

**TRINOMOOL CONGRESS' ELECTORAL VICTORY IN 2011 ASSEMBLY ELECTION
IN WEST BENGAL: A STUDY IN ELECTORAL GEOGRAPHY**

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ABSTRACT

The study of electoral geography is considered as one of the modern subfield of political geography which essentially focuses on the interaction of place, space and electoral process. Electoral geography reviews the influence of geographical context on voter's decision making process, parties and electoral system and builds an interface between political science and human geography. The present paper attempts to analyze and described the first electoral victory of Trinomool Congress in 2011 Assembly election in West Bengal. Trinomool Congress came in West Bengal in 1998 as a breakaway faction of the Indian National Congress. The 2011 Assembly electoral victory of T.M.C is a remarkable success and defeat of thirty four (34) years long ruling party Left Front. T.M.C won 227 seats out of 294 seats in 2011 Assembly election and led the government of West Bengal. The study is based on secondary sources of data and election data taken from Election Commission of India, New Delhi, and Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) Delhi, Chief Electoral Office, Kolkata.

Keywords: Political Geography, Electoral Geography, Assembly Election, Trinomool Congress

Introduction

Electoral geography is considered as one of the modern subfields of political geography. It essentially focuses on the interaction of place, space and electoral processes. Electoral geography investigates the influence of geographical context on voter's decision making process, parties' strategies, electoral system and makes an interface between human geography and political science. Electoral geography provides a spatial perspective to the study of the organization, conduct and result of elections. Many political scientists greatly contributed in the field of electoral geography. Andre Siegfried, a French political scientist is considered as the founder of

academic electoral geography. With the passage of time and inventions of maps the study of electoral geography increased. Another Swedish political scientist Herbert Tingstin applied statistical data to analyze electoral geographies (Tingstin 1937). Taylor and Johnston (1979) identified three main focus points in the study of electoral geography. They considered that 'geography of voting' is the first and it is based on statistical analysis which identified and explored voting pattern in a particular election cycle. Second, 'geography's influence on voting' includes campaign strategies, specific voter issue and final focus theme is 'geography of representative' which mainly focused on electoral district boundaries.

Assembly elections in India are the elections where the Indian electorate chooses the members of the Vidhan Sabha. Basically they are held every five years and the members of the legislative assembly are known as MLAs. But one noted point is that assembly elections are never carried out in same years for all states and union territories of India. West Bengal, relatively a developing state, has been important in India's politics since independence. It has always played a great role in the formation of the government at the centre of the country. Trinomool congress is one of the new political parties in West Bengal. It was founded in January 1998 under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee. In the beginning it was working with alliance like National Congress, BJP and it was known All India Trinomool Congress (AITMC) but in recent times it became only Trinomool Congress (TMC). The 2011 assembly election was the first electoral victory for Trinomool Congress. This election recorded major successes of TMC and highest voter turnout in the electoral history of West Bengal. Trinomool Congress won 227 seats out of 294 seats and the defeated Left Front got 67 seats only out of 294 seats.

Significance of the Study

The study of electoral geography has a great significance in the electoral studies since its academic origin. However it provides a pathway to the people where they feel their opinion, voice and choose the correct person who clearly matches with them. It also gives importance to electoral maps which clearly shows where the voter is in favour or against the party. The present paper gives attention to the people's role in conceptualising the political choices and voting behavior of individuals. The present study also bears a great significance as it points out issues

like Nandigram movement, Singur incident, lalghar incident. All these clearly understand the local people of the state and the reasons why the people favour TMC.

Aims and Objectives

The principal aims and objectives of the present study are given below:

- i. To study the historical background of Trinomool Congress in West Bengal elections.
- ii. To find out the factors behind the victory of T.M.C in 2011 assembly election.
- iii. To analyze the voting pattern in the election.

