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With flowers and capsicum in the driver's seat, food sovereignty is impossible: A comparison of the politics of agricultural policy in two Indian states, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh

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Abstract

According to the International Food Policy Research Institute's Global Hunger Index, 2011, India ranks 67th among the 81 countries of the world with poorest food security; and this is when some states in the country have registered very high rates of growth in agriculture. The objective here is to understand how these contradictory facts coexist. To build such an understanding, the drivers of agricultural growth has been identified in this paper which includes two primary factors - classes of farmers whose interests dominate policy-making and examine how tenets of new policy are furthering class interests of ruling classes. It explored the industrial bourgeoisie alongside rural big farmer and landlord interest to see what character they have assumed in post-liberalisation era. This explained why there has been a shift from land reforms to input-centricity as the core of India's post-liberalisation agricultural policy. The two states compared are Gujarat and Chhattisgarh based on empirical evidence gathered through fieldwork.

1. Introduction

According to the International Food Policy Research Institute's Global Hunger Index, 2011, India ranks 67th among the 81 countries of the world with poorest food security; and this is when some states in the country have registered very high rates of growth in agriculture. The objective here is to understand how these contradictory facts coexist. To build such an understanding, the drivers of agricultural growth will be identified in this paper which includes two primary factors - classes of farmers whose interests dominate policy-making and examine how tenets of new policy are benefitting them. It will also look into other classes whose interests dominate the state to explain the shift from land reforms to input-centricity which marks India's post-liberalisation policy. The two states compared are Gujarat and Chhattisgarh based on empirical evidence gathered through fieldwork. Gujarat is a west Indian state, reputed world over for its economic achievements and powerful and controversial chief minister, Narendra Modi; while Chhattisgarh is a newly formed state in central India, been in news mostly for its political disturbances and rapid growth since formation. A commonality is both these states are ruled by the same political party-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Recent literature indicates a blissful marriage between the economic and political interests in Gujarat. The state has been favourably disposed towards the industrial bourgeoisie, the highest expression of the same being in facilitating land acquisition (Sud 2007). My fieldwork has found Gujarat to be decisive in the ambits of both policy-making and implementation. It has taken strident steps towards rapid industrialisation, focusing particularly on real estate. Alongside industrial success, agricultural growth has touched 10 per cent, the highest in the country

between 2002 and 2012. The fieldwork shows that the origin of this high growth lies in two phases of shift in cropping pattern: the first from food crops to cash crops, and second stage to floriculture and horticulture accompanied by intensive use of chemicals and machines. The not so glorious part of the story is that the nutritional poverty levels in Gujarat are higher than all-India levels (Dixit 2011).

Chhattisgarh is a relatively new state formed in 2000 bringing together the tribal dominated regions of the erstwhile state of Madhya Pradesh in Central India. Thus authoritative literature on this state is limited. My fieldwork indicates that the state in Chhattisgarh is a weak entity, under almost total control of the trader and industrial classes. The state has parallelly registered high agricultural growth and been recognized by the Union Government in 2011 as the highest paddy producing state beating the Green Revolution states.

Politically the states do not exert similar control and economically, they are in two different stages of economic development, and yet both of them are food insecure. This paper would attempt to weave these diverse facts together through understanding the political economy of agricultural policy in these two states and speculate as to why they have adopted them. The second question (regarding the reasons of adoption) will be answered through a class analysis of the states and their negotiations with the State machinery - political leaders and institutions. This will contribute to unfurl why with the current class dynamics, the Indian state cannot strive towards food sovereignty and food security.

2. Theoretical framework

Jessop (1983) provides a detailed analysis of the way the present-day capitalist state interacts with the dominant classes. He argues that there is a close relation between monopolies and state apparatus, to the extent of 'personal fusion' where monopolists or their kin come to occupy seats in highest echelons of the state. In this scheme, political parties act as instruments of ideological control, the loyalty being established by monopolies investing in parties, elections campaigns among others. He also argues that another mechanism commonly seen is the presence of interest association, lobbies, contact with politicians and individuals in influencing policy decisions which increases under monopoly capitalism; immediate contact with politicians and public officials often take the form of control over means of 'mental production', through controlling school curriculum, media, even religious institutions.

Two crucial points that Jessop makes is that along with the concentration of economic and political power, there is a simultaneous and almost complementary 'immiserisation of proletariat' and decentralisation of power to micro-economic and/or local political levels. The former is done to keep the supply of labour going, and a pull of unemployed labour constant to keep wages low. Decentralization is carried out in order to refine the control of capital over

even the smallest areas of surplus production or consumption and/or to facilitate penetration of state control into all areas of social life (1983, p.59).

However, it should be noted that the analysis put forth so far, with exception of Byres' (1997) contribution, are based on writings on the Northern Monopoly Capitalist State. So the question is how this can be made useful for states in the South where classes might differ. As I see it, both Jessop and Poulantzas (un) provide a framework for the analysis of the relationship between the dominant social groups and the state which is relevant across capitalist states in today's world. The actual specific content of this relationship in any country will vary and can only be decided after a class analysis of that society.

It is worth mentioning that the class and state relation is not one-way and the State also plays significant role in shaping classes through its policies. For instance, in India, reservation in most cases has picked individuals from lower castes and made them members of a different class, in such a way that they often identify with the class interest over and above their caste. So while many would argue this is a case of caste empowerment, this seems as much a case of class expansion where the individual may become an agent of the class he/she has newly acquired. Many scholars have written about this phenomenon under the label 'creamy layer'. The present study intends to capture such two-way state-class processes. Whose interest does the agricultural policy represent and how does the state maneuver different class interests and create consent among otherwise disadvantaged and rebellious sections? Deeply linked is the question, why some classes, despite the numerical strength, cannot stir state response.

The literature on India is wide and could not be discussed as a separate section for word constraint. So it has been discussed in respective sections with relevant field data.

The central point is to interrogate if a relation exists between political classes and the prevalent agricultural policy of each state. Once both these spheres are explained, I would attempt to explain one through the other. A description of which classes play determinant roles in each state and what interests they represent is given in sections 2 and 3, on Chhattisgarh and Gujarat respectively.

3. Chhattisgarh

Most activism in Chhattisgarh raises the issue of government's favourable disposition to primary industries while meting a step-motherly treatment to tribals and their livelihood-agriculture. This is explicit in government policies and support for big industries. For instance, Jhanjgir Champa was probably unique in having 60 per cent irrigation, traditionally a SC majority area. Some of them had big holding, while in Rajnandgaon, there were settlers from Maharashtra called Khurji with more than 20-25 acres of land. In 2001, the government filed an

affidavit that Hasdeo dam, located in the district cannot provide water for Rabi crops since it would be used for industrialisation (Mishra Oct 2011). This is the district which as of today has 54 power-plants coming up on agricultural land. The land was used for producing two crops each year over past decade. In such a district, directing water to industrial use is a case of support for secondary sector against primary sector. Displacement has been severe with land and water directed to industry. To understand why agriculture has been relegated to such a status, it is important to look at the character of the ruling class.

