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Occasional Paper No. 42

DIALECTICS OF CAPITALIST
TRANSFORMATION AND NATIONAL CRYSTALLISATION :
SOME NOTES ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION
IN INDIA

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Dialectics of Capitalist Transformations and
National Crystallisation : Some Notes
on the National Question in India

I

There is a growing concern of late, with questions of national and political unity of India even after more than three decades of independence. It suggests that the underlying forces that work to weaken or impede or facilitate the unity of the people within the modern Indian state have not yet been brought under control by those who wield power and manage the affairs of the state. A wide range of problems associated with the different nationality groups in India have come to the fore. These range from : first, there are conflicts involving the tribal formations, religious communities, caste groups, sons-of-the soil movements, etc. obstructing the unification of the people within the major national or cultural linguistic groups through the development of secular national cultures; then there are the questions of mutual relations between the different nationalities themselves; and finally there are the issues concerning the relations of some of these national groups -- the constituent states of India -- on the one hand and the Central state authority on the other. The totality of these together constitute the national problem or question that confronts us in India today.

It is obvious that the manifest form of the problem now is different from the one in the 1950's and the early sixties at the time of the struggle for linguistic states and that itself was very different from the one before independence when the growth and the political and cultural assertion of different nationalities got entwined with the communal problem leading to the partition of the country. It is therefore important to ask : what makes for this heterogeneity of forms and their concrete manifestations in the different phases of the evolution of the national question in India ? And, what keeps alive, in its varied forms, the problem even today ? In seeking to answer these questions it is also necessary to ask : Is it possible to provide explanations to these questions in terms of a unified set of factors

or factor that have shaped the growth of modern India. The argument here assumes that it is both possible substantively as well as necessary methodologically to integrate the analysis of the national question with the large-scale socio-economic transformations through the development of capitalism in India.

The development of capitalism and the many sided transformations brought about by it have been the key factor in the emergence of national awareness and national movements; as in much else. The subsequent differences in the levels of crystallisation of people with the different national compositions as between Maharastrians and Panjabis or Tamilians and Oriyas, etc., has also been conditioned by the consequences of the capitalist transformation. In this respect the problem in India, as in the rest of the third world, shares a major historical dimension with Europe. This assertion that some of the main relationships that became determinant in Europe, or more specifically in western Europe, are of a general type is more than a hypothesis but less than an axiomatic truth. This is so because what seems inconceivable is the repetition of the patterns and stages in the crystallisation of national entities. The historical basis for such a variation in the patterns and stages is rooted in the radically different social and political consequences of capitalism today than what they were at that time in Europe.¹

Hence capitalism as a generic form but the radically different and varied social and political consequences of its development under different historical conditions becomes the basis of investigation in the determination of the specific national problems confronting the various multi-national states in the third world today. In more concrete terms, a capitalism in retreat as in Europe today or in a situation of historic compromise with pre-capitalist social forces and economic relationships for its political survival as in the third world now becomes, in its essence, a divisive force. In this respect, capitalism today is quite unlike, especially in the third world, the growing capitalism in the period of the genesis and consolidation of European national states.

It could then relentlessly break down all barriers to its expansion and amalgamate people into new social unities within, what provided the market for its consolidation, the emerging nation-states. Today in the situation of post-colonial imperialist domination, like in the colonial phase earlier, capitalism in the third world is no longer capable of totally destroying the pre-capitalist forms and therefore incapable of creating new social unities on its terms. Instead, while it partially under-mines the pre-capitalist forms and relationships it compromises with the forces represented by them. Consequently its historical significance as a revolutionising force is lost for the third world.

The assumption of capitalist development and its altered socio-political consequences as the main determinants puts the problem in perspective. As far as the continuing evolution and the varied manifesting of the national question in India is concerned, the historical context and content of the capitalist transformation in India today is radically different from what it was both in western Europe at the time of growing capitalism or in Central or Eastern Europe when it had entered into a stage of intense imperialist rivalries. If with time the bourgeoisie in the central European states achieved social hegemony via fascism, the east European states came under socialist system; and thus, in both the national question got sorted out either through the re-drawing of boundaries or by the success of the struggle against oppression and exploitation. A number of possibilities latent in the situation got frozen or lost; perhaps, for the good of people. Patterns, tendencies, and possibilities cannot be the same in India where capitalism however crisis-ridden, moribund and reactionary in its character, continues to expand and grow. But its historical expansion and growth has been characterised by a specific retardation : failure to establish its sway over productive economy and society has forced it to accommodate landlordism with all its pre-capitalist ideologies and pre-modern outlook. In spite of its crisis-ridden nature capitalism in India today has displayed, with the backing of landlords and a united imperialist camp, greater surviving capacity than in eastern Europe and has been able to push back revolutionary forces

from becoming strong enough to capture state power. And it is this more than anything else that keeps the national question alive in multi-national countries like India where the formation and development of people with different national compositions and make-up remains incomplete.

