

**THE RISE OF OPPOSITIONS
POLITICS OF LAND, PATRONAGE, AND
RESISTANCE IN WEST BENGAL**

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI

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by

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Certificate

It is to certify that the thesis entitled “**The Rise of Oppositions: Politics of Land, Patronage, and Resistance in West Bengal**” being submitted by **Ms. Suchismita Das (Entry No. 2016HUZ8181)** to the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi for the award of **Doctor of Philosophy** in department of Humanities and Social Sciences is a record of the bonafide research work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance. She has fulfilled the requirements for the submission of this thesis, which to the best of my knowledge has reached the requisite standard.

The material contained in the thesis has not been submitted in part or full to other university or institute for the award of any other degree or diploma.

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suchismita Das" with a small flourish at the end.

Suchismita Das

Abstract

This thesis explores the rise of oppositions in West Bengal, a state that has been historically known for the uninterrupted rule of the incumbent regime and a lack of viable oppositions. A strong opposition is fundamental to any democracy, but in a state where oppositions are conspicuously attenuated, the very rise of oppositions becomes a cause for sociological enquiry. The politics of patronage, land and resistance are pivotal factors in this rise of oppositions. The CPI(M)'s uninterrupted rule of thirty four years is characterized by a deep entrenchment. The resistance against land acquisition in Singur became emblematic of the demise of this entrenched regime, and the rise of the TMC, a decade ago. A decade later, Singur witnesses the rise of the next opposition, namely the BJP. Thus, the political field of Singur has allowed for the rise of *two* successive oppositions, over the course of just one decade, in a state that has been historically hostile to oppositions. The field work for this thesis has thus focused on the villages of Singur, which reveal the forces that have led to the rise of these oppositions despite this traditional hostility. The TMC's projection as a powerful opposition became associated with its role in resistance to land acquisition. Thus, this thesis also studies the events unfolding in Bhangar, where the TMC tried to acquire land after coming to power. Bhangar was beset with violence over this acquisition and a study of these events show how a party that rose through resistance, came to manage resistance to land acquisition during its own tenure. This also reveals how the state and the protesters responded to land acquisition and resistance under two separate regimes. This thesis explores how state violence plays a paradoxical role of both endangering and engendering oppositions. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'feel for the game' helps to explain why and how people shift allegiances to a rising opposition even before it comes to power. This thesis has engaged with the concept of the state to understand how the state can be located not only in the architecture of the government but also in processes that exist in the opposition – albeit an opposition that has the support of a larger, national government. Some important factors in the rise of oppositions include defiance, and the support of larger structures of power, which in themselves acquire a magnetic quality in West Bengal. Although the need and desire for oppositions may be felt due to various malpractices of the regime, they remain unaddressed till the opposition itself acquires a formidable stature through unabashed defiance and support of larger power structures. This thesis thus studies the rise of this phenomenon, locating it in the political field of Singur as a product of the past decade.

सार

यह अध्ययन पश्चिम बंगाल में विपक्ष के उदय की शोध करती है, एक राज्य जो ऐतिहासिक रूप से अवलंबी शासन और व्यवहार्य विपक्ष की कमी के लिए जाना जाता है। एक मजबूत विपक्ष किसी भी लोकतंत्र के लिए मौलिक है, लेकिन एक राज्य में जहां विरोधों को स्पष्ट रूप से कमजोर किया जाता है, विपक्ष का बढ़ जाना समाजशास्त्रीय जांच का कारण बन जाता है। विरोध की इस वृद्धि में संरक्षण, भूमि और प्रतिरोध की राजनीति महत्वपूर्ण कारक हैं। सीपीआई (एम) का तीस वर्षों का निर्बाध शासन एक गहरी परिधि द्वारा विशेषता है। सिंगूर में भूमि अधिग्रहण के खिलाफ प्रतिरोध एक दशक पहले टीएमसी के उदय, और सीपीआई (एम) के निधन के प्रतीक बन गए। एक दशक बाद, सिंगूर में अगले विपक्ष, अर्थात् भाजपा का उदय हुआ। इस प्रकार, सिंगूर के राजनीतिक क्षेत्र ने लगातार एक दशक के दौरान दो विपक्षों के उदय की अनुमति दी है, जो राज्य में ऐतिहासिक रूप से विरोधों के विरोधी रहे हैं। इस अध्ययन के क्षेत्र कार्य ने इस प्रकार सिंगूर के गांवों पर ध्यान केंद्रित किया है, जो इस पारंपरिक शत्रुता के बावजूद इन विरोधों के बढ़ने का कारण बनती है। टीएमसी का एक शक्तिशाली विपक्ष के रूप में प्रक्षेपण भूमि अधिग्रहण के प्रतिरोध में अपनी भूमिका से जुड़ा। इस प्रकार, यह अध्ययन भांगर में सामने आने वाली घटनाओं का भी अध्ययन करता है, जहां टीएमसी ने सत्ता में आने के बाद जमीन हासिल करने की कोशिश की। भांगर इस अधिग्रहण पर हिंसा से घिरे हुए थे और इन घटनाओं के एक अध्ययन से पता चलता है कि कैसे एक पार्टी जो प्रतिरोध के माध्यम से बढ़ी, अपने स्वयं के कार्यकाल के दौरान भूमि अधिग्रहण के प्रतिरोध का प्रबंधन करने के लिए आई। इससे यह भी पता चलता है कि राज्य और प्रदर्शनकारियों ने दो अलग-अलग शासनों के तहत भूमि अधिग्रहण और प्रतिरोध का जवाब कैसे दिया। इस शोध पत्र में इस अवधारणा का अध्ययन किया गया है कि कैसे राज-हिंसा राज-विरोध को जन्म भी देती है और उसका संहार साधन भी करती है। पियरे बोरडियू की 'फील फॉर द गेम' की अवधारणा यह समझाने में मदद करती है कि सत्ता में आने से पहले ही लोग बढ़ते विपक्ष के प्रति निष्ठा क्यों और कैसे स्थानांतरित करते हैं। यह अध्ययन राज्य की अवधारणा के साथ लगी हुई है कि यह समझने के लिए कि राज्य न केवल सरकार की वास्तुकला में स्थित हो सकता है, बल्कि ऐसी प्रक्रियाएं भी हो सकती हैं जो विपक्ष में मौजूद हैं - एक विपक्ष जो एक बड़े, राष्ट्रीय सरकार का समर्थन करता है। विरोधों के उदय में कुछ महत्वपूर्ण कारकों में अवहेलना, और सत्ता की संरचनाओं का समर्थन शामिल है, जो स्वयं पश्चिम बंगाल में एक चुंबकीय गुणवत्ता प्राप्त करते हैं। यद्यपि शासन की विभिन्न कुप्रथाओं के कारण विरोध की आवश्यकता और इच्छा को महसूस किया जा सकता है, लेकिन वे तब तक अनियंत्रित रहते हैं जब तक कि विपक्ष खुद को बड़ी शक्ति संरचनाओं के समर्थन के माध्यम से एक दुर्जय कद प्राप्त नहीं करता है। यह अध्ययन इस प्रकार इस घटना के उदय का अध्ययन करती है, पिछले एक दशक के उत्पाद के रूप में सिंगूर के राजनीतिक क्षेत्र में इसका पता लगाती है।

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