The class that controls the economy is the trader class (Berthet 2011), fast transforming into the industrial class. The formation of the state in 2000 has opened new opportunities in mining and industry. State apparatus has ensured that land acquisition for corporate projects is made easier. There has been laws like environmental clearance, land ceiling, buying land in Schedule V areas which have been flouted (Lawyer, Bilapur Nov 2011). New opportunity has been tapped by existing trader class and surplus generated through trade has been steadily invested in industries. The class is chiefly constituted of Agrawals, Gujaratis, Sindhis, with some Bihari Brahmins; this class dominates trade, business, real estate, cement, mining (Berthet 2011).¹ 'The Agarwals are the kings here' stated an interviewee (Jha interview September 2011). In last one decade they have invested in primary industries like making aluminium from bauxite, coal mining but not in labour-intensive manufacturing industry. The other ethnic group is Sindhis. They settled in this region post-partition and have been here for more than six decades. They were originally belonged to refugee camps located in Indore, Nagpur from where they migrated and settled in Chhattisgarh. It is the third generation which is now running the business. But despite adoption of new technologies, their way of life is rather feudal. Be their gender relations or their relation with the *adivasis*, they continue to be highly discriminatory and repressive. Along with national, there are international players like Anil Agarwal's Vedanta, Lafarge Cement who are investing in the state; they particularly they invest in political elections. They partner with local businessmen living in the state and taking care of day-to-day operations. Global and local capital reap profit from these projects (activist Raipur 2011, mining transporter Korba 2011).

An important person whom I met is Sridhar Gandhi. He put me in contact with the Director of Agriculture, the Deputy Director Agriculture and the Chairperson of Seed Corporation. Mr Gandhi is a Gujarati businessman who came here 50 years ago. He owns a stone quarry in Rajim. He is also the minister of rural development. He still has business in Gujarat and often goes there to attend meetings. Chewing pan, he expressed his disregard towards the Chhattisgarhis, "They drink a lot and at sundown, become a source of nuisance". He was a

¹ There are many families like the Damanis who have lived here since pre-independence while many have come in over past two decades. I met them in Raipur, where they are into diamond business and also have several petrol pumps and own land all over the state. They have contact with ministers and rice millers.

typical case of how traditional business community has managed to entrench itself into political positions of power that can influence policy-making. His portfolio bespeaks rural development, but he belongs to the industrial class. Clearly, these are conflicting interests, where the need to secure profit is most crucial. He also has the ability to influence policies to realise such profit motives, similarly, Brij Mohan Agarwal, Amar Agarwal, Rajesh Murat are all businessmen who entered politics after the formation of Chhattisgarh state. Today they hold important portfolios, remaining industrialist by vocation. A journalist, Alok Sahu informed, "They have shares in all upcoming power-plant projects. So when they are the decision-makers of agricultural policies, the policies are bound to be against small and marginal farmers, as it is in their class interest to make land acquisition easy" (Bilaspur, October 2011).

Jindal, owner of biggest sponge-iron manufacturing company has his fingers dipped in steel, cement and thermal power. He is also member of Parliament. He won the election on Congress party ticket and not BJP, the state's ruling party. Once more the industrial class enters the political institutions to further their class interest. What is more interesting is that this feature is not true of BJP alone, but other national parties also use the same route to secure class interest. His new project is coming up in Raigarh.

There are four important political lobbies in the state as an academic Prof. Reddy indicated, namely rice miller lobby, sponge iron lobby, big farmers lobby, and mining lobby. The rice millers are not farmers, but are traders or businessmen from the Agarwals, Sindhis, Sikhs and Gujaratis. They require rice at cheap prices to process the same. This is assured by the government which procures paddy from Mandis. The rate is Rs 1080 per quintal of rice, so per kg. price is Rs 1080. Government acquiring is done over three months only and the farmers have no choice for Rabi crops but to sell to the middlemen or traders. Shyama Charan shukla came to power on the rice miller lobby support.

The government declared a subsidy of up to 80 per cent on making godowns. This opportunity has been cornered by rice millers who now own private godowns. Districts of Raipur, Dhamtari, Durg Bilaspur, Mahasamund together account for more than 50 per cent of rice mills' daily milling capacity (Chhattisgarh Government) and 896 (60 per cent) of mills are located in these districts out of a total of 1457 mills. These godowns are taken on rent by FCI and other government agencies to store rice. Farmers cannot afford to store in godowns, so they sell their produce at market rate right after harvest, though at this time, the supply exceeds the demand and so they get low prices. Speculation is in the hands of the middlemen who have urban connection and belong to petty bourgeoisie and big farmers, who can wait to sell their produce later. While big and capitalist farmers gain from speculative practices, they are also important to political parties. The reason behind keeping big farmers happy is their control on rural votes. They can garner support at grassroots level given their socio-economic power. This is especially

true given in many parts of Chhattisgarh where feudal order is still prevalent and hence the political parties maintain close ties with them.

Other than lobby, there were several instances where individuals with different class interests like land mafias and industrial class have entered the party and consequently the government. The beginning of this was at the beginning of state-formation, when the Agarwal family, through the BJP, entered the state cabinet (Berthet 2011). These classes have used the state apparatus to further their class interest. In Bilaspur, a powerful Cabinet Minister wields tremendous economic power. He is the biggest landowner, though the holdings are kept in *benami*. His economic power stems from his land-holding and trade. But he is a capitalist landlord and his party people engage in land *dalaali* (broker). He is a very important minister who owns rice mills and a power-plant. He also has the most pompous villa among the ministers. In the local *dandia* (a type of dance) performance posters in cafeterias, local businessmen put up his picture, inviting everyone to join the Hindu festivals.

More evidence on how political power is used for economic gains and as a source of accumulation was found in the case of another Minister of the state. He comes from a tribal district which is the hub of industrial growth and mining in the state. He is regarded as a symbol of the common man; a tribal and political worker when he originally fought election. But as of today, he owns land in the heart of Korba, the industrial hub of Chhattisgarh. He also has a rice-mill and has recently started a 500 mega-watt power plant. Politics has acted as his source of accumulation. He is a favourite among small and marginal farmers. He maintains a huge rest house in Raipur where food is prepared for 100 to 200 people each day. Whoever from his constituency visits Raipur is welcome to eat at his place, free of cost. There is also arrangement of spending the night in the rest house. As a villager narrated the story, this helps them a lot when they have to go to Raipur for any work as it is expensive for them to rent in a room or eat in the capital. This is a case of patron-client relation among politicians and common people.

In Jivan Haran's (CPM President) interview, it was revealed that the rice mill lobby has lost a part of its authority over last few years. This is because a kind of monopolisation has set in, with the Raipur millers exercising greater control on rice trade. The smaller millers are now forced to sell their produce to Raipur millers. The government has refused to allot single wagons in goods train to the small millers and so they cannot transport their produce to other states. This has brought down their capacity to negotiate for higher prices, or sell their products in deficient states. Only that miller who can send a truck or train full of rice, can now trade. So the Raipur based mills who have higher capacity and better machinery, control the rice trade. He suggested, this monopoly has made these mill owners effectively partners to government instead of a lobby.

There are two other lobbies operating in the state- liquor lobby and mining lobby as revealed during the fieldwork. The origin of these lobbies is trade and interestingly, their interests are overlapping. They are not exclusive lobbies, since rice-mill owners or their kin are fast investing in mining and power plants. A common interest among various lobbies is keeping wages low by maintaining a pool of unemployed labour. This has been achieved by transferring marginal and small farmers into secondary sector, as unskilled and semi-skilled work force. The former have been steadily selling their land to industries, given unviability of agriculture. As Bhubnesh Kumar (a technocrat running a NGO for farmers) stated, to remain in agriculture, the best position is that of the labourer; he does not have to worry about resources and profit; just take his day-to-day payment which has steadily increased in the last four years. Thus being a landowner these days is bothersome for small farmers. Clearly, there is a trend of small and marginal farmers giving up land ownership and taking to wage labour. Migration has also been on a high in the state, especially from Champa district.