Moreover, the capitalist growth in India has throughout shown a strong tendency towards self-perpetuating unevenness both region-wise and community-wise. Although capitalist growth everywhere is always uneven this creates serious problems in multi-national states when it coincides with nationally demarcated regions or contiguous areas within such regions where population composition is different like, for example, the tribal belts. This pattern of development has been taking place when people inhabiting these region have been at different levels of linguistic and cultural development; in other words, at different stages of national-identity formulation. Such a process of capitalist transformation also gives rise to differentiation of such national groups from the larger nationalities of which they form unstable parts. The overall tendency of a divisive capitalism is more towards differentiation and separate crystallisation than towards assimilation, as was the case with growing capitalism in western Europe.

In such a perspective, the relevance of the national question is not only obvious but also poses an issue of some theoretical importance. Questions of definitions and distinctions of terms like "nations" or "nationalities" or their interrelations are no longer relevant for understanding the emerging national movements. This is so because, unlike the historical model of development as in western Europe, "nationality" or a well developed cultural-linguistic community is no longer a necessary ground of transition to the emergence of national awareness and movements and the eventual crystallisation as nation-states. It was so then because capitalism grew, as Marx remarked, out of the womb of the old society. The future was conceived when the past had realised its potential. In a situation of imposed capitalism and its retarded development under colonial patronage this could not be so. The grounds of

transition to national movements later were provided by people at different levels of linguistic-cultural developments and social formation. In the course of developments in countries like India, even the Bengal-Maharashtra-Tamil Nadu pattern could not be gone through by many other national groups when national movements arose among such people after their capitalist incorporation. The basis of future national movements in case of these people were not well-formed linguistic-communities with distinct literary traditions as it was in western Europe. Therefore the earlier model of transition to national movement and crystallisation is inadequate as an analytical aid. This inadequacy is also due to the fact that terms like nations, nationalities or even ethno-linguistic communities can no longer refer to distinct stages in the development of national identity of people in terms of which one could specify that national awakening occurs only at this stage and not at that; such perhaps was the case in western Europe. The process today gives an indeterminacy to the transitional forms as well as to certain historical concepts like nations and nationalities in relation to the understanding of the origin and development of the national movements in the multi-national context like those of India. What, therefore, is more important today is to specify the condition which make possible the rise of national awakening and the demands such movements may generate, including the one for statehood.

With the above, providing a perspective as well as a point of departure I will, first, briefly examine the terms of debate at Lenin's time with their connotation for the present. I consider this debate to be as relevant today as ever before; furthermore, it seems to me, that it contains all the class and national cues that one needs to understand the problem. Secondly, I will go into a few specifics of Indian history that are relevant for the issue under discussion, and in terms of these will look at a few aspects of the debate among Indian Marxists -- aspects that have a methodological relevance for analysis. Thirdly, as background for my own analysis, I will highlight certain aspects of the capitalist developments in India that seem to me relevant

for the national question. And finally, I will consider a few sets of problems that I consider as the more important dimensions of the question in India.

II

The national question emerged as a problematic not just with reference to problems of revolution in the Tsarist Russian Empire but as much in the polemics Lenin had with leaders of European social democracy. Within a wide range of divergent opinions then current, two positions which became the central points of debate and critical attack by Lenin were those of Rosa Luxemburg on the one hand and the Austrian social democrats on the other. They opposed the right to self-determination on the ground that it goes counter to the historical tendency of capitalism which, as they argued, unifies larger and larger territories. They therefore treated self-determination as regressive and something that legitimises "national separation". Instead they pleaded for "territorial autonomy" and "national cultural autonomy" respectively as providing a better basis to reconcile the historical needs of the revolutionary movement and the demands for political democracy.²

