread out not only nationally but also internationally. Here the author explains although the movement occurred in same situation but the result and the outcome of the movement are different and express comparison of two places.

Keywords: Industrialization, Land Acquisition, Singur, Nandigram, Movement.

Introduction: Land related problems are not a new feature in Indian scenario. From the medieval eta to still present times we observed various types of land movement in different place of the state and as an example Singur and Nandigram movement was another two important movement not only in land politics perspective but also entering in the new beginning of new political rule of West Bengal. "Scarcity of land, however, has proved to be a serious problem in many third world countries including India where protest movements have erupted against the forcible acquisition of land by the Government for development and industrialization. When land is acquired for the purpose of industrialization, it invariably entails eviction of people from their traditional livelihood and surroundings. The recent experience in the Indian state of West Bengal would testify that this is a matter with grave socio-political consequences, critical enough to disrupt and perhaps even stall the pace of industrialization in India." (Chkroborty, P.-64) This article would focus on the reasons behind the land acquisition and the inception of a comparative analysis of Singur and Nandigram movement.

Singur Movement at a glance: Singur is a 45Km away from Kolkata and now a days a most burning block in the Hoogly district. Singur is basically agriculture based peasant community area but there was two different ideological conflicts made the incident in the

limelight. Most of the area of Singur is fertile enough so that peasant community is in instable condition and in the other side that the dominant class tried to establish their political power and ideological ideas in terms of grasping the fertile land of peasant.

The massive victory of the Left front Government in the election of 2006 promoted the then Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and Ratan Tata had proposed a beneficial project for the betterment of the livelihood people at large. In a letter Tata Motors Ltd. specifically stated that their team visited the area and met the representatives of the Government and also expressed that positive attitude and consent of the willing farmer expressed that there was no disruption to establish the project.

In the process of the agreement allocation of compensation landowners were received 8.7lakhs per acre for single-cropped land, 12.8lakhs per acre for double-cropped land, registered bargaders were received 25% of the value being offered to owners. West Bengal Industrial Development Cooperation (WBIDC) admits according to physical investigation total number of recorded bargaders applied for some compensation to them. The first agitation was formed with the help of local peasant on 25th May 2006 in the wake of this confrontation. The “Krishi Jami Raksha Committee” voices their grievances demanding return of the land to the unwilling framers and as a result the entry of the Tata Group was obstructed by the people and a chaos ensure in the shape of Political tarmoil.

On Sept 25th 2006, when final disbursement day came the local block office was surrounded by thousands of protesters. The police finally started lathi charged and as a result of one death and several injuris happened.

Ceremonial inauguration of construction of factory took place on January 21, 2007. “Mamta Banerjee called a Bangla Bandh on 1st December, protesting against police brutalities and demanding the return of 400 acres, which the landowners were unwilling to give up. She then went on a 25 day Anasan (Hunger strike) only to withdraw call at the request of the Present and Prime mister on 28th December”. (Ananda Bazar Patrika,30,2006)

Construction process of the project continued throughout 2007 and the first half of 2008 but in between investors faced several disruption at work and finally Tata Motors withdraw the project on 3rd October 2008, in the press conference, Chairman of the Tata Group, Ratan Tata stated: “This is a decision that has been taken with a great deal of sadness because we came here two years ago, attracted by the investor-friendly policies of the current government, which we still have a great deal of respect for, the leadership of Mr, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee. And all through the two years that we worked, we are very appreciative of the support that the government gave us and the facilitation that they provided. Unfortunately, we also faced great agitation and great aggression on the part of the opposing parties, which have been the sole reason for us to take this decision”. (The Telegraph, October 4th 2008).