Industrialization has not created appropriate employment opportunities; rice mills have fast taken to machines, replacing the use of labour. In a conversation with a mill owner over phone, he informed that keeping workers has become increasingly difficult. Tribals are not good workers, as they continue to run back to villages. Despite moving to cities they are only interested in seasonal employment. Once they earn enough for a few months, they go back to the village, and enjoy with that money. Only when the sum is over, they come back to the cities. Also, they are deeply engaged in community life, and thus a marriage or funeral means involvement of the entire village. So for all such occasions, they leave their jobs and come back to the village and stay there for a month, or as long as the ceremony lasts. As a result this has made the flow of labour erratic, and keeping them on work increasingly difficult. This has forced millers take to machines to ensure high productivity. Mostly what are available are Oriya workers, since the adivasis are reluctant. As a rice miller said, 'Villagers are migrant labourers and as such leave every three-four months and are irregular. So we are trying to use machines, which are being imported from Thailand, Japan and for best quality, the UK'. They have been in this business for 35 years and about three and half years ago, they started a new mill. They supply within the country, while the basmati rice, which is exported is sent to export houses where they are packaged.

It was triangulated that these lobbies are not distinct identities, neither do they represent different interests (media personnel and activists). The owners of rice mills and factories are the same or are best kin. A power plant owner's brother heads the current Rice Millers' Association in the state, which operates as an arm of the government. A Doordarshan reporter whom I met during an interview with a senior journalist told that the rice millers return 25-30 per cent of the paddy given to them for processing by the state, whereas on average 65-67 per cent should be returned. The government has no authority to question them since they are kin

of the politicians if not owned by them. The presence of such influential leaders who carry their class interest into the party explains the government's soft treatment towards industries and supporting the land grab.

To conclude this section, the industrial bourgeoisie and state have become interchangeable in context of Chhattisgarh. The plains are where they operate from but their reach is as much in tribal districts where they are investing in land in a big way. This is particularly worrisome since tribal land is not saleable under Schedule V areas yet I found such transfer of land ownership rampant. To make land continuously available, the agricultural policy is helpful. Poor support prices, procurement in one season, rising cost of inputs have impacted the small and marginal farmers severely. Their access to cooperatives which provide subsidised seeds and fertilizers is also poor given these are appropriated by big and capitalist farmers. So they are left at mercy of market-traders and moneylenders. They are either tending to adopt cash crops to increase their income which means incurring more debt or sticking to foodgrains which mean safe but lower incomes. In this scenario, there is distress sale of land which is working in favour of the bourgeoisie.

4. Soybean, Jatropha and Horticulture: Policy Induced Cropping Pattern Change

Chhattisgarh's cultivable land area is 46.77 lakh hectares, about 33 percent of total area (GoC). The cropping intensity of Chhattisgarh is 117 percent while Punjab is at 183 percent. This has therefore been seen as a major lacuna by the government. Chhattisgarh has primarily a mono-crop agriculture covering 70 percent of land. The government wants immediate change and is pinning all hopes on horticulture to give agriculture growth a boost (Directorate of Agriculture, GoC) for this, call for 'Phasal chakra parivartan' (change of crop cycle) was given by the government. This has been instrumental in introducing commercial crops. The Government has been proactive in introducing cash crops. As mentioned before the other slogan is 'paddy brings poverty' (Menon Raipur 2011). Post-liberalisation the focus has been on intensive agriculture with increase in yield per acre being focus. This has seen a simultaneous shift from HYV to high breed seeds (Mishra Oct 2011).

The Chhattisgarh Agrovision 2011-12 lays down that seed, fertilizer, pesticide, irrigation, transport to market, and credit are key to furthering the growth in this sector and shall be concentrated upon. The fieldwork revealed that the government here is pushing for adoption of high-end cash crop like horticulture and has been popularizing slogans like 'paddy brings poverty'. Some areas of inherent conflict arise as to why a state doing so well in paddy production is pushing for cash crops? Why is it failing to provide food to its people? Some answers and observations made in field on this issue are discussed here.

A senior government official deputy director of agriculture, in whose office I met a big farmer, was emphatic that though slow, over 15 years, the farmers have adopted soybean cultivation in his district. A representative of a global NGO informed small and marginal farmers have averted change to cash crops due to their high risk potential. The change has been slow since small farmers are reluctant to change informed senior government officer. The government has been using demonstration effect to convince farmers to adopt new technologies and go for cash crops. While the state not only made seeds and technology available, they also facilitated easy availability of loans for the farmers. The farmers who benefitted from these schemes have bought more land in the past decade and as of today have landholdings of more than 50 acres. I met one farmer who had nearly 100 acres holding. Given the high investment required for soybean, big and middle farmers have more readily adopted it. He said fellow farmers in his village were very satisfied with the state and Mr Katre, in particular. The farmer stated

Whenever he got a transfer, the farmers stopped his transfer, and he has been posted in the same district for 15 years. Once the mother of one of the farmers told his boss, that 'he is my son, so you cannot transfer him elsewhere.

This relationship was uncommon to find, and he was rather involved with the farmers but a point remains that this relationship was with big farmers.

Commercial agriculture and technologies have been successfully adopted by big farmers in Durg. The others who grow vegetables with sophisticated technology and live in farm houses are not from the state itself. As reported in Open (2009) magazine, farmers from Haryana have bought huge tracts of land, by using force on local people. The local people belonged to the Satnami Dalit community, and are at present working as wage labourers in their own fields. The local media informed this could be because the state was planning to undertake 'Green Revolution', and these big farmers, already armed with modern technology have bought over huge tracts of land in Chhattisgarh to reap the benefits of impending Green Revolution.

The other fallout of commercial crops has been rise in number of shops selling chemical inputs. The entire highway to Durg district is dotted with huge tractor and other agricultural machinery shops. Dhamtari also has such shops with pesticide and fertilizer supplier shops but mainly for paddy and some vegetables. These are owned by traders, often from other states and urban Chhattisgarh. In Champa and Durg districts, some big farmers also own seed and pesticide shops. I met one such trader who comes from a big farmer family and now owns a tractor shop. He stated, "Though the government gives subsidy to small farmers for buying tractors, the latter cannot pay the remaining amount. So we forge paperwork and in the name of the small farmer, a big farmer buys tractor. Often this small farmer is either a tenant or wage labour in big farmer's farm". Big farmers have found avenues of diversification into input shops and agro-

business in last one decade; thus adding to their source of income. The sale of machinery has gone up significantly in last ten years as reported in both districts (Das Gupta 2013).

Farmers in Durg are growing tomatoes and have good market linkage and even supply to Mumbai and Kolkata; this linkage has been made possible by introduction of soybean cultivation in this region in the 1980s, the first cash crop of the state. As a big farmer from Durg claimed, "The bank branch of our *taluk*² has a deposit of 33 crores now, which was 8 crores only 10 years ago. What is more significant is this money belongs to the farmers, each of whom on this date has a saving of a crore of rupees. This has been made possible by changing to soybean cultivation from rice." These are big farmers who have adapted to new technologies and taken to capitalist farming. The shift in cropping pattern was due to efforts of the state agricultural department in 1980s. He added, "We can now buy tractor with down payment and our children proudly associate with agriculture." Clearly, they have accumulated through agriculture which is now invested in business but benefits of commercial agriculture are limited to a few who could invest in capitalist agriculture.