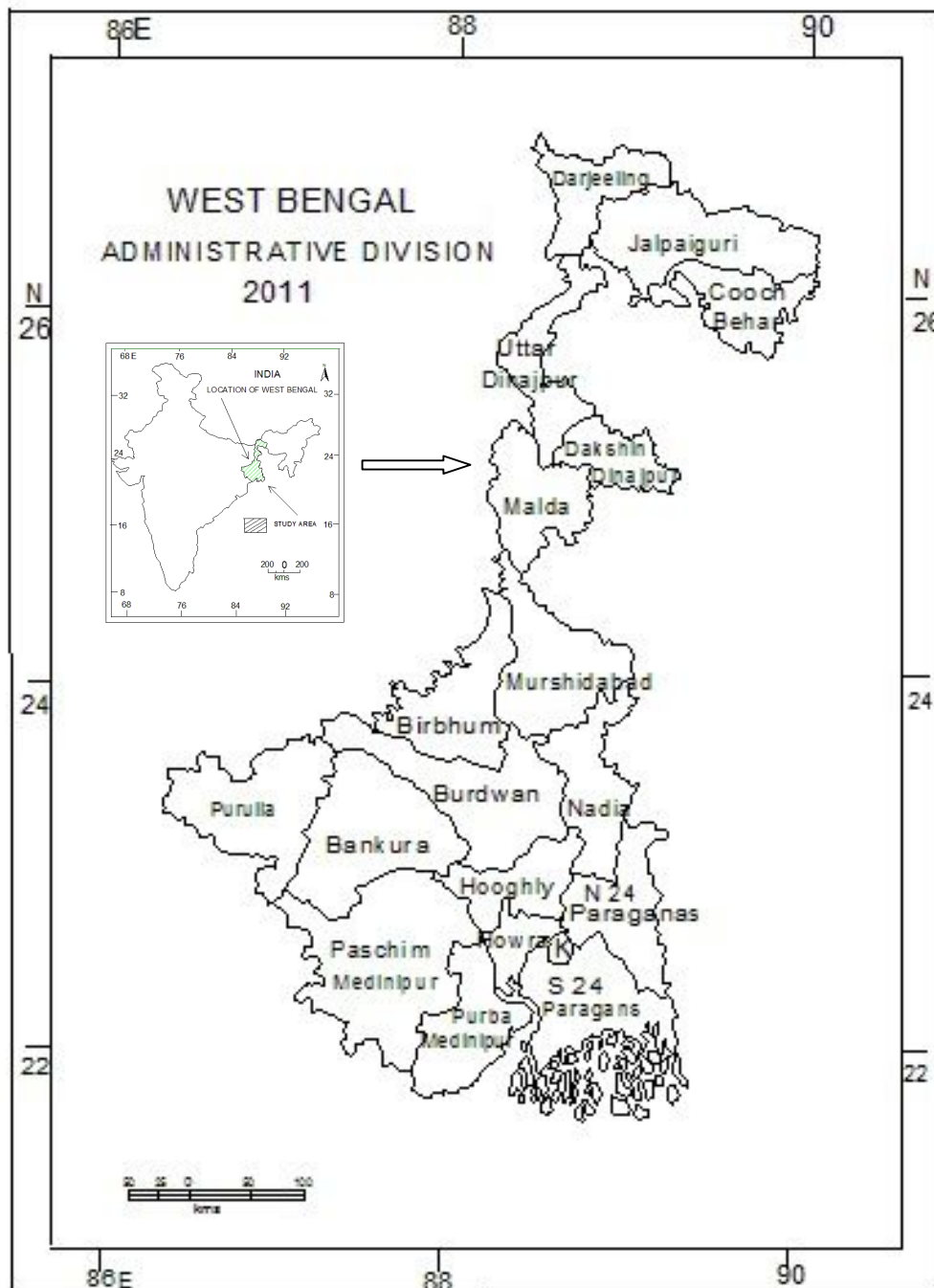
Data Base and Methodology

The present study takes recourse to the secondary source of data. The electoral data have been collected from Election Commission of India, New Delhi, various research journal, articles, dissertations and survey findings conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in New Delhi, Chief Electoral office, Vidhan Sabha library, Kolkata.

Study Area

Since independence, West Bengal became one of the important states in terms of India's political scenario. West Bengal is generally a developing state but most of the part of the state is becoming developed. Sikkim and Bhutan bounded it in the north and Assam state in north-east, Bangladesh in the east, Jharkhand and Bihar bounded in West and Nepal in the north-west. The state is located between 85° 50' and 89° 50' east longitude, and 21° 10' and 27° 38' north latitude. Its total area is 88,752 Sq. kms. (34,267 sq. mile). In terms of demographic pattern West Bengal ranked 4th position in total population of the country. According to 2011 population census, the total population is 91, 347,736 persons. The literacy rate is 74.08% which is higher than national average literacy rate. The administrative boundary is divided into 3 sub division and 19 districts. The 2011 assembly election had 294 constituencies and some seats were reserved for schedule caste and schedule tribe candidates.