Singur Land Acquisition Movement Issue: At a glance 2006-2016

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| May 18, 2006 | The then Tata Group Chairman Ratan Tata announces Nano small car plant at Singur in Hoogly, West Bengal on the day Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee is sworn in as state Chief Minister for another term. |
| May 25, 2006 | Farmers demonstrate protesting over forcible” acquisition of land for the Tata Car project. |
| July 18, 2006 | Trinamool Congress Supremo Mamata Banerjee sows paddy near Tata factory site to protest forcible” acquisition of land. |
| December, 2006 | Demonstrations against the acquisition begin. |
| December, 2006 | Mamata Banerjee holds 26-day hunger strike |
| December 29, 2006 | Mamta Banerjee calls off her indefinite hunger strike following appeals by then President A.P.J.Abdul Kalm and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. |
| January 21, 2007 | Tata Motors starts manufacture of Nano car Plant in Singur. |
| March 9, 2007 | Tatas and state government link Singur land deal lease. |
| May 24, 2007 | Peace talks between state governments, Trinamool fail. |
| June 14, 2007 | State government rules out returning land to farmers. |
| January 18, 2008 | High Court Calcutta upholds Singur land acquisition, following which farmers and NGO moved the Supreme Court of India challenging the Calcutta High Court order. |
| February 15, 2008 | Tatas announce Nano roll out by October. |
| August 18, 2008 | Budhadeb Bhattacharjee invites Mamta Banerjee for talks. |
| August 20, 2008 | Talks between states Government, Trinamool Congress fail. |
| August 22, 2008 | Ratan Tata says Nano will move out of West Bengal if violence at Singur persists. |
| August 24, 2008 | Mamata Banerjee starts indefinite dharna at outside the car plant |
| September 2, 2008 | Tata Motors suspends work on Nano Plant,says alternative sites being explored. |
| September 3, 2008 | Governor of West Bengal Gopal Krishna Gandhi plays mediator; Government and Trinamool agree to hold dialogues. |
| September 5, 2008 | The Government of West Bengal and Trinamool Congress started negotiations, a meeting is held in Raj Bhavan. |
| September 7, 2008 | A media release from Raj Bhavan says, “the government has taken the decision to respond to the demands of those farmers who have not received compensation”. |
| September 14, 2008 | West Bengal government announces improved compensation package for Singur landlosers. |
| October 3, 2008 | Tata Motors decided to leave Singur, shift to Sanand in Gujrat. |

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| October 7, 2008 | Tata Motors announces new Nano plant at Sanand in Gujarat. |
| May 20, 2011 | Mamata Banerjee sworn in Chief Minister of West Bengal, declares first Cabinet decision to return 400 acres of land to unwilling Singur farmers. |
| June 9, 2011 | The Government brings ordinance and takes over 997 acres citing non-performance by Tata Motors. |
| June 14, 2011 | Singur Land Rehabilitation and Development Bill, 2011 passed in West Bengal Assembly. |
| June 22, 2011 | Tata Motors moves Calcutta High Court seeking ex-parte relief on Singur land. |
| June 29, 2011 | Supreme Court orders the state Government to stop distributing land until further notice from the court. |
| September 28, 2011 | Calcutta High Court single bench upholds the Singur Land Rehabilitation and Development Act, 2011. |
| October 29, 2011 | Tata Motors challenges Calcutta High Court order before division bench. |
| June 22, 2012 | A Calcutta High Court division bench holds the Singur Land Rehabilitation and Development Act, 2011 as unconstitutional and void. |
| August 6, 2012 | The West Bengal Government challenges the Calcutta High Court order in the Supreme Court. |
| August 31, 2016 | Supreme Court sets aside land acquisition for the Tata's Nano project in West Bengal's Singur, and orders state government to return the land to all within 12 weeks. |

Nandigram Uprising: Now we shift our vision into another important area, which is also another part of this paper i.e. Nandigram uprising. Nandigram is located 150 Km away from Kolkata, rural area of East Medinipore district of the West Bengal situated opposite to the industrial town of Haldia Development Authority (HDA). “The Nandigram movement started on 2nd January 2007, when a notice was officially issued by Haldia Development Authority (HDA) that about 14,500 acres of agricultural land would be acquired from the peasants of Nandigram block. Since then, people of the affected villages of Nandigram block started a violent protest movement opposing such despotic acquisition of their agricultural and homestead land. They formed two independent people’s organisations named “Gana Unnayan and Jana Adhikar Sangram Samity” (Association for Mass Development and People’s Rights) and “Krishi Jami O Janaswartha Raksha Committee” (committee for Protection of Agricultural Lands and Public Interest) to protect their life and livelihoods (Das, 2007)”.

On 31st July 2006 Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya signed a deal with the representatives of the Selim Group. It specified that the Indonesian company would set up, among a slew of other infrastructural projects, a chemical hub SEZ at Nandigram as part of

the proposed Petrochemicals and Petroleum Investment Region (PCPIR). The projects, it was said, were to bring in investments worth RS 400 billion to investment starved West Bengal. In 2005 Bhattacharya had made a trip to Singapore and Jakarta and returned with what he called a “package deal” with the Indonesian business giant.