This policy-induced change has resulted in reducing the independence of farmers. Small and middle farmers who used to grow indigenous varieties of paddy now have to buy seeds. HYV seed also make use of chemical fertilizers mandatory. And those opting for cash crops have additional expenditure on pesticides, machinery and water pumps (Menon, Mishra Oct 2011). Hybrid crops also have poor resistance to pest which pushes the cost further. Given the state's poor irrigation, private means of irrigation has become the only source.

Whereas government interest in rice has been limited, Universities have been collecting samples of indigenous varieties of paddy; work on these has however been slow. Under the Jogi government, there was also news of selling these varieties from the lab to Monsanto. Support for seeds from private companies has been high from the state, while preservation of indigenous varieties has not been in focus. The class interest of emerging intelligentsia lies with the corporate which is part of the ruling class.

The other crop that has enjoyed major government support is Jetropa. The slogan was *tel milega bari se*, meaning oil would be produced from plants. The government four years ago (2006-07) pushed for this crop. Common property projects were leased out to companies and land beside roads and highways were sown with Jetropa. Bharat Petroleum had a tie up in the project. Estimates say 250-300 crores were spent on the project with no oil produced. Activists suggest that this has been a huge scam where the government and bureaucracy have made a lot of money. There has also been a tool for land-use conversion as land allocated to Jetropa now are used for non-agricultural purposes.

² It is a division within district, which constitutes of several villages organised for revenue purposes elaborated?)

Purav Mishra, a farmer and political leader stated that the reason agriculture has become a non-viable profession is because surplus has been flowing out of agriculture consistently, and has not been invested on buying land and using it as commodity. Since the returns from agriculture were low, farmers opted to move their next generation to urban centres, primarily in service sector. The first thing a big farmer would do is buy a house in Bilaspur. A similar case of surplus flowing out of agriculture was observed in Dhamtari. Anand Chandrakar³ narrated that his family has moved to the urban area with four sons, about 20 years ago. The four sons gained education and now work in urban centres. Two of them are in government service, one in police. The family owns 30 acres of land, and falls in the category of big farmers. The eldest son has continued to live in the village and look after the cultivation. He also hardly participates in cultivation; they hire wage labourers who work under his supervision. The village is 25 km from the Dhamtari city centre.

Moving eastward from Raipur, a different trend has been observed in Jashpur, Champa among others. Here an activist who works on tribal rights highlighted how the livelihood of small and marginal farmers was under threat. He explained

A decade ago about 1250 hectare of land was under potato cultivation which has fallen to a mere 250 hectares. In 80s and 90s, Tibetan settlers would lease in land from the government to grow potato. But now the government is unwilling to give them the lease. Instead contractors are coming in from Bihar for 3-4 months a year. The input cost is borne by them and they do contract farming, using local labour. Similarly in Jashpur, tribals used to carry out potato and tomato cultivation. But now they work as contract labour under contractors from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. These contractors are better connected to market and so take out the surplus. There were also settlers from Bangladesh who cleared forests to grow vegetables; they came in two phases, 1964 and 1979. Their villages were known as Camp 1 and 2. But the Forest Department has claimed back this land as they did not have *patta* of land denying them their livelihood. At the riverbed of Mahasamund, local population would take lease to grow watermelons. The cultivation spread over 2000 km on both sides of the river. Mahanadi is wide and the river bed is flat, so this was fertile land with high productivity. But once, in a tragic accident, a farmer lost his life. The sudden opening of flood gates caused the death. Post this, farmers have been scared to come back to cultivate in this region. The government has also shown reluctance to lease land to small and marginal farmers, mostly Dalits. But the

³ Chandrakar is another caste with big landholding. Post-state-formation many from this caste have been employed in state bureaucracy and also diversified to service sector. They are well linked to the political party.

same land is again being leased out to contractors, who are coming from other states. The latter are capable of high investment and have good market linkage.

It is strangely observed that the state is reluctant to support indigenous population but is most helpful to outside contractors in horticulture. It is worth mentioning here that the farmer lobby that operates in the state is geographically concentrated in the plains-Raipur and Durg with limited participation from Bilaspur. Big farmers who have fast transformed into capitalist farmers liaison with bureaucracy and political party are found in more than four occasions. They maintain individual relation with state bosses to represent their interest, as I found a capitalist farmer from Durg in office of a senior bureaucrat and in the residence of leader of opposition. Similarly there were Chandrakar⁴ farmers waiting to meet the minister outside his office. The Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, the farmer wing of the ruling party is also active in these districts. So their interest finds representation in the state machinery, unlike eighty percent of farmers who are food-grain producers. Other major crops are coarse grains, wheat and growing cash crops and horticulture. The capitalist farmers have also been given new opportunities to accumulate through input-centricity policy. They are entering the input retail, where they are vehicles of oppression of small and marginal farmers. They sell chemical inputs, sometimes spurious and often more than required to fill their pockets. This is changing their class position to that of petty-bourgeoisie from farmers, thus shifting their interest from agriculture⁵. It was noted that, maize, groundnut, pulses and oilseeds, other important crops also do not get attention in policy measures.

5. Lobbies in Gujarat; before and after 90s

It was reconfirmed by both interviews and literature that *teli mafia* ([vegetable] oil goons) was the most important lobby in the state until the 90s (EPW 1980). They hailed from Saurashtra. They were landed and controlled the oil mills. But with BT cotton arriving, ground nut slowly lost its position to cotton. With GM seed, cotton production increased manifold. Northern districts started doing better in cotton production, which made the Karva Patels gain an upper hand over the Leva Patels. China's huge demand for cotton created a big export market and the prices were pushed up. As a result, there has been a fall in the control of oil millers on state government. Another important lobby was that of rice mills, but rice mills closed down in great numbers post 80s. This was caused by fast adoption of commercial crops, as is evident from the town of Bavala (political leader Ahmedabad 2012).

⁴ This is a caste owned large holdings and have reverence in society as the elite of rural society. Post state formation they have come to join bureaucracy and have gained an upward mobility.

⁵ Similar observation was made by Barbara Harriss White (2004) in context of Tamilnadu where input traders have rural roots.

The oil lobby was a very dominant lobby in the state politics. Oil mill owners were big and middle farmers, but never cultivators. Entering the industry, they gradually dissociated themselves from land entirely. The importance of oil seeds have reduced significantly and with opening of frontiers post-liberalisation, a lot of edible oil is also imported into India, at competitive prices (Jharwal 2007). Alongside with increase in cotton production, there has been a lot of cotton oil extracted which is commonly used by households for cooking purposes. However, this is not an indicator of loss of power of the industrial class over state. Despite a change in interest, the class in charge and reaping benefits are the same. It does not matter what crop they grow as seen in transition from tobacco to cotton, as they are the same caste and class who exert power (Breman 1986 and Rutten 2003).

An organized voice also arises from the diamond industry. This has been studied by scholars who have inferred a kind of horizontal unity existing among its members; common caste identity and regional roots among Saurashtra Patels cause this unity. They have migrated to Surat since 1960s given the arid nature of land in part of north-east Saurashtra and continue to do so. Most people have migrated through kin contacts and were originally middle and small farmers. Those who came earlier have gradually accumulated enough to open workshops and factories while those who came later and did not have adequate surplus work as *karigars* (labourers) (Engelshoven 1999). The owners have an organization called the Surat Diamond Association (SDA) which works for the workshop owners and traders. The reach of this organisation can be estimated from the fact that the owners acquire license for the diamond merchants to keep pistols with them. According to an activist, this is acquired using the plea of recent robberies; their actual use is in controlling *karigars*. There was no way I could validate this finding but the activist disclosed that during his work with labourers they had shared these details (Surat, May 2011).

