

# frontier

Vol. 57 : No. 39

ISSN 0016-2094

March 23-29, 2025

Founder-Editor: **SAMAR SEN**

On Other Pages

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Comment  | 2  |
| Note   | 3  |
| A PIONEER<br>Suniti Kumar Ghosh: His Contribution<br>to Indian Historiography-II<br>Amit Bhattacharyya | 4  |
| HINDUTVA NEEDS AN ECONOMIC BASE<br>Why Assam is a<br>Prime Destination of Investment<br>Arup Baisya    | 7  |
| THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE?<br>Delimitation: Dangers and Demands<br>I Mallikajuna Sharma                   | 8  |
| REMEMBERING CLARA ZETKIN<br>The Woman behind 'Women's Day'<br>Rishika Singh                            | 11 |
| REVISITING 21ST FEBRUARY<br>'...It is the Blood of Barkat'<br>Arun Kumar Sinha                         | 12 |
| WATER: NEW BATTLEGROUND<br>China's Brahmaputra Hydro Project<br>Nilanjan Ghosh<br>Sayanangshu Modak    | 13 |
| Letter   | 15 |

Editor: **TIMIR BASU**Assistant Editor: **Subhasis Mukherjee**

Published weekly for Germinal Publications Pvt. Ltd. by Sharmistha Dutta from 44, Balaram Dey Street, Kolkata-6 and Printed by Abhijit Goswami at Laser Aid, 35A/3, Biplobi Barin Ghosh Sarani, Kolkata-67, West Bengal.

E-mail : frontierweekly@yahoo.co.in  
frontierweekly@hotmail.com

Telephone : 2530-0065

[Typeset by THE D-COMLASER, 60 Sikdar Bagan Street, Kolkata-4, Ph : 98361-58319]

## *The Delimitation Debate*

**T**HE DELIMITATION DEBATE IS NOW HOTTING UP. DEMANDING a freeze on the delimitation exercise for the next three decades, the all-party meeting convened by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on March 5, resolved to form a joint committee comprising MPs from southern states to create awareness on the adverse impact of delimitation based on population. Southern states fear that redrawing constituencies based on population would diminish their representation compared to more populous states. The idea was originally mooted by Congress and Prime Minister Modi who is now too eager to implement the scheme criticised it not very long ago. In October 2023, while addressing a rally during the Telengana Assembly polls, he used the delimitation issue to attack the Congress: "The country is now talking about the next delimitation. It will mean that wherever the population is less, the Lok Sabha seats will come down, and rise where population is high... The southern states have achieved remarkable progress in population control, but will stand to lose heavily if the Congress's idea of rights in proportion to population is implemented... South India stands to lose 100 Lok Sabha seats", said Modi. But his home minister Amit Shah said on more than one occasion that there won't be any injustice with the southern states after delimitation. But his assurance was more like an electoral rhetoric not to be taken seriously. And people of South India too don't believe in his vague promise. One point agenda on which regional parties like DMK rely on is how to get more doles and grants from the Centre.

In independent India, delimitation has taken place only four times—1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002. If it takes place at all the 2026 exercise will be the fifth one. The number game matters in bargaining power and that is the real bone of contention.

The Election Commission examines changes in the population to redraw constituencies or create new ones. After taking public feedback, the Commission publishes its final report. The last census was done in 1971. In 2021 when census was scheduled, the Modi government abandoned it because it was at the height of the Covid crisis. And since then the census has been consistently put off, with none scheduled in the foreseeable future. If redrawing constituencies is based on 1971 census, then there is no question of reduction or increase in number of seats. But the Delimitation Commission may decide otherwise without waiting for the new census report.

The new Parliament house has the capacity of 848 members. The present Lok Sabha strength is 543. Nobody knows when the census will start. If delimitation takes place as per population statistics available with the states, north is certainly going to gain.

As Stalin is facing election next year he has some compulsion to make noises against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led central government and the Centre's discrimi-

natory treatment. He seems to be emerging as the key anti-BJP voice in the South. Besides delimitation, Stalin has been vocal against the Centre's pan-India projects including the three-language formula of the National Education Policy. In truth Tamil Nadu has almost a century-old history of anti-Hindi agitations. But Andhra's Chandrababu Naidu is not with Stalin as he would like to advise his voters 'it is better to learn Hindi'. He also sees population

growth in states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh as a positive development.

As elections loom in Tamil Nadu and Kerala Stalin is trying to become a bigger player on the national stage. The BJP which originally started as a party of North Indian *baniyas* has long been trying to gain traction in the South, with its hopes now resting mainly on its one key ally—Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandra Babu Naidu.

□□□

## COMMENT

### 'All this for a Novel'

OVER THE PAST WEEK A VIGOROUS social media campaign has been going on in Kerala. Malayalee media, both print and visual, have given good coverage. The issue—permission to publish a novel. All that for a novel? Well, the novel isn't about usual novelistic matters and the author too isn't the usual literary figure. He is a Maoist, a convict, in jail for 10 years. And the novel, 'Ormakurippukal Bandhitharude' (*Memoirs of the Incarcerated*) is about that—the seen and unseen meshes of incarceration in the country. The jail authorities have refused him permission to get it published since it references the jail system among others. For one thing jails in India are living hells, designed originally by the British and later updated by successive Indian governments, to dehumanise the prisoners in most barbaric way.

Roopesh TR, the author, has been in jail since 2015, when he was arrested and charged under the notorious UAPA. 42 more cases, all UAPA, were foisted on him. He has been acquitted in one, convicted in another, discharged in 13, trials going on in several, while the rest are pending.

Roopesh has been using his time quite fruitfully. Reading, learning,

writing, fighting his own cases and assisting fellow prisoners in their legal appeals, all the while fully engaged in prison social life to the extent allowed. Above all, he has stood firm in his convictions.

Evidently, this is the real reason for blocking publication of his novel. It is a state decision made at the higher level. Because the law laid down repeatedly by the Supreme Court is quite clear on this matter. Prisoners have the right to publish their writings.

The ongoing social media campaign has made this its focal point. Roopesh's one day hunger strike in Viyyur Central Prison gave it added force. A wide cross section of literary figures and social activists came forward to demand permission for publication. An even greater number are signing up on a petition to the Chief Minister.

This is happening in Kerala, presently ruled by a front led by the CPM. Ironic indeed! More, a telling sign of present times. At the time of writing, the CPM's State Conference is going on. It will be discussing their Central Committee's resolution, pondering over nuances of fascism. Perhaps a whiff of fresh air would do the delegates well. A whiff bringing them fragrances of struggle, of

Roopesh, of the striking Asha workers, and memories of past struggles and sacrifices betrayed. It would help them situate the fascisation taking place around the society in a broad frame, broader than that of one or the other ruling class party.

That, in fact, is the crux of this struggle to exercise a prisoner's right to publish jail writings. It was gained through prolonged, harsh struggle spread out over generations, all over the world. The state, whether administered by the BJP or the CPM or any other party, wants to end it. Just as it is ending or whittling down various other democratic rights. Roopesh's struggle is part of the broad array of struggles taking place all over the country in defence of democratic rights. With popular support for Roopesh growing among broad masses the authorities are now trying to shift him to the high security prison. As Roopesh's sentence will end at the end of next month, what could be the reason that prompted the CPM-led government to transfer him? Maybe, they want to block his writing and reading facilities or it may be yet another conspiracy to file new cases against him. □□□

[Contributed by K Murali]

Readers are requested to note the changed address (new) of our website  
**www.frontierweekly.com**

## NOTE

## Looking Back: 'Chernobyl' & 'Bhopal'

*Barshaneel Bora writes:*

**T**HE 1980S WERE A TURBULENT decade for global industrial safety. Two monumental disasters—the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe and the Bhopal gas leak—shocked the world, revealing systemic flaws in both technology and governance.

On 26 April 1986, the world witnessed the horror of the Chernobyl disaster at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in the Soviet Union (modern-day Ukraine), while just two years earlier, on 2 December 1984, the Bhopal Gas Tragedy unfolded in India.