Lenin, starting from the same position of proletarian revolution and internationalism, made the right of self-determination, understood as the right to secede, the fundamental postulate of his position. He and Stalin realised more clearly than anybody else the close dialectical relationship between the revolutionary struggle for socialism and political democracy. National self-determination, after all, being a demand of political democracy becomes, in the course of struggle for social revolution, a weapon in the hands of proletariat to forge internationalism. Basing themselves on Marx's assertion that "no nation can be free that oppresses other nations", Lenin exhorted the proletariat of "dominant" nations to recognise and support the demand of "oppressed" nations to be free.³ This was, as he emphasised, the only way to achieve a voluntary union of the working people of different nations under common revolutionary parties.⁴ There was, otherwise, as he repeatedly pointed

out, the danger of the mistrust and hostility of the working people of oppressed nations towards the oppressor nation being used by the bourgeoisie of those nations in their fight for "national privilege".⁵ Toward that end the bourgeoisie tries to involve the masses belonging to peasantry and working people in narrow-minded and chauvinistic nationalism. There is no other way, according to Lenin, to foil the appeal of bourgeois nationalism than to fight against all national privileges and for the "complete equality of all nations and languages".⁶ Complete equality for the oppressed nation involves, by its very logic, the right to secede and be free to determine their own destiny. Hence the importance of the slogan of self-determination for nations.

Looked at in this perspective of the close interconnection between the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and political democracy the thrust was clear; it was, in its essence, first, the democratisation of the national question and, secondly, its use as a weapon in the revolutionary struggle. It is, therefore, important to note that in Lenin's view the "task is largely a negative one. But this is the limit the proletariat can go to in supporting nationalism, for beyond that begins the "positive" activity of the bourgeoisie striving to fortify nationalism".⁷ He adds, "to go beyond these strictly limited and definite historical limits in helping bourgeois nationalism means betraying the proletariat and siding with the bourgeoisie".⁸

It is therefore important to differentiate, as Lenin always stressed, between the right of self-determination which is absolute and the demand for secession which cannot be so. Quite apart from the necessity of resisting all bourgeois nationalistic influences while supporting the struggle for national liberation so as to preserve the unity of the proletarian class struggle for socialism, there is also the need to consider the demand for secession on a world scale.⁹ If it were to cause major wars on an international scale, i.e. to place the interest of a small number of people at the cost of hundreds of millions of people who suffer from war, then it would be the worst kind of narrow-minded nationalism. It cannot ignore the correlations of world forces,

the schemings of imperialists and the risks of major wars.¹⁰ The proletarian movement is thus confined to the negative demand of the right of self-determination, "without giving guarantees to any nation, and without undertaking to give anything at the expense of any other nation".¹¹ These were some of the basic considerations that guided Lenin and the leaders of the proletarian movement then and they still are taken to be valid by the Marxists as theoretical guidelines. But to avoid a priorism it is imperative to specify the present in its distinctiveness from the past.

One of the most striking feature of the period then was the annexation and subjugation of various big and small nations and nationality groups within the multi-national states of Central and Eastern Europe including Tsarist Russia. These empires were characterised by a central nation which had militarily kept under control a number of outlying nationalities (also referred to by Lenin due to their geographical locations as border-line nations). Extreme economic exploitation and cultural-linguistic oppression, as well as religions persecution, was the general practice. In the capitalist transformation under way then, these nationally distinct regions had been converted into internal colonies. This colonisation, as distinct from, but not dissimilar to the formal colonies, was a central feature of these multi-national states which gave rise to the characterisation of nations as oppressor/dominant and oppressed. Beyond the forced annexation and control and capitalist economic exploitation there were no bonds of unity between these different national groups — cultural or political. The relationship of the coloniser and the colonised also forestalled any slow cultural assimilation of people over time. Around the time of rapid development of capitalism within these relatively backward multi-national states, there took place the awakening of national life and national movements; the historical thrust was primarily a struggle against national oppression and for equality and this took the form of an urge for the creation of national states. This "awakening of masses", as Lenin notes, "from feudal lethargy and their struggle against all national oppression, for the sovereignty of the people, of the nations are progressive".¹²

As an aside, it will be useful to take note of two interesting points that are implied in Lenin's discussion of the problem. First, the internationalism that was being talked about was not just an inter-state problem as it is generally conceived now but also an intra-state phenomenon; i.e.; representing the unity and solidarity of the working masses of different national groups within a state system as well — Austro-Hungarian Empire, Tsarist Russian Empire, etc. Secondly, it is also important to note that the national question as a problematic has little to do, as far as Lenin is concerned, with the controversy about the when and how of the origin of nations or the exact criteria that should define a nation or, with what differentiates a nation from nationality. It referred primarily to that situation and the set of problems that the situation threw up wherein people of different "national composition" awakened at a certain stage in their historical development and struggled for liberation including statehood. Hence the close equation between the awakening of distinct identities and demand for statehood in the conceptualisation of the national question.