Two points needs to be noted here. Relevant literature and my field interviews agree that the investment in setting up workshops and factories, be it sugar mills, diamond or chemicals is generated from agricultural surplus, like in establishing sugar mills in south Gujarat (Breman 1989); it is a case of shifting of agriculture surplus to industry while continuing to hold on to agricultural land. This point finds elaboration in Rutten's writing (2003). But that does not justify using Patels as a synonym to the ruling class. Although majority of the mill owners and diamond merchants are Patels, within the caste they are a mere minority. In terms of number, many more work in the diamond industry as *karigars* facing hardship and violence and poor living conditions. Thus using their caste would be a generalization not explaining the reality (Engelshoven 1999). Rather both owners and workers belong to the same caste standing at two ends of production.

The indigenous bourgeoisie come from different communities in the state like Shah, Thakkar, Vohra (Muslims) (bureaucrat Ahmedabad 2012 and academic Ahmedabad 2012). These were the first communities who invested in secondary sector, and now are mostly based in Mumbai, Surat and other metropolitans; while Patels⁶ came into the game later⁷ and hence forth have seen steady rise. A chief difference between Patel and other communities mentioned here is that the others moved out of agriculture once they invested in other secondary sector. So they are dissociated from farmer interest unlike the Patels⁸. This information finds support in Damodaran (2008) who elaborates this point and in Shah (2002). He found that *banias* and Brahmins form the industrial class in the state and have had a historical advantage in the same; Patels joined them later and their initial investment was in agro-industries like mills, dairy processing and their unique entry point was cooperatives. Since this paper looks at agricultural policy, the interests of the community which continues to have stakes in agriculture are more crucial. The bourgeoisie have stakes in agriculture which makes it easier for the state to cater to their interest. They are keen to invest in cash crops which generate high revenue and are capable of bearing the cost of cultivation. This creates a rupture in farmer interest where the former do not associate their interest with small and marginal farmers; latter cannot suffer the increasing cost of inputs neither have access to irrigation to adopt cash crops. So they supplement their income by either working as labour in agriculture, or by giving up cultivation entirely and move to urban centres as casual labour. Their inability to continue with cultivation and need for stable income is forcing them to sell land. This is creating a continuous supply of land which is much desired by the industrial bourgeoisie, thus resulting in monopolization of land resource in hands of few.

The voice of majority of farmers who operate on small holdings go unrepresented in state politics since BKU does not involve itself with their issues. BKU which claims to be a farmer organisation seemed to be a coterie of cotton growers from northern and central districts, again excluding foodgrain growing small farmers. In fact, farmers from Rajkot informed there was minimal presence of BKU activity in their district. Their demands and protests have centred around interests like electricity, water rather than cheaper inputs, or land access indicating the high cost of cultivation was a non-issue for them (DNA 2012). These are also capitalist farmers who have stakes in secondary sector, and have assumed petty-bourgeoisie or industrial bourgeoisie class position. This has been observed by scholars before like Rutten (2003), Damodaran (2008).

⁶ Within Patels there are two sub communities. As the story goes, they originate from two sons of Ramchandra, the mythological character of *Ramayana*, the Indian epic: Kush and Labh. The Karva have invested in trade and business, and are the more progressive sub sect, while the Levas, are more orthodox and have invested in *kisani* (agriculture), diamond and real-estate.

⁷ Discussed in detail later section.

⁸ Discussed in detail in later sections.

The Modi government's fame has been in promotion of high growth and industries and organizing "global summit of investors" which is being treated as a model all over India. This is linked to the support the political party, especially the chief minister enjoys from various industrialists (Navhind Times 2012). Gujarat has experienced a shift in dominant lobbies in the '90s due to new forces playing up. Two respondents stated in their interviews that post-liberalization, indigenous economic capital of Gujarat has come to be concentrated in diamond and textile, second to real estate. Lobbies have operated historically in the state but the super growth story post 2000 is ascribed to the convergence of political and economic power in Gujarat (Sud 2007). Several informants—activist, academic, political leaders—mentioned similar nexus between the state and big corporate houses. This can be argued from observations like state's proactive role in acquiring land for private companies, signing MOUs and making land procurement in any corner of the state possible. This found mention in several interviews, across districts. Be it Maruti, or Tata, Gujarat has emerged as a favourite destination of corporates because of this agile attitude of the government. The role that the bureaucracy is playing is conducive to these transactions. It is commonplace to accept that government belongs to Reliance and Adani⁹. There is consensus that the Gujarat government has achieved very high growth in secondary and tertiary sectors but at least three respondents suggested that this has been at the cost of small enterprises. A trade union leader and an industrialist, located at two ends of the spectrum pointed out that influence of small players have suffered in past decade.

Senior politicians from opposition party explained how this growth has been achieved by giving undue advantage to corporates and big business houses (Hirway un¹⁰). This was mentioned by four respondents—an academic, a CII member, a veteran political leader and a political cadre. The respondent (political cadre) mentioned that the total subsidy to the corporates is a figure of Rs 2, 00, 000 million between 2007-2011. Essar, a leading corporate house has not paid taxes amounting to 900 crores to the government. The government has been reluctant in recovering this money from the company. Recently Reliance has bought 16,000 acres in Bhavnagar with the reason of establishing an industry. Only a part of that land has been used for industry, while on many acres of land they have started mangroves. This has made them exporters of mangoes on paper, eligible to tax evasion¹¹ on agricultural income. In addition, the company has been demanding more land from government for setting up staff quarters. The High Court has dismissed their plea, and asked them to convert mangrove land to residential land (reference).

⁹ Reliance, Essar and Adani are three biggest corporates in the state controlling a large chunk of cement, power, real-estate, oil sectors. They are all Indian companies with headquarters in the state and big players in Indian economy.

¹⁰ A paper presented in Centre for Development Alternatives (CFDA) conference, May 2012 posited the large proportions in which subsidies are given to corporates to invest in the state.

¹¹ Similar argument can be seen in Rutten (2003), p. 61 where he finds this across 59 families investing in agro-business and trade.

While a part of these claims might be due to political enmity and vengeance and could not be verified, academics indicated a similar partial treatment on part of the government towards the industrial class. In 2013, the Comptroller and Auditor general (CAG) found similar problems with the Gujarat government (the Hindu, 2013). It found undue benefits accruing to 52 crore for Reliance while Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Ltd. (another department) failed to recover penalty of Rs 160 crore from Adani Power. Similar arguments were made by Indira Hirway (un) in her paper in CFDA conference, 2012.

The interests of the industrial class are represented by Southern Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industries. This region has dominated capital of the state for past five decades thus earning the name 'golden corridor'. They maintain close contact with state government and unions. They also stand for interests of chemical, pharmaceutical and IT companies. Other organisations include Federation of Gujarat Weavers' Association (FOGUA) which is a union of power-loom owners; many of the looms are unregistered and/or are on paper in name of different owners who belong to one family. This helps evading labour laws applicable to big power-looms. Power-looms are concentrated regionally and in what are known as estates. Each estate has a leader who come together to form federation (senior academic and activist, Surat and CPM leader). As newspapers (IBN 2007 Accenture 2011¹²) reveal individual industrialists maintain close connection to political parties in both extending financial support and directly contesting elections. Respondents across districts informed me that industrial class maintains close link to the present government and a senior member of CII argued the same in a conference in Ahmedabad¹³.