These incidents, while vastly different in nature—one involving nuclear power and the other, toxic chemicals—share striking similarities in terms of the factors that led to them: government negligence, corporate irresponsibility, and an inadequate response to the immediate crisis.

Both Chernobyl and Bhopal highlight how governments failed to protect their citizens, suppressed critical information, and delayed relief efforts, resulting in devastating human and environmental consequences. Thirty-eight years after Chernobyl and forty years after Bhopal, the effects of these disasters are still felt, with lasting damage to health, ecosystems, and public trust.

The Soviet Union's response to the disaster was marred by secrecy, misinformation, and delayed action. In a bid to prevent panic and international scrutiny, Soviet officials delayed evacuations and initially downplayed the scale of the accident.

Residents of the nearby town of Pripyat, home to over forty thousand people, were not informed of the danger until 36 hours after the

explosion. This delay in evacuation exposed thousands of people to life-threatening levels of radiation.

Despite the global outcry and scientific recognition of the scale of the disaster, the Soviet leadership faced little accountability. Even more troubling was the fact that the nuclear industry continued to operate with similar flaws, as the Soviet Union's reluctance to fully acknowledge the disaster led to insufficient reforms.

Two years before the Chernobyl disaster, on 2 December 1984, the Bhopal Gas Tragedy unfolded in India. The tragedy took place at the Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) pesticide plant, where a deadly cloud of methyl isocyanate (MIC), a highly toxic chemical, leaked into the surrounding area. The leak exposed over half a million people to the toxic gas. It led to an immediate death toll in the thousands and long-term health effects for countless others.

The Indian government's response to the Bhopal disaster was equally inadequate. The government's failure to enforce industrial safety regulations in the years before the incident allowed the conditions that led to the leak to persist.

Much like the Soviet Union's handling of Chernobyl, the Indian government and Union Carbide faced little accountability for their actions. Union Carbide's parent company, based in the United States, faced minimal legal consequences, and the Indian government's efforts to hold the company accountable were slow and inefficient.

In the years that followed, victims of the disaster were left without adequate compensation or justice, a

### BOOKS BY T VIJAYENDRA

Just Released

REQUIEM FOR OUR TIMES Rs. 100

AFTER ALL IT IS ONLY HIM!

AND OTHER STORIES Rs. 70

AN INTELLIGENT BIRD'S GUIDE

TO THE BIRDWATCHER AND

OTHER STORIES

Second reprint Rs. 40

THE LOSERS SHALL

INHERIT THE WORLD

Third Reprint Rs. 60

REGAINING PARADISE:

TOWARDS A FOSSIL

FUEL FREE SOCIETY Rs. 120

THE TEACHER AND

THE CHILD LABOUR Rs. 50

For Copies Contact :

**MANCHI PUSTAKAM**

12-13-439, St. No. 1 Tarnaka,

Secunderabad 500017

Email: info@manchipustakam.in

Cell: +91 73822 97430

situation that continues to haunt many survivors and their families.

The consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and the Bhopal gas leak are felt even today.

In Chernobyl, the exclusion zone around the reactor remains largely uninhabitable, and the long-term health impacts of radiation exposure continue to affect survivors and their descendants.

Similarly, in Bhopal, the survivors of the gas leak continue to suffer from respiratory problems, birth defects, and other long-term health issues. The environment around the plant remains contaminated, and many families are still seeking justice. □□□

*[Originally published in Madras Courier]*

For **Frontier Contact**

**MYTHRY BOOK HOUSE**

MASJID LANE, KARL MARX ROAD

VIJAYWADA-520 002

## A PIONEER

## Suniti Kumar Ghosh: His Contribution to Indian Historiography—II

Amit Bhattacharyya

THE NEW INDIAN STATE looked to the USA for food 'aid', capital goods and technology for building industries from the beginning. Nehru himself went to the USA in October 1949 and appealed to the US government for assistance. Despite the fact that with all the huge surplus wheat in their stores, the US imperialists were totally indifferent to the famine conditions in India as the British rulers had been during the Bengal famine in 1943. In fact, as Ghosh observes, they had not only been indifferent, but had also contributed to its intensification (Ghosh, p.21). They sought to take advantage of the extreme distress of the Indian people to extract political and strategic gains.

While conditions in India deteriorated, the Indian government made an urgent request in December 1950 to the USA for a food loan of 2 million tons. After about 6 months, the US government agreed to provide on credit the food grains from its surplus. Very high prices were fixed and India had to pay transport unbelievably inflated. According to L. Natarajan, the "overcharge" on account of freight alone, "was closer to \$29,000,000 since most of the grain was carried in American ships". The loan had many political and economic strings attached to them (L. Natarajan, *American Shadow over India*, pp.100-11. The words quoted are on p.103).

The first Public Law (PL) 480 was adopted by the US Congress in 1954. With its adoption, observed Roger Burbach and Patricia Flynn, "food aid was institutionalized as an arm of US imperialism... PL480,

with its ostensibly humanitarian purpose, provided a perfect cloak for US diplomacy" (*Agribusiness in the Americas*, pp.64,69—emphasis added).

India signed the PL480 agreement with the USA in August 1956. Ghosh argues that the complex manner of repayment for the imports of surplus agricultural produce provided the US government with the lever to exert control over Indian currency, to promote the interests of the subsidiaries of US transnationals and the interests of the Indian big bourgeoisie by granting them loans from the Cooley Fund (named after US Congressman H D Cooley) and to influence all other spheres of life including politics and politicians. As we proceed to discuss 'Green Revolution', it is necessary to keep this background in mind.

Imperialist Restructuring of India's Agricultural System: 'Green Revolution': Who Promoted it and Why?

Suniti Kumar Ghosh wrote: "U.S. imperialism had still other plans. Its object was to cast India's agricultural strategy into a mould that would serve the interests of US transnationals. The aim was to decide for India what to produce and how to produce and to make Indian agriculture an appendage of imperialist capital".

In 1958, prime minister Nehru and the Planning Commission accepted the suggestion of Douglas Ensminger, the Ford Foundation chief in India, that a group of foreign experts might be set up to work with an Indian group to make recommendations about Indian agriculture. Ensminger formed a team headed by Sherman Johnson, then chief economic of the U.S. department of

agriculture's research service. In 1959, this team produced the Ford Foundation's *Report on India's Food Crisis and Steps to Meet It*. This report by the Ford Team, as Ghosh points out, prepared the way for the 'Green Revolution' in India and for the penetration and control of Indian agriculture by US and other transnationals. It strongly criticized the approach of institutional change [that is change in the property structure] and recommended "a technocratic approach based on price incentives to individual farmers for higher investment in modern inputs, especially chemical fertilizers. Simultaneously, the report recommended the formula, abandoned in 1952 on the grounds of social equity, of an intensive and selective development strategy, involving the concentration of a combination of modern practices—improved seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides—in irrigated areas of the country"—in about 25 districts of Punjab (which then included Haryana), and parts of U.P., M.P., and Bihar (Frankel, *India's Political Economy*, p.180). At this time, giant agricultural corporations of the USA were seeking expanded markets for fertilizers, pesticides etc, especially fertilizers, of which there was a glut in Western markets. The report put the major emphasis on the use of chemical fertilizers.

Ghosh argues that the policy was to ensure imports of chemical fertilizers from the metropolitan countries as well as imports of capital goods and technology for building chemical fertilizer plants in India. These were to be set up by transnational corporations, either by themselves alone or in collaboration with their Indian compradors. Their aim was to use Indian agriculture as a captive market for several agricultural inputs manufactured by them—fertilizers, pesticides, farm machinery and so on.

As noted before, as an experimental measure, under the sponsorship of and with generous financial assistance from the Ford Foundation, the Intensive Agricultural Development Programme (IADP)—also called the “package programme”—was extended to several districts. It concentrated on the rich farmers in irrigated areas and supplied them with subsidized inputs, price incentives, technical advice and marketing facilities.