To come back to the main point, another striking feature of the age when the debate on this problem took place was the ripening of the inter-imperialist rivalries which had reached a bursting point. The relatively backward multinational states still struggling to develop capitalism were fully drawn into these imperialist rivalries. The efforts of the imperialist diplomacy and manoeuvres of mature capitalist states was to win over the ruling classes among the national groups in these states so as to re-draw the boundaries of these states in their favour. In this they had, as potential allies, the bourgeoisie of different oppressed nations within these backward multi-national states. Re-drawing of maps and major alterations in boundaries being very much on the agenda, secession and the demand for it was the accepted norm of the international behaviour as is evident from the Balkan Wars of 1912 or the First World War (1914-18) which was followed by the Treaty of Versailles. Such a demand could threaten peace then in many instances, which, in any case, remained threatened for more deeper reasons.

When we look at the post-Second-world-war world where the rivalries between advanced capitalist states have stabilised into a relatively unified world imperialist camp confronted by a section of socialist states as a bloc under USSR, things are not quite the same. The age we live in has "sanctified", under the United Nations Charter, even the boundaries that are considered to be most artificial. So the question of re-drawing boundaries of states or even drastic alteration are extremely difficult to realise notwithstanding Bangladesh in 1971. Even the slightest moves towards secession invite big power interventions and create serious suspicion among the confronting blocs. These threaten international peace and have made the questions of the viability in terms of size and resources extraneous as well as irrelevant. Moreover, secession today is not possible without a civil war - a perfectly legitimate weapon in special cases - but then, one does not demand a right to wage civil war. When one has to, one just wages it. In the light of these compulsions we should seriously ponder and attempt a new assessment of the range of possibilities within which self-determination can be concretised. The attempt, while being careful, has to ensure that the spirit of the principle is kept alive; quite in the way that Lenin did with Marx.¹³ It provides for us today a more enduring basis than any other on which to struggle for the equality of all distinct national groups. The urgency of such a struggle is obvious to all democrats in face of a large number of multi-national states in the third world where distortions and unevenness of capitalist development pose with renewed vigour problems of political unity.

After all, the enunciation of the principle was a definite historical way of approaching the problem of oppression of nations within multi-national states and the colonial empires. Furthermore, it was a specific way of giving a concrete form to the universal value of the complete equality of people and of nations and nationality groups. The value is still as valid today as ever before.

In a nut-shell the concrete meaning of the principle of self-determination was determined by the presence of two historical conditions : the oppressor-oppressed relationship among nations within the multi-national states of central and Eastern Europe and, secondly, the prevailing colonial situation. Specially, in the context of colonies self determination understood as the right to political separation was the only possible meaning because the independence of colonies (states and nations) was inconceivable without "secession" from the colonial empires. The political independence of colonies in the post-second-world-war period brings to completion the phase of the colonial question. With that one important dimension of the struggle for political democracy, in a way, is over. Similarly with the re-drawing of boundaries in central and eastern Europe and the successful October revolution in Russia brought to an end, in a significant qualitative sense, the issues agitating them.

After this, the national question in India and the greater part of the third world is no longer a part of the colonial question but there remains the national question with a different historical connotation. India no longer comes under any of the three categories of nations¹⁴ in terms of which Lenin analysed the types of nations for an understanding of this question. The remaining problem whether India or any of the other third world states are characterised by the oppressor-oppressed relationships or if any other type of oppression of nations exists wherever there are multi-national states is a matter of empirical determination and cannot be settled in an a priori manner. At least in the Indian case, all data indicate that neither before nor after independence the situation was anyway near that of oppressor-oppressed relationship among national groups. If this is so then the essence of the problem can no longer be conceived in terms of the right of self-determination but a consistent struggle to achieve equality for all national-linguistic groups as well as rights of national-minorities and against all forms of national oppression and discrimination. Given extreme inequality, as will be discussed later, between nationally demarcated regions and people the essence of the national question -