Fig. Study Area: West Bengal Administration Division 2011



Historical Background of Trinomool Congress in West Bengal Elections:

Trinomool Congress came in West Bengal as a break way faction of the Indian National Congress. The party was founded in January 1998 by the current chief minister of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee. At first it was named as All India Trinomool Congress (AITMC). After the victory in 2011 assembly election its name has changed and it is known as Trinomool Congress (TMC). Trinomool Congress has an election symbol that is ‘twin flowers in grass’ approved by the Election Commission of India. This individual symbol is famously known as ‘jora phul’ which means grass and two flowers. It covers all the colours of the Indian National flag and its political slogan is ‘Ma Maati’ means motherland and people. The flowers and grass represents the essence of our nation, of the motherhood or the country. The ‘Maati’ or motherland indicates mother or ‘Ma’. The people dwelling on the motherland are called manush. TMC is a new emerging political party which stands for the down-trodden sections of the society. The leader Mamata Banerjee used this single flower which indicates that TMC support of those sections of the society which are apparently insignificant and are oppressed. One of the main motivations of TMC is that it helps and recovers those sections which are backward in the sense of economy, education and culture in West Bengal.



Fig: Symbol of TMC

The electoral performance of TMC has been increasing. In the 1998 lok Sabha election TMC won 8 seats. But TMC performed well in Kolkata Municipal Corporation election in 2000. In the 2001 assembly election TMC won 60 seats in alliance with Congress. In the Lok Sabha election of 2004, TMC won only 1 seat with BJP. In the next assembly election in 2006 they won 30 seats with BJP. In 2009 Lok Sabha election, TMC performed a bit well, they won 19 seats. But once again in 2010 Kolkata Municipal Corporation election, TMC won a majority of seats, 97 out of 141 seats. After the long electoral journey Trinomool Congress got the first victory in the assembly election of West Bengal in 2011. In 2011 assembly election, TMC got a majority of

seats. It won 227 out of 294 seats and beat Left Front government which ruled West Bengal for the last 34 years. It was the major victory for the Trinomool Congress.

Factors behind the Victory of Trinomool Congress in 2011 Assembly election:

Nandigram movement, Singur Tata Nano controversy, lalgarh agitation and Rizwanur Rahman murder case played a great role in the victory of Trinomool Congress in 2011 assembly election of West Bengal.

Nandigram Movement

Nandigram violence was an incident in Nandigram village of Purba Medinipur in West Bengal where the Communist Party of India (Marxist) forcefully tried to acquire land for SEZ (Special Economic Zone). But the local people did not want to give up their land. Approximately 70,000 people were evicted from their homes. People of that village started movement against this land acquisition and TMC led the movement. When the movement was dangerous and out of control then police opened firing and killed 14 villagers and many people went missing. The CM Buddhadev Bhattercharya did not help or provide support to the victims. But Trinomool leader Mamata Banerjee supported and stayed with them and provided moral help. In this way the local people turned against the Communist Party of India (CPM) and favoured TMC under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee.

Singur Tata Nano Controversy

It was also one of the pathetic incidents of the local people of Singur village in Hooghly district of West Bengal. In 2008 Tata Nano Company wanted to build a Nano motor factory in Singur. For that the government of West Bengal took over 997 acres of farmland and handed over to Tata for building the Tata Nano factory by using 1894 land acquisition act rule. Therefore, the people of that area started a movement and got against the government. They did not want to hand over their holy golden farmland to the Tata Company. This movement was also headed by Mamata Banerjee and finally the Tata Company had to go back and left the farmland but these

fertile farmlands turned into barren lands and left unsuitable for any form of cultivation. In this way Singur movement helped Mamata Banerjee in 2011 assembly victory in West Bengal.