The World Bank, as Ghosh notes, was not far behind the US imperialists in decrying institutional changes, in insisting on a technocratic approach and in putting emphasis on the role of imperialist capital in raising imperialist capital in raising agricultural production in underdeveloped countries. The World Bank mission, headed by Bernard R. Bell, which came to India in late 1964, derided the objective of institutional change. It recommended “a reorientation of overall investment priorities toward agriculture; incentive prices at levels high enough to guarantee profitability to individual farmers” using the new technology—the concentration of modern inputs, especially hybrid seeds (bred at the research centres set up by imperialist agencies), fertilizers, pesticides, power and farm machinery in irrigated areas. The package of policies recommended included proposals for relaxation of controls on industrial licensing and an import liberalization programme to stimulate investment in private industries. As part of the strategy for strengthening price incentives in the promotion of export-oriented industries...the mission made its first recommendation for the devaluation of the rupee”. It is notable that the World Bank presented to the Indian government its package its package of economic reforms as *condition* of substantial flows of ‘aid’ (Frankel, *India’s Politi-*

*cal Economy*, pp.270-71—emphasis added).

Ghosh avers that the strategy that the U.S. imperialists and the World Bank sought to thrust on India was aimed at tightening the grip of imperialist capital on Indian agriculture. There were, according to him, two strategies open before the Indian ruling classes and their political representatives. One was to carry out radical land reforms, rouse the initiative and enthusiasm of the peasants—the creativity and genius that is in them—and apply science to improve upon the indigenous seeds and the traditional methods and practices, as contemporary New Democratic China had been doing. Such a strategy, as Ghosh rightly stated, “would not discriminate against vast agricultural regions which, during the colonial period, were more neglected than certain other regions, but distribute as far as possible irrigation and credit facilities throughout India and rely on a balanced use of locally available manure and chemical fertilizers and on crop protection by indigenous methods” (p.25). He quotes from an article published in *Economic Times* which stated:

“China uses one-third of the fertilizer inputs that India does, but still manages to produce about twice as much per unit of land as India does. The reason for China’s success is its optimal mix of manufactured and natural fertilizers. At one level this helps lower costs per unit of output, At another, it helps retain soil fertility by replenishing the soil” (‘Seeds of Growth, Seeds of Controversy’, *ET*, 5 March, 1991).

The other strategy was to import the Western model, which had developed in conditions entirely different from ours. “It sought to reject all that was positive in our farming system, which had already deteriorated under very adverse conditions

## FRONTIER

44, Balaram Dey Street, Kolkata-700006

Phone: (033) 2530-0065

Mail: frontierweekly@yahoo.co.in

frontierweekly@hotmail.com

Site: www.frontierweekly.com

### SUBSCRIPTION RATES

|                             |     |       |
|-----------------------------|-----|-------|
| India [Annual]              | Rs. | 500   |
| Frontier Associate [Annual] | Rs. | 1500  |
| Life Subscription [Inland]  | Rs. | 5000+ |

Make payment by Cheque/Draft in favour of FRONTIER or GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.

or  
FRONTIER [GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.]

MO should be addressed to Frontier Please add Rs. 50/- to inland outstation cheques towards bank charges, all remittances to FRONTIER

\*\*\*\*\*

Payment could be made directly to our bank accounts as given below. Check the bank details before transferring money. Also inform us through e-mail after sending money.

**Beneficiary Name:**

**GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.**

Bank Name: **PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK**

Address : 223, C.R. Avenue, Kolkata-6

Branch: Jorasanko Branch

Current Account Number: 0085050001319

IFSC Code: PUNB0008020

Branch Code : 0008020

Swift Code: UTBIINBB0BC

**OR**

**FRONTIER**

**(GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.)**

Bank Name: **PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK**

Address : 223, C. R. Avenue, Kolkata-6

Branch: Jorasanko Branch

Current Account Number: 0085050001378

IFSC Code: PUNB0008020

Branch Code : 0008020

Swift Code: UTBIINBB0BC

**OR**

**GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.**

Bank Name: **CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA**

Address: 4&5, Singheebagan Lane, SC

Avenue, Kolkata-700007, West Bengal

Branch: Singheebagan Branch

Current Account Number: 3116713216

IFSC Code: CBIN 0281476

Branch Code: 281476

Swift Code: CBININBB0CAL

\*For MO, Regd. Post and Speed Post mailing address should be written in the following fashion :

To

**FRONTIER**

C/o Durbar Mahila Samanawya Committee

44, Balaram Dey Street, Kolkata-700006, WB

Contact Number : 8240016324

during the British rule and needed improvement. However, as Ghosh opines, “the total rejection of the indigenous system based on the experience of our peasants over thousands of years meant throwing the baby out with the bath-water. The new technology that would displace the old one was wholly out of place in Indian conditions—the socio-economic, ecological and other conditions”. (p.26) It was a technology that was not based on the between the old and the new, between tradition and science, but was totally exotic in Indian conditions. It was a technology that. Though locally advertised as an instrument of combating hunger, was really intended to ensure large profits for TNCs based in imperialist countries. According to S.K. Ghosh, while it would intensify India’s dependence on imperialist capital, it would be a disaster for the country and the people.

As Pat Roy Mooney in his *Seeds of the Earth* observes, the Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation and the Kellogg Foundation have played an active role in exporting the ‘green revolution’ to India and other underdeveloped countries. The pivot of this revolution was the HYV seed (*Ibid*, p.60). It was these foundations that provided financial assistance to the establishment of seed research institutes in different countries. Such research institutions were set up in Mexico, Philippines, Peru, Columbia and India (‘International Crops Research Institutes for the Semi-Arid Tropics’ in Hyderabad)—all in under-developed Third World Countries. The work of these research centres was coordinated by the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources (IBPGR) which is based in Rome. Robert McNamara, a former member of Ford Foundation and US War Secretary who earned much notoriety and worldwide condemnation by intensifying

US aggression in Vietnam and President of the World Bank, was associated with this scheme. (Mooney, *op.cit*, pp.21-23).

Hybrid seeds of wheat, rice, maize, potato etc. were bred in the international research centres controlled by the US capitalists (by crossing the seed genes of plants with which Nature has endowed several underdeveloped countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America). These countries are, in fact, the original homes of an infinite variety of plants while the gene-poor industrialized countries of the North depend on them for them for the genetic material. Many of these seed genes have been plundered by the imperialist agencies and stored in gene banks and laboratories under their control like the National Seed Storage Laboratory at Colorado—“the world’s storehouse for many major crops” (Mooney, *ibid*, pp.3-7, 23). As Mooney states, “almost 90% of all genetic material in long-term storage is located in Europe is located in Europe and North America” (*Ibid*, p.31). It has been said that “any person or group, *who could successfully achieve private control over a variety of these genetic resources, whether they reside in a centralized cold storage facility or in preserved environment, would indeed possess almost infinite political and economic power*” (M L Oldfield, *The Utilization and Conservation of Genetic Resources: An Economic Analysis*, 1977, p.164, cited in Mooney, *op.cit*, pp.28-29—emphasis added).

In order to understand the purpose behind the ‘green revolution’ one has to know its connection with agri-chemical transnationals. Foreign agencies, according to Ghosh, hold that these seeds are of high-yielding (HYV) varieties; however, actually, the seeds which they sell to the peasants are not so much high-

yielding as high-responsive seeds. They respond only to large amounts of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, besides adequate water. In the absence of required inputs, there may be extensive crop failures.

Giant transnationals have been attracted to the seed business. They claim monopoly over the HYVs they breed in their laboratories. These include giant agrichemical corporations like Cargill, Monsanto etc and Pioneer Hibred International of the USA, Royal Dutch Shell of the UK and the Netherlands, Ciba=Geigy and Sandoz of Switzerland (these two TNCs have merged to form Novartis AG). Ghosh points out that most of the TNCs which breed HYV seeds and dominate the seed business, also dominate fertilizer and pesticide industries, besides oil, pharmaceuticals or other chemicals. They look to profits from several sectors and breed seeds which would boost the sales of fertilizers, pesticides etc. and serve their chemical interests—not the interests of peasants or consumers.