On one hand reports on elections and electoral candidates reflect industrialists emerging as favourites of both national parties, Congress and BJP. Candidates floated by both parties, especially in south Gujarat are industrialists, hailing from textile, real estate, diamond industry. Openly Congress spokesperson argues this is because they understand the interest of the industrialists better. It's known from sources that they have invested 100 crores in last election (IBN 2007, Krishnakumar 2007). A respondent from Banaskantha informed Prafulbhai Patel, Home Minister of BJP owns big landholdings and has close ties with the landed interest. He has also invested in business lately, adhering to the common norm of Gujarat. When funding and politicians comes from a particular class, where does the state support go once elections are won? This needs no explanation. While on the one hand industrial class enters politics, on the other hand political leaders and bureaucracy speaks the language of market. As Jessop (1983) had predicted, the state and monopolists have come to interchange their positions.

¹² I should accept here that this report was mentioned in a conference proceedings but I have not had access to it as yet.

¹³ CFDA conference

The state in turn protects its allies' interest by granting subsidies of different kinds. A veteran CPIM trade union leader stated big power-looms are given huge subsidy for buying new machinery once in every five years. So they sell their old machinery which is bought by smaller power-looms at low prices. The reason for operating as a small mill with 20-30 people is because these units do not fall under labour laws and so few rules are to be followed in informal economy, allowing higher profit margins. So many big firms have split itself under names of different family members to evade regulations meant for big units. Firms like Mafatlal, Vimal have now taken to outsourcing their work to these small looms. All they do is put their labels and carry out the finishing of products. But post-liberalization, there has been another development in textile industry. 1, 04, 000 small unit have closed down or in words of Marxian analysis, have been gulped by big corporates. A trend of monopolization can be observed where economic power is contained in hands of few. The money of these textile firms have been invested in share market

One particular policy of the Modi government to create congenial climate for all industries has been weakening labour laws, as was triangulated across three interviews. As seen in previous paragraphs, the state is actively supporting big business; while its passivity about recruitment of labour officers. This has smoothened the casualization of labour-making Modi a favourite among business houses. The entire machinery of labour is suspended and Labour laws have had little implementation. There are 75 per cent vacant seats in the labour department; even posts like Assistant Commissioner of Labour, highest post in each district is left empty. In Saurashtra, among 7 districts, there is only one Assistant Commissioner. Two respondents argued that this systematic weakening has made issues like minimum wage, timely payment of wages and dispute on labour laws redundant. Where will people register their complaints in absence of an operational department? This has also helped the industries who are increasingly using contract labour. This makes their liabilities less as often labour comes from other states like UP, Bihar, MP, Rajasthan, making them more vulnerable. So the government has managed to suspend issues of labour rights successfully. There is no official data on wages available in the state and as an activist stated, "Modi in his attempt to befriend industries, has crushed the rights of labourers." The same attitude finds ramification in indiscriminate transfer of agricultural land to industries under present government over past one decade

Politics in India needs money and substantial amounts, and where can it be truer than in the state where most of indigenous capital comes from. In a tone of acceptance, it was disclosed across respondents that contesting elections need a lot of investment, more than a crore per member of legislative assembly election, and this makes alliance with the moneyed an essential factor to remain in politics. Political leaders are either economically powerful and come in to promote that class interest or else, they acquire power with help of industrial class and big farmers and serve their interest from their offices. It was reported recently that most of Modi's

visits to different parts of India and abroad are funded by these corporates and he travels in their private jets (DNA 2012).

As an interview it was well articulated, 'both industrial class and big farmers are important to state, first one brings the money and second one garners votes'. Modi government has failed to garner as much support from rural votebank as it claimed. This is very close of the inference I drew of Gujarat politics, only that the state does not have two distinct categories of classes, and has great overlap between the two. The same class has stakes in different sectors, even across agriculture and industry.

6. Understanding agricultural policy: for capitalist farmers, by bourgeoisie

This section is derived from both literature survey and fieldwork information. The key elements of state agricultural policy after 2000 has been highlighted and how each of these has affected different classes of farmers are discussed. Gujarat's total cropped area is 128 lakh hectares, 65 per cent of total area of the state; The policy statements post 2000, and Agro-vision 2010 document—all from government websites—which have set the goals and stipulated a planned path is the source of the tenets discussed. It is not an exhaustive list of all policies but selectively talks of some specific principles. The central goal is singularly achieving growth in primary sector. The path stipulated to achieve the same is input centricity, meaning using chemical pesticides and fertilizers and hybrid seeds, all bought from market. This is a clear departure from any distribution with a “go-getter attitude”. The state is favouring commercial cropping and providing aid for required infrastructure to grow these crops as they will be growth pullers. Under these circumstances, moving away from food sovereignty and security is an obvious outcome. Further, adopting cash crops are subject to various other resources as Byres (1981) had pointed out in context of Green Revolution or Gidwani (2000) in context of cotton; thus making such policy initiatives more lucrative for few classes of farmers than others.

In context of Gujarat eminent scholars among other respondents argued there is an absence of comprehensive agricultural policy, and many aspects are contradictory in Gujarat agriculture. An activist based in Baroda informed me how unlike other states like Madhya Pradesh, the state has not adopted a policy on organic farming. While the state has been boasting about organic crops and how it is in support of the same, ground reality does not show any sign of same (Vinod Singh, Baroda interview). This I regard as an instance to show how the state wants agriculture to thrive on use of chemical inputs as it promises high yield. The push is towards growth even if it comes at high cost of irrigation and inputs, affordable by few. The respondent

asked me to refer to various websites¹⁴ with information on agrarian crisis in the state. He also accepted that:

There are exceptions where the government has been pushing for higher agricultural growth by making floriculture more profitable. The big farmers engaged in floriculture are receiving 20 percent subsidy on tools and technology as given by the government. The government needs high growth figures and this sub-sector has been making significant contribution to Gujarat's agricultural growth and thereby earning state patronage.

I do not agree with his opinion entirely on how all promises made by the government are political. In fact, the more likely inference taking an overview of different respondents is that the state has got its principal objective in place and it is economic in nature. The tenets operate on a sharp distinction between capitalist farmers and the rest. This indicates the Gujarat government is taking the classic developmentalist policy with two prongs: pro-industry and large-scale farming. It is based on the Lewis model of gradual shifting out of population from primary sector. In this case the pivotal problem of such state vision is it cares too little about the small farmers and wage labourers. Liaison with big MNCs like Monsanto and Cardill to push chemical inputs and hybrid seeds, procured from MNCs to achieve higher growth rates. I, however, do not think there is an absence of policy. Rather I think, even if some aspects of policy are not implemented, the main agenda set by the ruling classes is very well being taken forward. The main reason for deriving such a conclusion is the following.

Infrastructure support: Power and road access

During 2003-06, the Gujarat government introduced Jyotigram Yojana (JGY). The aim was to provide 24/7 power supply to villages. However, a subsequent realization was that this could not be achieved without effective rationing of farm power supply. This led the government to invest Rs 1,170 crore in separating agricultural feeders from non-agricultural feeders throughout Gujarat (Shah and Verma 2008)¹⁵. Hence, now Gujarat government is effectively rationing farm power supply and reduced losses. There is no denying that this has made a difference in cultivation but only for those who can bear the cost of an electric pump for irrigating his fields. The mass of small farmers and wage labourers bear the additional cost of hiring pumps to irrigate their fields (Kumar, Singhal and Rath 2004). The government concentrates on those who are already ahead in the race.