Lalgarh Incident

The government of West Bengal wanted to develop and improve the necessary infrastructure of Lalgarh village in West Medinipur of West Bengal. But the village people did not want it and didn't accept the proposal of CM Buddhadev Bhattacharya. So West Bengal police started an operation named operation Lalgarh against the Maoists of the villages. In this way the situation became serious and Maoist people blasted a bomb and many people died and got injured. It converted into a political war between Left Front and TMC.

Voting Pattern of 2011 Assembly Election

In the battle of 2011 assembly election in West Bengal two major parties contested, one Left Front and another Trinomool Congress. Since 1977 to 2011 L.F dominated the government of West Bengal. Trinomool Congress came as a new political party in West Bengal and won an absolute majority of seats. In 2011 election TMC won 227 seats out of 294 seats and LF won only 62 seats out of 294 seats. This election also had the highest voter turnout in the history of election in the state. Election was held on April 18 to May10 with 294 constituencies in six phases.

Table 1.1: Summary of Electoral Participation

	Assembly Election 2011
Total Electorate	5,62,06,476
Male Electorate	2,94,81,750
Female Electorate	2,67,24,726
Total Turnout	84.8%

Male Turnout	84.4%
Female Turnout	84.5%
Number of Candidates	1,792

Source: Election Commission of India

Table.1.1. provides a general idea about the electoral participation in 2011 assembly election of West Bengal. In this election the number of total male electorate was 2, 94, 81,750 and female participation was 2, 67, 24,726 out of 5, 62, 06,476 persons. It also recorded 84.8% voting, that was higher voter turnout than previous election.

Table.1.2: Summary result in Reserved and General Constituencies

Category	Total Seats	Left Front Seats won	TMC+ Seats Won
SC	68	20	48
ST	16	10	5
General	210	32	174
Total	294	62	227

Source: Election Commission of India

The above table clearly shows that TNC won absolute majority of seats 174 out of 210 seats in general constituencies. But another notable point is that L.F won half of the total seats in reserved constituencies. Since the history of assembly elections it always performed well in reserved constituencies but in case of TMC it was reverse, they always performed very well in general constituencies.