The new offensive of US imperialism found the economic and political conditions in India in the mid-1960s quite opportune. Due to drought, crops failed in several parts of India in two successive years—1965-66 and 1966-67. Taking advantage of famine conditions in several parts of India, US imperialism used food as a weapon to force its policies on India, as Ghosh observes. The US government insisted on India’s adoption of ‘green revolution’ strategy as one condition of resumed economic aid. Felix Greene wrote that while countless Indians were starving, food shipments were ordered to be held up to force the Indian government to capitulate to the demands of the oil companies (*The Enemy Notes on Imperialism and Revolution*). *The New York Times* (15 May, 1966) reported that the US government and the TNCs in-

sisted that India provide easier terms for resumed economic aid.

The GOI also accepted the 'green revolution'. It would, as it explained, help in mitigating the immediate food crisis to some extent without bringing about radical changes in agrarian relations. The big landowning class and its representatives at the highest positions of power also welcomed this technocratic approach. Ghosh argues that such a policy would lay the spectre of radical changes in landownership and redistribution of land among the poor and landless peasants. This class of big landowners looked forward to thriving with subsidized inputs like fertilizers (imported or locally manufactured in collaboration with the imperialist capital), liberal credit and price incentives. Similarly, the big bourgeoisie hoped to expand and wax fact in

collaboration with imperialist capital and by swindling state funds. Thus, as Ghosh avers, the interests of the US and other imperialists and of Indian ruling classes converged.

C Subrahmaniam was then the central finance minister. In its 'Agricultural Production in the Fourth Five-Year-Plan: Strategy and Programme', the GOI gave an outline of its new approach. "The new policies", to quote Frankel, 'were mainly an amalgam of the dominant strains in foreign expert advice represented by the World Bank, the USAID, and the Ford Foundation then enjoying maximum influence on the thinking of the agricultural minister [C. Subrahmaniam]'.

Thus the "green revolution" was initiated in certain chosen regions of India—Punjab, Haryana, and western UP, which have enjoyed irriga-

tion facilities since colonial days more than any other region of India. And the 'new agricultural strategy' was based on the rich landowners. Here the top 10 to 15 per cent—the landlords and rich peasants—were offered a package of subsidized inputs—exotic HYV seeds, fertilizers and pesticides—and cheap credit and subsidies to install tube-wells and pumps and buy farm machinery. Frankel writes about loans given to farmers on easy terms: "Rs. 6,500 for a tube-well, repayable over nine years, with only repayment of interest during the first year". The International Minerals and Chemicals corporation in association with the Standard Oil Company of California, USA, set up a chemical plant in India which had an annual turnover of 3 lakh 65 thousand tons [ *Foreign Affairs*, April 1969, p.47] □□□ [To be concluded]

---

#### HINDUTVA NEEDS AN ECONOMIC BASE

---

## Why Assam is a Prime Destination of Investment

*Arup Baisya*

**T**HE ULTRA-NATIONALIST Hindutva sentiment, propagated by extremist ideologies, requires a corresponding economic rejuvenation at the national level to support its agenda, which relies on aggressive centralised state power. For this reactionary project to progress, Assam is viewed as a prime destination for investment. This scenario facilitates super-exploitation and generates super-profits through destructive methods. This investment model, often referred to as a "round trip investment," allows funds to be recycled back to both foreign and national corporate investors, resulting in the transfer of super-value as super-profit.

Assam has been selected due to its immature capitalist development, which provides a necessary supply of skilled workers, as well as cheap

labour and natural resources for capital investment. The remainder of capitalist development will occur through destructive and coercive means, which involve displacing peasant communities from their bond with the land and their communal belief systems. This process includes seizing natural resources at minimal costs, including grabbing the land of the peasant masses at throwaway prices, often using the coercive power of the state. The cultural void created by the destruction of the local natural economic foundations is intended to be filled by Hindutva ideology, which promotes the centralisation of power in Delhi. The current political regime, led by the BJP and its allies, presents itself as a force for nation-building, claiming its actions represent development and progress for the state of Assam.

This situation doesn't reflect a natural process of creative destruction in capitalism, and the destructive nature of this new investment drive cannot absorb the excess labour created by displacing many workers from their traditional means of survival. Consequently, the centralised political force and the Hindutva ideology will find it difficult to assuage the anger of the toiling masses to bring back stability in the system. As a result, social turmoil would escalate alongside the instability within the system. The working masses from all communities are becoming increasingly restless, raising the possibility of left and revolutionary movements emerging.

The social landscape of Assam has changed significantly due to the large number of workers in the organised sector of the tea industry, as well as a substantial presence of workers cutting across all communities in the informal sector. This situation has fostered an environment that is conducive to the emergence

of left and revolutionary movements, which can channel the progressive aspirations related to local languages and cultures.

The peasant base that once supported middle-class sub- or little nationalism in Assam has lost its vital energy. During the 1970s, the peasant struggle for equitable distribution of agricultural produce was defeated, and the peasant masses turned into an objective force behind the rise of reactionary chauvinism in the 1980s. With the natural decline of a prolonged period focused on the middle-class dimensions surrounding local language, ethnicity, and culture—coupled with the inevitable rise of obscurantist and chauvinist sentiments that gained strength in the 1980s—middle-class regional politics became marginalised.

This marginalisation has created space for subversive activities to emerge.

Geographically, Assam vis-à-vis NE is adjacent to the China border. The US has a political agenda to contain China's rise. These contending imperialist powers might use this space left open by the marginalised middle-class regional politics by promoting subversive activities to pressurise the Indian Government to take sides. Therefore, left and revolutionary movements in Assam must incorporate a direct anti-imperialist agenda into their progress, building strength progressively.

China has recently launched a significant dam project in Tibet, close to the Arunachal Pradesh border. The local BJP government in Arunachal Pradesh has expressed

concern that China did not consult the Indian government regarding this project. However, the Indian government's response has been notably silent. This lack of action may stem from India's considerable trade deficit with China, as well as the waning influence of the US as a superpower, which might not be sufficient to support India in this context. The dam has the potential to control water flow across the region, impacting areas such as Assam and Bangladesh, and could lead to negative environmental consequences for the Himalayan region. This situation creates uncertainty for those in power, resulting in indecision and leaving room for leftist and revolutionary groups to advocate for the interests of the state of Assam.

□□□

#### THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE?

## Delimitation: Dangers and Demands

I Mallikajuna Sharma\*

THE ELECTION COMMISSION briefly informs: "Delimitation literally means the act or process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a country or a province having a legislative body. The job of delimitation is assigned to a high-power body. Such a body is known as Delimitation Commission or a Boundary Commission. In India, such Delimitation Commissions have been constituted 4 times—in 1952 under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1952, in 1963 under Delimitation Commission Act, 1962, in 1973 under Delimitation Act, 1972 and in 2002 under Delimitation Act, 2002. The Delimitation Commission in India is a high-power body whose orders have the force of law and cannot be called in question before any court. These orders come into force on a date to be specified by

the President of India in this behalf. The copies of its orders are laid before the House of the People and the State Legislative Assembly concerned, but no modifications are permissible therein by them."

"Delimitation commissions have been set up four times in the past—1953, 1962, 1972 and 2002—under Delimitation Commission Acts of 1952, 1962, 1972 and 2002. The union government had suspended delimitation in 1976 until after the 2001 census so that states' family planning programmes would not affect their political representation in the Lok Sabha. This had led to wide discrepancies in the size of constituencies, with the largest having over three million electors, and the smallest less than 50,000."

The first delimitation exercise in 1953 was done by the Delimitation Commission 1952 which was created

due to the *Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Order, 1951*. Justice N Chandrasekhara Aiyar, a retired justice of the Supreme Court, was its chairman in 1953. The commission recommended the increase of the seats in the Lok Sabha from 489 to 494.