¹⁴ www.agrariancrisis.in, takingroots.in and indiagminfo.org were the websites he spoke about and also gave me a CD to watch. Later in other interviews I realized he has been most active in opposing the chemical fertilizers and BT technology.

¹⁵ By 2006, over 90 per cent of Gujarat's 18,000 villages were covered under the JGY. It meant laying a parallel rural transmission network where feeders supplying agricultural connection were bifurcated from those supplying to commercial and residential connection at sub-station itself. Meters on distribution transformer centres were also installed on both the sides of feeders to

Gujarat has invested heavily on road. This has facilitated transfer of milk from villages twice daily. This has acted as a catalyst in improving rural road connectivity. Indeed, many dairy unions and other private investors contributed to road construction (Breman 1989); the National Dairy Development Board even gave a large loan to the Gujarat government to construct/ resurface rural roads. Today, Gujarat has 37.77 km of roads per 100 sq km and a road density of 1.35 km per sq km. Road coverage is almost 98.7 per cent in the state. The government claims that while Gujarat invested Rs 3,484 crore on roads during the 40-year period during 1960-2001, it has invested Rs 4,783 crore during seven years from 2001 to 2007.

Offer higher subsidy for encouraging commercial crops

Gujarat has raised the SSP dam height to 121.5 metres; and there is enough water in the dam to irrigate 1.8 million hectares as originally planned. Gujarat government has also pursued aggressive policies to promote diversification to high value crops, especially fruit and vegetables, and spices and condiments. For example, it began offering farmers direct capital subsidy of Rs 2.5 lakhs to set up green houses, besides 25 per cent relief in electricity duty. These measures have produced some outcomes. For example, between 2000-01 and 2005-06, Gujarat's horticulture production increased by 108 per cent (Government of Gujarat 2009a). Gulati and Shreedhar (2009) argue that this is a major driver of Gujarat agriculture.

The result is two-fold. The private seed sector has come to dominate the seed market. In Gujarat alone, they have floated 26 private seed companies (Gulati and Shreedhar 2009). Secondly, across fieldwork it was observed that the retailers are rural elites, who have found new avenues of diversification in input shops. Their close social ties and caste hierarchy play a crucial role in selling the products. As a reputed businessman aptly put it 'BT cotton growers are tending to unite with global capital'(Parekh 2012). The other end of the reality is the huge number of small farmers and landless wage-labourers who can rarely access government seed supply and are thus entirely dependent on them (senior government official, Ahmedabad interview).

The other important crop cotton has seen highs and lows. Esha Shah (2005) writes how 'nature's agency makes cotton cultivation a risky and uncertain enterprise to the extent that the nature of work needed to compensate could potentially be afforded by those mighty enough, historically, socially and materially'. Once again the resource-rich farmers alone qualify to make good use of the crop. A kind of absentee landlordism is also reported in field which finds support from literature. The double layer-between landlord and labourers comes in the 'intermediate stratum'. By contracting out the labour-intensive parts of the production, the industrial entrepreneurs in Vepargam/Udyoggam avoid regular supervision and allow them to concentrate on factories (Rutten 2003, p.68).

Efficient disbursal of Institutional Credit

The government has been concerned about making cheaper inputs and credit available to farmers. Gujarat farmers have en-mass adopted 6.5:3.5:1 nitrogen-phosphorous-potassium composition fertilizer to a 13:7.5:1 which is cost-effective. The farm credit system has been simultaneously revitalised. Agricultural loan disbursements in Gujarat have clocked 22-25 per cent annual growth rate, thanks to supportive government policies. In the three years ending 2006-07, for example, agricultural loan disbursals in Gujarat doubled from 4,735 crore in 2003-04 to 10,468 crore in 2006-07 (Shah et al. 2009).

The cost of cultivation has risen in past decade with the use of chemical products have seen a steady rise, as respondents disclosed. In commercial crops, especially vegetables, inputs have been particularly steep. Coming to loans, the cooperatives and public sources are tapped by big and capitalist farmers alone, is what the fieldwork revealed¹⁶. In fact, cooperatives are keener to provide credit for buying machinery as a bank in Surat revealed. Till date, the machinery is owned by big and capitalist farmers, even if its use has spread in past decades. The moneylenders have made a comeback to rural markets to cater to small and marginal farmers' growing need for credit.

State procurement, a major catalyst

Scholars have seen remunerative Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for cotton by the central government as an incentive to farmers to increase production area under cotton (Shah et al. 2009), particularly so since the Cotton Corporation of India has a sizeable procurement operations in the state. Export demand for cotton has seen a rise with China being the highest importer. I did not find any evidence of state intervention in crop procurement. In fact farmers tended to sell their products to traders or at most at APMC.

At a more generic level, Bhaumik (2008) highlights that Gujarat has a poor awareness of price policy and procurement agencies. 'Only 26.7 per cent of farmers are aware of MSP while only 14.3 per cent knows the whereabouts of the procurement agencies' (p.148). Further, the food grains that the state produces, viz, jowar, bajra, and Mmaize are not important in the Central government's procurement priority. So farmers growing these food crops have lost out on any guarantee from the state which possibly explains why cropping area under them have shown steady fall in last three decades. What it further indicates is the lack of concern and proactive action for those growing food grains since these are not high remuneration, neither can capture foreign currency.

Facilitating market access

¹⁶ Discussed in later section

Gujarat was amongst the early states to amend the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act to enable farmers to directly sell their produce to wholesalers, exporters, industries and large trading companies without having to operate through *arhatias* or commission agents. It also allowed large players to establish spot exchanges. The amendment also helped create conditions conducive for the spread of contract farming. Vegetables are being grown in this mode (DNA 2010 and Kiran Yadav 2012). The government has been welcoming large corporates to establish retail chains and source their requirements directly from farmers.

Irrigation: surface and ground

Making water available to farmers has been a claim to fame for the present government. While Sardar Sarovar Project has been providing canal irrigation, the well known Green Revolution company has been entrusted with micro-irrigation systems.

The Gujarat government formed the Gujarat Green Revolution Company (GGRC) to promote micro-irrigation and allocated a fund of Rs 1, 500 crore to be replenished when needed. The GGRC then began offering subsidy-loan scheme¹⁷ to those farmers willing to adopt micro-irrigation (GoG, Shah et al. 2009, Gulati and Sreedhar 2009). While it is true that this is efficient for water-scarce regions, these technologies are expensive and reduce the use of labour. Both these qualities are useful for big farmers rather than small farmers. The initial cost of installing the machinery cannot be borne by them.

The core of the policy vision

The policy exhibits a renewed concern for the landlord and big farmers as seen in Agrovision 2010 prescriptions (GoG). Modi has kept it no secret that the state will facilitate a linkage between farmers and international markets under the World Trade Organization (WTO) regime (p.305). So in turn, it will help those who produce for world market and can use such links to their favour. The state is channelising its energy on increasing productivity by using technological solutions (Gulati and Shreedhar 2009), rather than looking at distributive aspects of agrarian structure. Narendra Modi has recently declared the upcoming 'Second Green Revolution' which will bolster agricultural productivity.