complete equality of all national groups -- is still present and therefore the struggle against such forms is a part of the fight for political democracy. What is, therefore, needed is, first, a different conceptualisation of the problem and the consequent tasks for the forces representing the people; and secondly, a careful empirical delineation of the emerging facets of the national question in face of the widespread development of capitalism. The retarded character of capitalist transformation underway in India with its tendency to aggravate pre-capitalist divisions and to make use of them, however, complicates the problem. Any major change in the situation like the rapid advance of revolutionary forces or successful revolution radically alters the possibilities. Contrariwise, the capacity of the crisis-ridden capitalism to survive for any considerable period of time not only keeps the problem alive but makes it indeterminate in terms of the historical models of development of the national question.

Assuming the persistence of capitalism for sometime, in the specific context of India, then it may be useful to recall Lenin, without, of course, reviving the ghost of Rosa Luxemburg :

"....it is not difficult to see why, from a social Democratic point of view, the right to "self-determination" means neither federation nor autonomy (although, speaking in the abstract, both come under the category of self-determination)..... As far as autonomy is concerned, Marxists defend, not the right to autonomy, but autonomy itself, as a general universal principle of a democratic state with a mixed national composition, and a great variety of geographical and other conditions."15

The argument above, given the assumption of Marxists that the formation of independent national states is the tendency in all bourgeois-democratic revolutions, has important bearings for the Indian state with its multiplicity of "National compositions" and a "great variety of geographical and other conditions" and where the bourgeois-democratic revolution while underway in however an erratic manner, is far from nearing completion. Marxists even doubt if it can at all reach completion in this "epoch of imperialism" under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, capitalist development goes on.

As it proceeds, it sucks in more and more areas and people, hitherto untouched or only marginally affected, into the laws of the motion of capital. These will have, needless to say, profound consequences on the further development of the national question in India. Before taking this aspect for analysis another point of comparative difference with central and eastern Europe, particularly Tsarist Russia, needs to be highlighted to situate the problem in its historical perspective.

III

Certain aspects of the manner in which the present Indian state came to encompass certain nations, nationalities, and ethno-linguistic groups in, to use a legal term, sovereign unity seem to be of considerable importance in understanding the way the national problem in India emerged around the time of independence as well as how it has been evolving ever since, and how it continues to be salient even today. This inevitably forces us to consider certain aspects from periods of our history much before the British came and began the transformation of Indian society in a definite capitalist direction.

In sharp contrast to the empire-states of central and eastern Europe, much before the emergence of any centralised state in India a consciousness of India as a society had emerged. This remained a fact for centuries before the British came. Largely through Brahmins with Sanskrit as the lingua franca a certain amount of civilizational unity, as distinct from political, as manifested in philosophical pre-suppositions and core religious notions of Hinduism, emerged. This was different from the notion of Christendom as it was also supplemented by the spread of the same principles and organisational forms of the social structure within a geographical entity. The Varna philosophy and the ideology of the caste system, inspite of all the regional and local variations, provided a basis of fundamental social unity as well. It is important to emphasize that this unity was not limited just to the formally educated literati or the other dominant classes. It created a common

reference world and a system of meanings in terms of which the exploited and illiterate masses could be drawn not only into the world of Hinduism but could also relate spontaneously to the world of secular activities. Its exploitative character or the function of maintaining a given type of class dominance does not detract from its historical significance. But this notion of unity — civilizational — does not, in any way, imply that there existed anything like an Indian nation as claimed by revivalists or Hindu fanatics today. The presence of such a civilizational unity does not anywhere automatically get translated into a sense of political community or political unity. It may only strengthen and reinforce or give a certain content to nationalism later when historical conditions emerge and give rise to such a phenomenon. Nationalism or the national movements are never primarily a socio-cultural phenomenon but can be secondary forces in conjunction with the politico-economic factors when these emerge. Within these historical limitations of the unity being talked about the spread was almost coterminous with the geographical entity called India; except for certain bordering belts like North-East-India and certain pockets within which remained largely tribal in organisation and largely outside the pale of Hinduism. It was into this preexisting unity that innumerable migrations largely from the north-western frontier, took place. All such migrations got, with time, assimilated into Hinduism. The overall pattern was the same till the Muslims came in large number beginning from the eleventh century.