The second delimitation exercise was done in 1963; it was the first delimitation exercise after the reorganisation of states in 1956. Only single-seat constituencies were permitted. The delimitation commission was set up per The Delimitation Commission Act—1962—An Act to provide for the readjustment of the allocation of seats in the House of the People to the States, the total number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of each State, the division of each State into territorial constituencies for elections to the House of the People and Legislative Assemblies of the States... The exercise was done on the basis of 1961 Census and the parliamentary seats were increased to 522 and Assembly seats to 3771.



The second delimitation commission process has become more well-known and controversial due to a challenge to the provisions of, and powers to the Commission under, this Delimitation Commission Act 1962 by one Meghraj Kothari in MP High Court and the ultimate final decision of a Constitution Bench of the Apex Court which held that the proceedings and decisions of the delimitation commission being sanctified by a parliamentary law cannot in general be found fault with by any courts and this decision was taken as the ultimate judicial guidance even to this day in Indian jurisprudence. So, it is appropriate here to delve into some detail about the circumstances, reasons and purport of that *Meghraj Kothari* decision. Kothari's contentions were rejected by the M P High Court whereupon he went to Supreme Court on appeal, but the Supreme Court also dismissed his appeal on the ground that the delineation of constituencies done by a delimitation commission cannot be challenged in any court as per the provisions of the said Act.

Meghraj Kothari was a "voter of Ujjain Parliamentary Constituency in the State of Madhya Pradesh [who] felt aggrieved by the order of the Delimitation Commission, set up under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1962, which undertook the delimitation of parliamentary and assembly constituencies in the whole of India on the basis of 1961 census. The Delimitation Commission reserved the Ujjain Parliamentary Constituency for the Scheduled Castes. The voter then claimed to have an unfettered right to contest election from any parliamentary or assembly constituency in the State of Madhya Pradesh, but the reservation of Ujjain Parliamentary Constituency for the Scheduled Castes deprived him of such right to contest

election from that constituency as he did not belong to the Scheduled Caste. He moved to the Madhya Pradesh High Court seeking to quash the order of the Delimitation Commission. The High Court did not grant him the relief [holding] that it has no jurisdiction to go into the question of the order of the Delimitation Commission. Aggrieved by the High Court's refusal he then, approached the Supreme Court. But the Supreme Court also did not interfere with the order of the Delimitation Commission, holding that Article 329(a) barred such interference. It was contended on behalf of the petitioner that under Article 329(a), the validity of any law relating to delimitation of constituencies or the allotment of seats to such constituencies made under Articles 327 or 328 could not be called in question, but the order made by the Delimitation Commission was not law and thus not immune from challenge. The Supreme Court did not accept this contention and observed that the Delimitation Commission Act, 1962 provided in Section 10(1) thereof that each of the orders of the Delimitation Commission delimiting the constituencies and reserving the seats in those constituencies for the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes were required to be published in the Gazette of India and in the official gazettes of the States concerned, and Section 10(2) further provided that 'upon publication in the Gazette of India, every such order shall have the force of law and shall not be called in question in any Court'.

It should be noted that in an earlier decision *Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam v State of Tamil Nadu* ('DMK') and *State of Goa v Fouziya Imtiaz Shaikh* ('Fouziya') also a 3-Judge bench of the Apex Court expressed similar opinions and even allowed DMK's petitions in part; the

latter *Fouziya* decision contains a detailed discussion and in the ultimate paragraph it was observed: "68. The most disturbing feature of these cases is the subversion of the constitutional mandate contained in Article 243K of the Constitution of India. The State Election Commissioner has to be a person who is independent of the State Government as he is an important constitutional functionary who is to oversee the entire election process in the state qua panchayats and municipalities. The importance given to the independence of a State Election Commissioner is explicit from the provision for removal from his office made in the proviso to clause (2) of Article 243K. Insofar as the manner and the ground for his removal from the office is concerned, he has been equated with a Judge of a High Court. Giving an additional charge of such an important and independent constitutional office to an officer who is directly under the control of the State Government is, in our opinion, a mockery of the constitutional mandate. We therefore declare that the additional charge given to a Law Secretary to the government of the state flouts the constitutional mandate of Article 243K. The State Government is directed to remedy this position by appointing an independent person to be the State Election Commissioner at the earliest.

Such person cannot be a person who holds any office or post in the Central or any State Government. It is also made clear that henceforth, all State Election Commissioners appointed under Article 243K in the length and breadth of India have to be independent persons who cannot be persons who are occupying a post or office under the Central or any State Government...."

The third delimitation exercise was done in 1973—The delimitation

commission of 1973 was chaired by Justice J L Kapur, a retired justice of the Supreme Court. The commission recommended the increase of the seats in the Lok Sabha from 522 to 542 (later increased to 543 with the addition of one more seat for the new state of Sikkim). It also recommended an increase in the total number of assembly seats across all states and Union Territories in the country from 3771 to 3997 (including 32 for Sikkim's legislative assembly). The exercise was based on the 1971 Census.

The next delimitation commission was set up on 12 July 2002 after the 2001 census with Justice Kuldip Singh, a retired Judge of the Supreme Court as its Chairperson. The Commission has submitted its recommendations. In December 2007, the Supreme Court on a petition issued notice to the central government asking reasons for non-implementation. On 4 January 2008, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) decided to implement the order from the Delimitation Commission. The recommendations of the Commission was approved by President Pratibha Patil on 19 February. This means that all future elections in India for states covered by the commission will be held under the newly formed constituencies. The present delimitation of parliamentary constituencies has been done on the basis of 2001 census figures under the provisions of Delimitation Act, 2002. The assembly election in Karnataka, conducted in three phases in May 2008, was the first to use the new boundaries as drawn by the 2002 delimitation commission. The tenure of the Delimitation Commission lasted until 31 May 2008. The delimitation orders issued by the Commission were given effect from 19 February 2008 for most states and union territories and 20 March 2008 for

Tripura and Meghalaya, by a presidential order. The orders regarding Jharkhand were nullified till 2026 by inserting section 10B into the Delimitation Act, 2002. The delimitation of four north-eastern states was deferred due to security risks, by four separate presidential orders, all issued on 8 February 2008, for Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur. The order regarding Assam was rescinded on 28 February 2020. Subsequently, the Government of India has reconstituted the Delimitation Commission for these four states as well as the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir on 6 March 2020, under the chairpersonship of former Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai. In March 2021, the four north-eastern states were removed from the purview of the reconstituted Commission.

Wikipedia informs that—"Up until 1976, after every Indian Census the seats of Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and State legislative assemblies of India were re-distributed respectively throughout the country so as to have equal population representation from every seat. The apportionment was done thrice as per 1951, 1961 and 1971 population census. However, during *The Emergency*, through *Forty-second Amendment* the government froze the total Parliamentary and Assembly seats in each state till 2001 Census. *This was done, mainly, due to wide discrepancies in family planning among the states. Thus, it gives time to states with higher fertility rates to implement family planning to bring the fertility rates down.* // Even though the boundaries of constituencies were altered in 2001 to equate population among the parliamentary and assembly seats; *the number of Lok Sabha seats that each state has and those of legislative assemblies has remained unaltered since 1971 cen-*

*sus and may only be changed after 2026 as the constitution was again amended (84th amendment to Indian Constitution) in 2002 to continue the freeze on the total number of seats in each state till 2026.* This was mainly done as states which had implemented family planning widely like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Punjab would stand to lose many parliamentary seats representation and states with poor family planning programmes and higher fertility rates like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan would gain many of the seats transferred from better-performing states." *The apprehensions summarised in the last sentence of this extract are now widely expressed by the Chief Ministers and political leaders of the Southern States now and especially Stalin, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, is making a lot of hullabaloo on this apprehension and even invited scores of political leaders, chief ministers of states, etc. to a recent conference to be held in Tamil Nadu on this burning topic.*

Stalin's apprehensions may be somewhat exaggerated but yet this is really a burning issue. In the last 20-30 years Southern States have progressed considerably more than the Northern ones, especially in family control programmes and results, general developmental indexes, etc. and in case population per constituency (say 16 lakhs or 20 lakhs) be made the only criterion for delimitation next surely southern states will lose considerable number of seats in the Lok Sabha. Naturally that will lead to considerable decrease of clout in the general running of the central legislature which is the final law making and decision-making body in all salient fields of developmental efforts and democratic functioning in the country. As such this writer opines that additional factors such as success in family control, in general development, in elimination of

stark poverty, in the general welfare of the inhabitants etc. should also be made plus or minus factors to an extent in delimitation of parliamentary constituencies in the country.