“Laxman Seth, The MP from here had pronounced that the land here was one crop, that people here were waiting with folded hands to offer their land ‘for industry.’ The moment he said this, the local folks got infuriated- ‘Lies, there isn’t a bigger lie than this. This land is our lung, our lifeblood. If we give that up what are we left with? Neither life, nor honour.’ The women were icons of fortitude. On 29th December 2006, Laxman Seth, chairman of the Haldia Development Authority (HAD)- under whose jurisdictions falls Nandigram-addressed a public meeting. The aim was to convince the people of the necessity of land acquisition. On 2nd January 2007 HAD issued a preliminary notice indicating a plan to acquire about 14,500 acres of land in twenty-seven mouzas in Nandigram Block 1 and in two mouzas in Khejuri Block 2. It was also made clear that 12,500 acres in Nandigram would be acquired immediately, because the construction work would soon begin for the mega chemical hub by the Selim Group and a shipbuilding-cum-repairing unit by the Pawan Ruia industrial group. As the news spread, more than a thousand people gathered at the Kalicharanpur panchayat office at Garchakraberia”. (Sarkar, Chowdhury, P-75-77)

“According to newspaper reports and the People’s Tribunal on Nandigram (2007), on March 14, 2007, two forces comprised of 300 and 500 armed policemen gathered at two entry points into Nandigram- one from the Tekhali Bridge, Gokulnagar, Adhikaripara and the other from the side of Bhangabera Bridge, near Sonachura at around 9.30 am, the police entered the area from the sides of Nandigram and Khejuri respectively. The forces, as alleged by the opposition group included local leaders and hundreds of Communist Party Of India (Marxist) cadres as well, clothed in khaki police dress, with sandals on their feet and cops. The police fired indiscriminately at people, including women and children. Fourteen people died, one went missing and hundreds were injured, the majority of whom were women. Many women were also alleged to have been sexually assaulted both by the police and the party cadres. Surprisingly, the local police did not even record a First Information Report (FIR) or report these incidents to the District Magistrate. The Times of India observed in its 15th March issue: “In a shameless display of muscle power, thousands of CPI (M) men sealed off all access points along a 30 Kilometers radius around Nandigram and disallowed journalists from entering the area, while the police continued a bloodbath on Wednesday morning. In a carefully orchestrated plan, the administration stayed away from Digha Road- the highway from which numerous roads meander into Nandigram. Instead, CPI (M) supporters took the position, setting up checkpoints at strategic points to flush out media persons from vehicles headed towards Nandigram.”(The Times of India, 2007)

A comparative analysis of two movements: This paper basically continued with three basic areas, First, Singur movement second, Nandigram uprising and lastly comparison of these two movement. In the last part writer explain the similarities and differences between

two movements. Both the movements had been started with the help of villagers and mostly peasant's society, against Government's role of development. Both the cases mass uprising happened near about same time of this millennium. Villagers started the agitation for the sake of their livelihood and it was very spontaneous reaction of the society not at all any political pressure or other supports. In the starting phase of this movement opposition party was not directly in the scenario but the time passed villagers were less important and opposition party took the pulse of the movement. In Nandigram local villagers, peasants, woman, children played the crucial role with the help of TMC leaders Shuvendu Adhikari and others but in the case of Singur the opposition TMC party supremo Mamata Banerjee was the center figure of this movements. She politically or tactfully used the atmosphere to establish that all the movement were done for the benefit of local mass and as a result she received supports from various sections of people, "Budhijibi Goshthi" and others not at all from state inside but from nationwide. Both the movement carries several numbers of similarities but as well as the differences. In Singur forcible land acquisition was happened and agitation was its spontaneous reaction but in Nandigram there was no land acquisition was happened only rumor made this kind of unutterable condition. Basically Singur movement was generally non-violent except one or two incident but Nandigram movement was very violent and undemocratic. Mamata Banerjee used the nonviolent strategy i.e hungur strike to solve the situation in Singur but in Nandigram protesters blocked the area long ten months. In conclusion it can be explained that peasants are never ready to compromise their basic demands. Land which itself is a very precious element and holds a special value to farmers life. Therefore, we have to very sensitive and cautious of the peasants who would lose their land and very careful when this land would be in use for project of industry or in the name of development.

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