While these policies and 10 per cent growth seem to indicate stupendous development, Breman (2007) argues that the growth has excluded the huge majority of small and marginal farmers from its benefits. He lists two tools commonly put to use in south Gujarat to keep the landless farmers in their status quo; one is the indifference of local authorities and the other is "downright sabotage" of village elites. He elaborates how the landowning castes are conscious that empowering the lower castes, who at present are at the foot of the economy which would corrode their powerbase. This explains why they would do anything to hinder such a change in

¹⁷ Up to Rs 60, 000 per hectare subsidy or half the cost.

power structure from occurring. Hence the immediate question that arises is whether the policies are addressing a structural change or are they abiding by the structural hierarchies facilitating accumulation by few and dispossession of the masses? My conclusion is that the policy builds on existing structures thus polarizing the big and small farmers. The former is adopting superior technology and moving to capitalist agriculture while small farmers are finding it hard to cope with such expensive techniques which are also not suited for small holding.

Joining the elements I arrived at the essence of the agricultural path the state has envisioned. A technocrat working closely with the government contributed hugely in developing the understanding.¹⁸ She indicated that agriculture is not a viable occupation given the small size of holdings. Further small and marginal farmers are moving out of agriculture and are selling land for their 'lifestyle aspirations'. So the need of the hour in her words is 'to craft a policy to allow people to move out of agriculture'. In her interview the questions that arose repeatedly was the 'viability of agriculture'. This pointed towards the intention behind government's attitude to agriculture. She highlighted two much needed measures for agriculture to thrive and prosper in the state –

- systematic conversion small and marginal farmers into landless labourers
- allowing concentration of land holdings in hands of few which would be useful for technology-driven commercial agriculture.

She emphasized that agriculture is not viable option in employing such a large population and this is how Punjab has shown such marvelous growth rate. BT cotton was adopted since it was a "win-win situation" for the farmers and it explains they are intelligent and choose their crop for maximizing profit. This also explains why Saurashtra has shown a shift from oilseeds. But this provided a direction as to what the core principle of state agricultural policy is to maximize production of commercial crops to ensure growth in agriculture. While it is crucial to accept that this perspective at best is tentative, it was a very important insight, particularly at an early stage of field.

The intention behind agricultural policy finds some explicit support in Sud's (2007) writing where she mentions that Viswa Samvad Kendrait¹⁹ argues corporatization of agriculture is the only way to make it commercially viable. It also encourages agro-industries for the same purpose. But as expected has no mention of small farmers, or those who cannot even afford an

¹⁸ She was extremely pro-government and showed reluctance to talk about real situation of farmers. She kept silent on government-related questions. In fact, in answer to all questions she asked me a return question challenging the validity of my findings and adhered to official statistics, like they were the Bible.

¹⁹ It is a pro-industry publication of the Hindu Right.

irrigation pump. The same style was replicated in an interview with a senior bureaucrat in Agricultural ministry. He stated, “The Gujarat government is all for those who can make use of opportunities. They ask and we give.” Migrant labourers are a problem and we are all for mechanization so that demand for labourers in agriculture goes down; those migrating from other states are forced to go back. Language of market where mechanisation and technology are key factors to agricultural growth and redistribution goes unmentioned. To quote him, “We are not pro-poor, we are pro rural economy growth.” He accepted that big farmers can adopt any new technology first, be it tractor or pumps, but this has a demonstration effect he added. So more people in villages adopt technology. He knew of at least 500 farmers who earn more than a crore, but is this enough to consider an economy developed. He told many stories of how horticulture and floriculture have increased farmer income by leaps and bounds, which it surely has. But the catch is cultivating such crops needs high investment, which is either for the already rich capitalist farmers to take or corporate to invest in.

Conclusion

There are three powerful forces in the two states—the state itself which wants high growth to use as a lucrative statistics; economic growth has come to become the parameter of political success in an increasingly urban India. The Industrial bourgeoisie whose core interest is land, as the safest bet to invest in, for setting up industries and expansion of the booming new sector post 2000-real-estate. As shown from field evidence and available literature, the state and bourgeoisie are practically representing the same interest and in case of Chhattisgarh, are interchangeable here Jessop’s prediction come alive in a developing nation like India. The third is the capitalist farmer and gentleman farmer who now are looking at agriculture as industry, and indulge in it for profit and not for consumption. They are fast moving away from foodgrains, trying to capture markets, especially export ones. So they are investing in crops like cotton, cashew, tobacco, soybean, floriculture and horticulture.

At the end of spectrum, with rising cost of production small farmers are finding it difficult to remain in agriculture. Privatisation of inputs, be it seed, pesticide or water is induced by agricultural policies which does not take note of the real condition of small and marginal farmers. This is resulting in concentration of resources in hands of capitalist farmers, who are either from big farmers or landlord class. There are also cases of urban middle class and industrial bourgeoisie investing in this sector, becoming the new gentleman farmer. Thus small and marginal farmers are left with two choices: either to take up wage labour which is more secure source of income, giving up their holdings or taking loans from informal sources, to grow cash crops and earn higher profit. The state’s poor procurement policy and reluctance to guarantee high prices has reduced food crops into a non-lucrative sector. This is first stage to consolidate holdings which will be appropriate for large-scale farming. The next stage will be

corporatisation of agriculture where commercial cropping will dominate. This is the path envisaged by the ruling classes of the two states. This has clearly little room for food security for farmers and any choice exerted by farmers of what crops to grow is rather limited.

The driver seat of Indian polity is occupied by the economic bourgeoisie and political leaders, but the big and capitalist farmers, interested and capable of mechanised-technical-large-farming have managed to board the bus for now. This is possibly a gift of their access to the huge pool of rural voters, though the latter have not made it.

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A fundamentally contested concept, food sovereignty has — as a political project and campaign, an alternative, a social movement, and an analytical framework — barged into global agrarian discourse over the last two decades. Since then, it has inspired and mobilized diverse publics: workers, scholars and public intellectuals, farmers and peasant movements, NGOs and human rights activists in the North and global South. The term has become a challenging subject for social science research, and has been interpreted and reinterpreted in a variety of ways by various groups and individuals. Indeed, it is a concept that is broadly defined as the right of peoples to democratically control or determine the shape of their food system, and to produce sufficient and healthy food in culturally appropriate and ecologically sustainable ways in and near their territory. As such it spans issues such as food politics, agroecology, land reform, biofuels, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), urban gardening, the patenting of life forms, labor migration, the feeding of volatile cities, ecological sustainability, and subsistence rights.

Sponsored by the [Program in Agrarian Studies at Yale University](#) and the [Journal of Peasant Studies](#), and co-organized by [Food First](#), [Initiatives in Critical Agrarian Studies \(ICAS\)](#) and the [International Institute of Social Studies \(ISS\)](#) in The Hague, as well as the Amsterdam-based [Transnational Institute \(TNI\)](#), the conference “Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue” will be held at Yale University on September 14–15, 2013. The event will bring together leading scholars and political activists who are advocates of and sympathetic to the idea of food sovereignty, as well as those who are skeptical to the concept of food sovereignty to foster a critical and productive dialogue on the issue. The purpose of the meeting is to examine what food sovereignty might mean, how it might be variously construed, and what policies (e.g. of land use, commodity policy, and food subsidies) it implies. Moreover, such a dialogue aims at exploring whether the subject of food sovereignty has an “intellectual future” in critical agrarian studies and, if so, on what terms.

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