However, so long as the 84th Constitution Amendment Act is in operation, and the current BJP Government does not take up any move to bring in any further constitution amendment to undo its safeguards, there is no immediate cause to worry till 2026 or as some put it till 2035 even. The Central Government should openly declare and assure the public that no such fur-

ther amendment moves are in stake and for the coming two general elections at least not a slight variation in the proportion of parliamentary seats between the South (including East) and North would be permitted.

As Indian legislature is bicameral, Council of States i.e. *Rajya Sabha*, whatever be the manner of election to each seat in it, should switch on to a near-U.S. Senate model—States with one crore or more population, as also the National Capital Territory, should be equally allotted 10 seats each; those states

with less than one crore population 5 seats each (with plus/minus 1-2 seats variations) and all Union Territories 1-2 seats only in the *Rajya Sabha*. That would give another strong defence to the States—small or big—to resist any possible future tyranny of the Centre. It will also make any future constitution amendments on key issues more difficult for manipulation and, if at all made, those would be based upon a general consensus. □□□

\* Advocate, Hyderabad; also, Convener, Marxist Study Forum, Hyderabad and Editor, Law Animated World.

---

#### REMEMBERING CLARA ZETKIN

## The Woman behind 'Women's Day'

*Rishika Singh*

**I**N 1910, THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL Conference of Working Women was held in Copenhagen, Denmark. At a time when women's participation as working professionals was exceedingly rare, 100 women from 17 countries—representing unions, socialist parties, working women's clubs—came together. One of them, Clara Zetkin, tabled the idea of an International Women's Day which continues to be marked worldwide after more than a century.

Her proposal aimed at amplifying collective efforts by designating one day annually, when women would make their demands for equality heard. It was approved unanimously at the conference.

Zetkin's call was followed by several other protests and movements in the beginning of the 20th century in the West, as part of what is known as the First Wave Feminism (from the mid-19th century to the 1920s). Here is how she played a role in advocating for the cause of women, even as socialism often trumped feminism in her worldview.

Born in 1857, Zetkin grew up

when the effects of capitalism became visible in German society. In and around the region, the rapid increase in manufacturing meant the value of goods domestically produced by women was declining. This would prompt her to consider the position of women under capitalism.

Zetkin completed secondary schooling but could not pursue university education as women were barred from it. Voting and other political rights were also restricted. She became exposed to socialist ideas through her brother and a schoolmate, according to an essay in the journal *Feminist Studies* ('Clara Zetkin: A Socialist Approach to the Problem of Woman's Oppression').

She soon joined the German Social Democratic Party, often given limited tasks by the largely male leadership. Zetkin gradually improved her oratory and writing and went on to expound on socialism and why it mattered to women.

"In former times, the man's wage along with the productive activity of his wife at home had sufficed to insure the existence of his family.

Now it is hardly enough for the survival of a single worker." This need for men and women to gain employment "freed women of their economic dependence upon men..." (*Clara Zetkin: Selected Writings*).

However, she argued that this independence only helped the capitalists. "Due to their monopoly of the means of production (such as land and capital), the capitalists have usurped these new economic factors and made them work exclusively to their advantage. Women who had been liberated from the economic dependence upon their husbands merely changed masters and are now subjugated by the capitalists. The slave of the husband became the slave of the employer."

Still, women at least now had some avenues to achieve economic equality with men, she noted. Zetkin also argued that inequality in the relations of men and women within the family were attributable to capitalism alone and socialism would remove these differences, but did not illustrate how that would happen.

For many women leaders of Zetkin's time, it was important to build a case for women's quality and voting rights to the general public, and fellow women. She said, "Just like the man under equally

hard conditions (and at times under even more difficult ones), she has to take up the fight for the vital necessities against a hostile environment. She needs for this, just like the man, her full political rights because such rights are weapons with which she can and must defend her interests.”

“By a slow, painful developmental process, women are emerging

from the narrowness of family life to the forum of political activity. They are demanding their full political equality as it is symbolised by suffrage as a vital social necessity and a social emancipation. The attainment of suffrage is the necessary corollary to the economic independence of women,” she said.

The essay in *Feminist Studies*

noted how Zetkin’s views on women evolved, seeing them in terms of their gender rather than only class. She said while women were different from men, the two were equal. By organising and attending conferences, like the one that led to Women’s Day’s creation, she sought to build global solidarity among socialist women. □□□

[Source: *Indianexpress.com*]

## REVISITING 21ST FEBRUARY

### ‘...It is the Blood of Barkat’

**Arun Kumar Sinha**

**T**HIS YEAR IN WEST BENGAL there was a discerning lack of enthusiasm in observing *Bhasa Divas*, 21st February. It was lackluster in spontaneity of public participation. As usual a government holiday was declared and some perfunctory government sponsored programmes were in place. However, the traditional marches around the educational institutes and usual remembrance of the martyrs in every locality by singing the immortal song ‘*amar bhaier rakte rangano ekushe February...*’, etc. were markedly absent. The apathy and confused public perception at large was glaringly visible a few days back at the 48th International Book Fair, Kolkata. No publisher or bookseller from Bangladesh was permitted to hold stalls, nor were books published in Bangladesh on display. This incident is a shameful exception and will be remembered as a sin of the *Bangla* speaking community in West Bengal towards the honour of their mother tongue.

What led the gentlemen *Bhadrolok* book-loving community in West Bengal to go down to such a sordid state of unwarranted retribution towards their brethren on the other side of the border that they refused to join their brethren in Bangladesh to celebrate *Bhasa Divas* together this year? After

all, it was always recognised with appreciation and acknowledgement in this part of Bengal the contribution of the people of Bangladesh in upholding and protecting the honour of the mother tongue, of *Bangla Bhasa*. The origin of *Bhasa Diwas*, 21st February is the day in 1952 when four students of Dacca University Abul Barkat, Abdul Jabbar, Rafiquddin Ahmad, and Abdus Salam fell to police firing in Dacca (Dhaka) in erstwhile East Pakistan. They were participating in a protest rally near the University campus against declaring *Urdu* as the only state language of undivided Pakistan. Bangladesh, a Nation of 174 million *Bangla* speaking population proclaimed itself as an independent State, 26 March 1971. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the first president of Bangladesh later assassinated, spoke in *Bangla* at the UN General Assembly on 25 September 1974 as an independent member among the 139 States of the then United Nations (UN). The contribution of this nation-state to this mother Earth is the universal recognition of mother tongue, *Bangla*. The *Bhasa Diwas*, 21st February is recognised by the UN from 2002 to be the International Mother Language Day declared at the initiative of the state of Bangladesh.

All these facts carry no information to the *Bhadrolok* community. They only swamped into senility by the overruling of the political regimes. They have no response at all to the reprehensible decision of the Publishers and Book Sellers’ Guild, the administrator or the International Book Fair in Kolkata. Not only had this gentry, the political outfits otherwise vociferous against the Centre and the State governments completely ignored banning of the published books from Bangladesh in the Fair.