Muslims were the first outside people into India who could not be assimilated at all by the Hindus. The reverse of it is also largely true. India is one of the very few places where the Muslims after the conquest and the establishment of their rule could not convert the entire indigenous religious communities to Islam. (May be this had to do, to hazard a guess, with the clash of two highly developed religions which was hitherto not so with both. Both Islam and Hinduism had hitherto encountered pagan or semi-pagan people vis-a-vis whom conversion or assimilation works relatively easier. When two higher religions historically confront each other, the situation does not lead to a clear victory of one over the other. Islam's experience has been

similar with European christianity both in Iberian peninsula and Balkans.) Nevertheless, Islam did spread both through coercion and the numerous mystic movements. After a few centuries, if one looks at the pre-partition map of India, one cannot fail to notice that Muslims became an overwhelming majority only in certain belts of north-western India, which by the time the British came had grown into distinct ethno-linguistic belts. Further to the east of these region, in Punjab and in a portion of eastern India, Bengal, they acquire a majority without an overwhelming advantage. In the rest of the country they did not constitute anywhere much more than twenty per cent of the population with Kerala and Assam having very large minority components. Such a pattern of development had a profound impact on the evolution of the national question with the distorted development of capitalism under colonial patronage. It also created considerable confusion among the Indian communists in drawing up a clear-cut national programme in the face of the growth of Muslim "separatism" and the demand for Pakistan.

Another factor, and in any assessment of considerable significance, although it is difficult to specify its salience, has to do with the kind of social movements that emerged in India. In my view, it is difficult to argue if India ever had a renaissance; before or after the British.¹⁶ What we had were movements which are more comparable, to the protestant movement in Europe. Before the British came, during the Mughal period with the growth of money-commodity relations, there was a proliferation of mystical cults and movements; both among the Muslims and Hindus. Yet, lacking a sufficiently strong social base to thrive on, most of these, in course of time, got ossified into new orthodoxies like Mahadivism among Muslims, Vaishnavism in Bengal, etc, or they developed into separate religions like Sikhism; or, else, they were Sanskritized and taken over by the rulers. These movements together with another wave of religious social reform movements in 19th century, which had different impacts on various religious communities in different regions, made modern social awareness religiously oriented. In the absence of a "renaissance" there were few modernising, secularising influences in the shape of social or political movements till we near the 20th century.

But the significance of the bhakti movements lies in another direction. By speaking to ordinary people — artisans and peasants whom the Brahmins shunned except for ritualistic purposes — in their own languages, and preachings social reform even if in a religious idiom, they represented a progressive trend.¹⁷ Moreover, and this is most important, by the fact of making the use of regional languages extensive they gave a spurt to the development of these languages and consequently also to the consolidation of ethno-linguistic communities. Stretching over a century or so after this, the development of ethno-linguistic communities has been noted and recorded by certain scholars.¹⁸ But what is of interest to us here is the fact that this development has given rise to a controversy on the emergence of national question in India. The most prominent writer on the national question in India, EMS Namboodripad, is of the opinion that the nation (and the national culture) emerged at this particular time.¹⁹ This has been strongly refuted by certain others like Irfan Habib.²⁰

On an examination of the basis of their arguments it seems to me that the evidence is far from clear. In principle, the evidence in an abstracted form is amenable to alternative explanations. In a way, pulled in different directions, it can support both the arguments without being able to establish either. It, therefore, seems to me that the conclusions are hasty and the problem needs, first, a more clear grasp of the concepts being employed and, secondly, a lot more empirical work for validation one way or the other. Moreover there is some amount of arbitrariness and Eurocentrism in the way concepts have been employed.

This however is not the main point. The dispute between them concerns the question of the emergence of nations and/or nationalities and, further, in the case of Irfan Habib and some others, what constitutes or differentiates a nation from a nationality. This is at the root of the confusion. The problematic, from the Marxist point of view, as I have understood it, is the national question as a specific phenomenon and not the emergence of nations, nationalities, or ethno-linguistic communities — terms on the significance of which Marxists, incidentally, are not yet in clear agreement.