.Table.1.3 District-Wise Analysis of 2011 Assembly Election Result

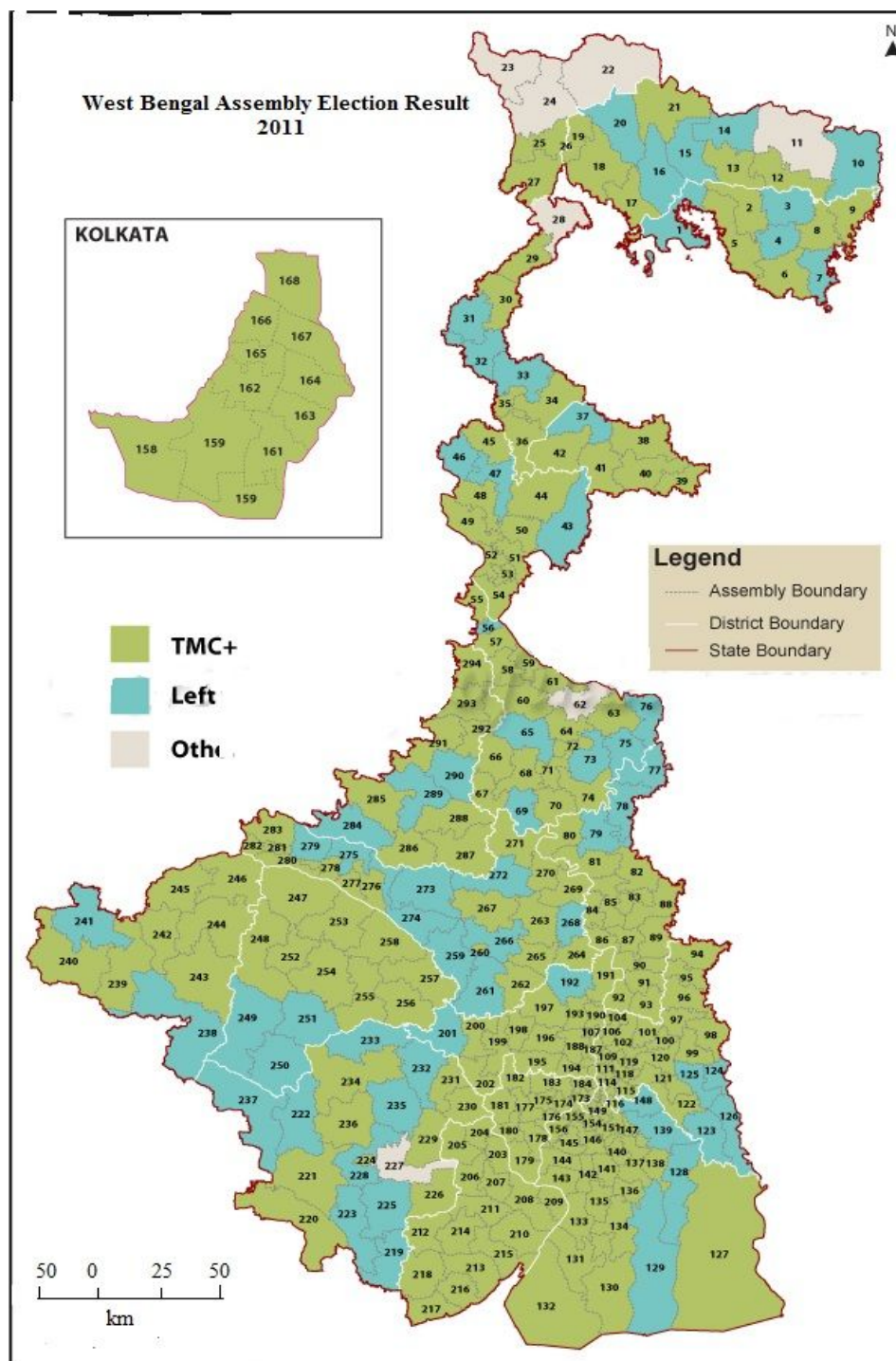
District Name	Total Seats	TMC+	Left Front
Cooch Behar	9	5	4
Jalpaiguri	12	6	5
Darjeeling	6	3	0
UttarDinajpur	9	5	3
DakshinDinajpur	6	5	1
Maldah	12	9	3
Murshidabad	22	15	7
Nadia	17	14	3
N-24 Paraganas	33	29	4
S-24 Paraganas	31	27	4
Kolkata	11	11	0
Howrah	16	16	0
Hooghly	18	16	2
Purb Medinipur	16	16	0
Paschimmedinipur	19	10	9
Purulia	9	7	2
Bankura	12	9	3
Bardhaman	25	16	9
Birbhum	11	8	3

Total	294	227	62
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Source: Election Commission of India

It is clear from the above table that the people of West Bengal refused the Left Front in every district. It is also worrying for left Front that they could not even win a single seat in four districts in West Bengal, those districts are Darjeeling, Kolkata, Howrah, and Purba Medinipur. Left Front performance also could not get double digit figure in any district of Bengal. In the district of Bardhaman and Paschim Medinipur, they have won 9 seats each which are the highest scores of LF. Finally left Front won 62 seats out of 294 seats with a six party alliance. But the table also shows that TMC+ has a favorable performance in every districts of West Bengal in 2011 assembly election.

Fig: District wise Analysis-West Bengal Assembly Election Result (2011)



Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Kolkata

Table 1.4: Party wise Summary

Party Name	Seats	% vote
Trinomool Congres +	227	48.35
Left Front	62	41.05
Bharatiya Janata Party	00	00
Independent/ Others	05	10.6
Total	294	100

Source: Election Commission of India

Table 1.4 shows the final result of contested parties Trinomool Congress won absolute majority of seats 227 out of 294 seats and L.F got only 62 seats and was at second position. BJP also contested alone in 2011 assembly election but they did not win a single seat.

Conclusion

From the above discussion and analysis we can conclude that 2011 assembly election witnessed the remarkable victory of Trinomool Congress, as a new political party. The Left Front won only 62 seats out of the 294 assembly constituencies. The study found that nearly 85% voter turnout is the highest turnout in the history of assembly elections in West Bengal. Through the district wise analyses of election results we can highlight that TMC performed well in Kolkata, Darjeeling, Howrah, Burdhaman, North and South paraganas districts. Some issues like Nandi gram movement, Lalgah incident, Singur movement etc played a great role in the victory of Trinomool Congress.

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