In reality, these are glaring signs of confusion, of dithering if not downright rejection of the tumult that has occurred in the political landscape of Bangladesh from July last year culminating in the fleeing of the erstwhile Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from Bangladesh to India. The political parties in West Bengal and to that extent in India whose source of information about Bangladesh are the scripts and links provided by the mainstream media cannot yet come to the terms with the ouster of the ruling dispensation in Bangladesh in August 2024. They are yet to realise it was not a *coup d’etat* nor was it a Machiavellian plot of inciting people against the then government, a pet-well nurtured belief of the conspiracy theorists. Wisdom can never dawn among the political parties and their followers among the gentry that Bangladesh earned a second Liberation on 5 August 2024 after the historic defeat of the Pakistan Army and surrender

at the Ramna race course in Dacca, 16 December 1971. They all along firmly believe that Bangladesh is a binary duel between the two ladies, between 'secular' Awami League (Sheikh Hasina) and 'communal' BNP (Khaleda Zia), that the population practising Hindu rituals in otherwise communal Bangladesh are safe under Sheikh Hasina, that the more fundamentalist forces got the upper hand under the rule of the interim government, etc. Add to that, the patronising air and display of the might of the big brother, the off repeated bashing that Bangladesh would not have been there had the Indian army not dissected the state of Pakistan.

It cannot be denied, rather it must be recognised that West Bengal bore the maximum brunt of the Liberation war for creation of Bangladesh. The huge migration of population practising Hindu religious beliefs in waves just before the assault of the Pakistani army in East Pakistan continued till the mid-seventies. The refugee population had very little resources to pull on as it happens every time. Overnight, refugee colonies sprung up here and there, many refugees were deported in distant Dandiyakanya of Chattisgarh or in Himachal Pradesh, Terai in Uttarakhand, etc. Deprivation and assault over human dignity created a deep scar and animosity among a vast section of the refugee population with Hindu beliefs who always maintained a communal ven-

geance towards the population of Bangladesh. Notwithstanding the fact there remains quite a substantial population in Bangladesh with Hindu religious beliefs. Moreover, over the past decades there is a continuous uproar over so-called 'illegal' migrants of Bangladesh, a pet whipping mascot of the bigots forecasting the doom of the majority population with Hindu tag in West Bengal as the perception over demography gets changed.

This binary representation of the issues of Bangladesh coloured by the communal portrayal is so relentless in bombardment that the electoral autocracy and the loot of the finances for the last fifteen years in Bangladesh do not create any flutter among the so-called 'educated' population of West Bengal. They have lost the eyesight to witness the dynamics of the popular upsurge, the meaning of the flooding of population on the streets of Bangladesh on the 5th August 2024, cheering with a single chant '*Hasina palaise*' (Hasina has fled). They cannot digest the fact that no political party of Bangladesh or any combination of them could claim the ownership of this huge upheaval of the youth (by the way, Bangladesh now has youth as one-third of its population). The martyrdom of Abu Sayeed in Rangpur on 16 July 2024 evokes no feeling in their mind. Abu Sayeed, the fresh radiant beam of light in winning fear in this subcontinent was a student activist at Begum

Rokeya University in Rangpur, Bangladesh. Abu Sayeed was a coordinator of the Students Against Discrimination movement at the university. The night before facing bullets of police firing in a completely singular unarmed position Abu remembered his teacher Professor Samsuzzoha. Like Abu, Samsuzzoha, a young Rajshahi University teacher had fallen to the police bullets of the then East Pakistan government while trying to protect student protesters in 1969. Abu wrote, "Sir, we desperately need you right now ... Your legacy is our inspiration. We are enlightened by your ideals".

There is some fundamental difference between the *Bangla* speaking population of Bangladesh and of West Bengal. While there are several intellectual contributions to the *Bhasa* from West Bengal, the people of Bangladesh not only produced immortal songs and literature, they earned their love for their *Bhasa* by offering tributes in flowing blood. To coin Pablo Neruda, 'Come and see the blood in the streets' of Bangladesh from the time of rule by Pakistan that continued till now. Can people, the *Bangla Bhasi* community from the west side of the border disown '*Ekusher Kabita*'? Al Mehmud initiated the poem as "*February-er ekush tarikh/ dupurbeler wakta/ brishti name, brishti kothai? / Barkat-er rakta...*". (On the Twenty-first of February, there is rain in the noon. Where is the rain, it is the blood of Barkat.) □□□

---

#### WATER: NEW BATTLEGROUND

## China's Brahmaputra Hydro Project

*Nilanjan Ghosh*  
*Sayanangshu Modak*

**S**INCE THE PUBLICATION OF the book *Water: Asia's New Battleground* by Brahma Chellaney in 2011, media narratives

and public discourse have been rife with concerns about the deleterious impacts of potential Chinese diversions of the Yarlung Tsangpo-

Brahmaputra river system. The position propagating that China could dry out India's Northeast region through dam construction and water diversion while withholding sediment crucial for downstream floodplain formation has also been referred to in the literature as the *Brahma Hypothesis*. While China's upstream hydro-hegemony warrants moral and

ethical scrutiny, the entire discourse on the Brahmaputra hydro-politics remains shrouded by a critical void—the absence of hard data. Such a data deficit discourse has consequently resulted in unsubstantiated myths, turning speculation into popular rhetoric thereby aggravating the already fragile hydro-political landscape of the basin.

Recently, the Chinese government approved the construction of a mega-dam at the Great Bend of the Yarlung Tsangpo river in Tibet, often described as the longest tributary of the Brahmaputra river in India though there are variations in this viewpoint. Many treat Yarlung-Tsangpo as the main stem of the Brahmaputra system.

This hydropower project is envisaged to utilise one of the world's most lucrative real estate for hydropower development—a massive drop of 2,000 metres within a 50-kilometre stretch of the river as it flows toward India's easternmost state, Arunachal Pradesh, where it is known as the Siang. The Siang is one of the three main headwaters of the Brahmaputra River in India, making this development a source of significant concern. These apprehensions are further fuelled by unfounded rhetoric suggesting that the dam could alter the flow and course of the Brahmaputra, trap nutrient-rich sedi-

ment, and cause far-reaching downstream impacts in India and Bangladesh.

In an environment where trans-boundary hydrological data on Himalayan Rivers is scarce and geopolitical tensions dominate public discourse, such rhetoric exacerbates tensions and misguides trans-boundary priorities.

Framing China's mega-dam at the Great Bend as a “geopolitical weapon” amid border tensions with India is misleading. This project was inevitable and is certainly not linked with a multi-pronged geopolitical agenda to dominate South Asia. The “Great Bend” was marked for hydropower development as early as 2003. Despite the immense potential, only 0.3% of the Yarlung Zangbo basin's potential for hydropower development had been harnessed as per estimates from a paper in 2017. Now, compare that with 24.6% for the Yangtze, 34.2% for the Yellow, and 58% for the Pearl, and it would seem obvious that the gaze would eventually lay on this stretch of the Yarlung Zangbo in Medog County in Tibet. This county's remoteness, connected by highway only in 2013, delayed this project, as did the sheer technical challenges of harnessing the incredible hydraulic gradient that the river creates. Presently, with China's push for carbon neutrality by 2060, hydropower has become essential—not just as a source of renewable energy but also for grid stability, balancing intermittent sources like wind and solar. Unlike wind and solar, which can generate power intermittently, hydropower can rapidly adjust its output to balance supply and demand, filling gaps when overall renewable generation is low or reducing the output during surpluses in energy production. This capability ensures a stable and reliable power grid, a key requirement during the transition to a clean energy future.

Stretching 2,880 km from its origins in the Angsi Glacier in Tibet to its sink in the Bay of Bengal, the Tsangpo-Brahmaputra river system carves through the Tibetan plateau as the Yarlung Tsangpo for 1,625 km. Entering India, it flows for 918 km—first as the Siang, then the Dihang, before becoming the mighty Brahmaputra. In Bangladesh, its final 337-kilometre journey sees it renamed the Jamuna, merging with the Ganga River near Goalando, before completing its epic descent. Therefore, a conventional look at the map of the Brahmaputra, along with the fact that 56% of its length lies in Tibet as the Yarlung Tsangpo, gives the impression that the stretch in the Tibetan boundary of the river contributes substantially to its overall flow—suggesting that China can “turn off the tap.” However, a recent paper unfolds a different story when hard data is brought into the picture.

The discharge of the Yarlung Tsangpo, measured at Nuxia in Tibet, is 31.2 billion cubic metres (BCM) annually, swelling to an estimated 135.9 BCM as it passes through the Great Bend and exits China. This rain-rich stretch of the river is where China plans to harness hydropower. However, when compared with the annual discharge of approximately 526 BCM at Pandu in Guwahati, India, and 606 BCM at Bahadurabad in Bangladesh, the data begins to unravel. This dramatic surge isn't driven by glacial melt but by the sheer force of the monsoon on the south side of the Himalayan Crestline which extends predominantly to Medog County through a moisture corridor along the Yarlung Tsangpo Grand Canyon. While the mean precipitation (1978-2008) upstream of Nuxia is 416 mm annually, parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam can get over 4,500 mm of rainfall annually. This rainfall feeds powerful tributaries like the Dibang, Lohit, and

**For Frontier Contact**

**D.K. AGENCIES (P) LTD.**

Booksellers, Publishers & Subscription  
Agents since 1968

CIN: U74899DL1983PTC017169

"DK" is a registered trademark

Regd. off: A/15-17, D.K. Avenue,

Mohan Garden, Najafgarh Road,

New Delhi-110059. INDIA

Metro Station: Nawada (Blue Line)

Web: <http://www.dkagencies.com>

Ph: (011) 25357104, 25357105

Fax: (+91-11) 25357103

Subansiri and fuels various springs dotting this landscape.

Concerns about China trapping sediment behind dams are equally exaggerated. Measured at Nuxia, the Brahmaputra carries 30 million metric tonnes of sediment annually, but by the time it reaches Bahadurabad in Bangladesh, this annual load increases to 735 million metric tonnes—most of it originating from the catchment within India. Even if China built multiple upstream dams, their impact on sediment dynamics would be minimal. It is the monsoonal precipitation again that drives the sediment regime of the Brahmaputra. So, simply put, China can neither “turn off the tap” nor “trap the sediments.” Furthermore, a recent opinion piece by Wang Lei, Chargé d’Affaires a.i. of the Chinese Embassy in India, confirms that the water would not be used for consumptive purposes, thereby indicating that there would not be any inter-basin transfers.

The primary risk posed by this project is not water diversion but dam failure, particularly in the face of extreme climatic and seismic events. The eastern Himalayan syntax is one of the most seismically active regions in the world, making infrastructure projects of this scale inherently vulnerable. India has had

enough tragic experiences of its own following recent disasters like the Chamoli disaster of 2021 and the Chungthang dam collapse of 2023. With climate change driving unprecedented glacial retreats, avalanches, and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), the likelihood of cascading hazards increases. A stark reminder of these risks came in March 2021, when a massive glacier collapse in the Sedongpu River basin triggered a debris-laden flood in the Yarlung Tsangpo’s Grand Canyon, raising water levels by 10 meters. Such extreme events have the potential to destabilise large dams, leading to catastrophic downstream flooding.

India should use this as an opportunity to push for a comprehensive framework agreement with China on the Brahmaputra... Rational hydro-diplomacy can be enabled only if hard data is brought into the broader discourse at the highest levels of discussions.

Thus, India’s concerns over China’s dam at the Great Bend should focus on dam safety and data sharing rather than alarmist rhetoric about water control. Engaging China through both the Expert Level Mechanism (ELM) and high-level diplomacy is essential to ensure transparency and preparedness. An immediate priority is renewing and

improving the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on hydrological data sharing, particularly real-time data from the Yarlung Tsangpo stretch between Nuxia, in Tibet, and Tuting, in Arunachal Pradesh. In truth this stretch, presently a blind spot for India, experiences high precipitation as well as extreme rainfall events. Additionally, China must share dam designs, contingency plans, and emergency protocols, recognising that India bears the greater risk in case of failure.

Beyond such immediate concerns, India should use this as an opportunity to push for a comprehensive framework agreement with China on the Brahmaputra. Such an agreement should include provisions for water-sharing, joint monitoring, dispute resolution, and collaborative decision-making. Moving from reactive posturing to proactive engagement will be key to long-term regional stability. Rational hydro-diplomacy can be enabled only if hard data is brought into the broader discourse at the highest levels of discussions. □□□

*[Nilanjan Ghosh is Vice President, Development Studies and Senior Director, Kolkata Centre at the Observer Research Foundation. Sayanangshu Modak, a human-environment geographer and a scholar of water governance, is a doctoral researcher at the University of Arizona at Tucson.]*

*[Courtesy: The India Forum]*

**LETTER**

**A Bull in a China Shop!**

Trump is going, or at least threatening, to trigger a trade war on the global scale.

The act of sudden hurtling back to “protectionism” on the part of by far the major most proponent of “economic globalisation” cannot but spread chaos all around.

The (much-reviled) WTO structure is going to crumble?

The whole, interlocked, global

economic system is threatened with collapse. If it does, all—friends, foes and the joker—will be hit.

No, it doesn’t look like any revolution is in the offing.

The Great Depression of the thirties ended with the rise of Mussolini and Hitler—culminating in the WWII. The Atom Bomb was yet to appear on the scene.

Similarly, Trump is also very much out to critically undermine, if not dismantle outright, even the admittedly inadequate multilateral

structure for controlling global emissions.

The house is on fire!

Humanity is now on the accelerated march towards the Domsday!?

**Sukla Sen**

**For Frontier Contact**

**DHYANBINDU**

**COLLEGE SQUARE**

# GERMINAL BOOKS

## The Age of Rage and Rebellion Fifty Years After The Spring Thunder

[ A Frontier Anthology ]

Edited by : Timir Basu & Tarun Basu  
ISBN 9788197498183, Paperback, Rs 400

*The Naxalbari Peasant uprising of May 1967, was a turning point of Indian History. After Naxalbari nothing remained the same as before. New theoretical orientation that began with the 'Spring Thunder' seems to have lost its course in the middle. Shaking the earth to the core was the net result of 'Spring Thunder' and the country needs another shake.*

□ □ □

## Without Pride And Prejudice Thinking Rationally

By Ashok Nag

ISBN 9788197498107, Paperback, Rs 300

*This book of essays is a collection of articles that the author had written for his blog. The thread that binds these disparate articles written over a decade can be found in the book's title. Rationality is a big claim. But the author has tried his best to remain unbiased, subject to the boundaries defined by his own intellectual capability and knowledge.*

*The first article was written in the centenary year of Bolshevik revolution. The article digs into the Marxist concepts of "class" and "class struggle" which formed the ideological underpinning of that revolution. The author argues that even Marx himself could not explain the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte in terms of his own concept of "class struggle".*

*In a one-page article written in the wake of so-called "Arab Spring" uprising in the Arab world, the author rightly identified that movement as reflection of crumbling of the world order with USA as its hegemonic power.*

## Subhas Chandra Ganguly

[ A Commemorative Collection of Life Sketch  
in English and Bengali ]

Edited by Frontier Collective  
ISBN 9788197498169, Paperback, Rs 500

*Subhas got arrested for his political activities. After coming out from jail he, Sanjay and others organised APDR [Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights]. He translated Romila Thapar's book on Ancient Indian History into Bengali. —T Vijayendra*

*I am very sorry to hear that he has passed away. I do indeed remember him and our exchanges in the course of his translating my book. Please convey my condolences and sincerest sympathies to his family'*  
—Romila Thapar

□ □ □

## Aleek Manush Anirban Biswas

Compiled by

Timir Basu, Arup Sen, Nabinananda Sen, Tarun Basu

Paperback, Rs 100

□ □ □

## Birth of an Alternative Development Paradigm Unfolding of Transformative Mode of Production

By Sunil Ray

ISBN 9788197498114, Paperback, Rs 250

*Prof Sunil Ray with 35 years of experience in research and teaching in the field of environmental economics, political economy of development, rural development and institutional economics has shown how it is possible to develop an alternative development initiative that can challenge the present destructive capitalist approach to nature and resources.*

For copies contact

# frontier

44, BALARAM DEY STREET || KOLKATA-700006 || MOB: 8240016324