At this point, it seems to me important to identify the basis of the conceptual confusion so as to better grasp the problem in all its historical complexities. I would attempt this, being fully aware that no amount of conceptual analysis in itself can lead to the knowledge of social reality. But then conceptual confusion and misapplication of terms can hinder understanding. It is therefore useful to be clear, to the extent possible, about the scope, precise applicability and appropriateness of concepts. While doing so, it is also necessary to guard against the trap of the so called defining-one's-concepts clearly exercise. The trap leads to a nominalist fallacy and nominalism is alien to Marxian methodology. The point is to use concepts in a way that they reflect the reality which is sought to be comprehended.

It may be useful to recall at this point that Lenin in his numerous writings on the national question, most of which have been cited earlier, nowhere posits the questions concerning the origin of nations and nationalities or bothers about the differences between these terms. It would be useful to remind oneself that he was basically concerned about grasping the logic of historical forces behind the emergence of national movements and the consequent tasks of the revolutionary forces. The historical salience of the problem for Lenin lies in the fact that the "principle of nationality is historically ^{evitable} in bourgeois society and taking this into due account, the Marxist fully recognises the historical legitimacy of national movements".²¹ It would also be pertinent in this connection to highlight that while trying to grasp this logic he takes recourse to a multiplicity of terms in a more or less synonymous manner. Terms like "nation", "nationality", "national population", "national group", "national features", "national distinctions", "national composition", "nationally distinct", "national make-up", etc. have been used in an interchangeable way in the course of building arguments during the polemics he had with the leading spokesmen of European Social Democracy.

What seems clear from his writings is that the ground for national movement to emerge is provided by the contiguous presence of people with a distinct identity that is more or less "national". The degree or extent of development of various characteristics and their crystallisation seems to be of secondary importance; in fact, these are never talked about by Lenin. It is plausible to argue here that Lenin does so because the capitalist incorporation and penetration and the consequent transformation of different social formations in different parts of the world took place in the context of extreme uneven levels of development of antecedent societies. Some had advanced to very high levels of money-commodity relations whereas many others were still at the stage of primitive social segmentation. This was so not just across countries but even within a country; there were regions which were highly developed while others had not moved out of tribal formations. Capitalist transformation of all these areas began more or less around the time of their colonial conquest and forced incorporation into the economies of metropolitan capitalism. The extraction of resources from these areas and the destruction of indigenous economies was of prime importance in the primitive accumulation of capital for the development of metropolitan capitalism but simultaneously led to a massive distortion of the capitalist transformation of these colonised societies. In view of such a development Lenin could therefore assert categorically that "we cannot say whether Asia will have had time to develop into a system of independent national states like Europe, before the collapse of capitalism, but it remains an undisputed fact that capitalism having awakened Asia, has called forth national movements everywhere in that continent, too, that the tendency of these movements is towards the creation of national states in Asia, ..."²² But, he points out, "theoretically, you cannot say in advance whether the bourgeois-democratic revolution will end in a given nation seceding from another nation, or in its equality with the latter,..."²³ It is the indeterminacy introduced by the late beginning of capitalism under colonial patronage and its continuation in the era of imperialism that makes Lenin say that "... the working class should be the last to make a fetish of the national question, since the development of

capitalism does not necessarily awaken all nations to independent life. But to brush aside the mass national movements once they have started, and to refuse to support what is progressive in them means, in effect, pandering to nationalistic prejudices, that is, recognising "one's own nation" as a model nation..."²⁴ Yet, "in the leap which all nations have made in the period of bourgeois revolutions clashes and struggles over the right to a national state are possible and probable".²⁵

There are a few implicit suggestions in what Lenin discerns in the situation that need highlighting. They have a particular relevance for any scientific analysis of national movements in countries like ours. What is obvious, first, is that the model of national crystallisation that emerged in the phase of early progressive capitalism does not generally get repeated later. In other words, tendencies that are inherent may not fructify. It is therefore necessary to be cautious in equating tendencies with necessary features. Otherwise, serious errors in understanding may crop up. Secondly, the future basis of transition of a people to a national movement can no longer be the same empirical configurations as were witnessed in western Europe; alternatively, levels of development from where people take off toward national awareness have changed with the change in the pattern of capitalist development. Thirdly, and this may be of importance, there can no longer be a model of a nation/nationality in the evaluation of a national movement. If "one's own nation" cannot be a "model" then it logically follows that no one nation can be taken as a model. It further follows from this that one cannot define it once and for all for definitions imply a model. This however does not imply that historical categories cannot have core meanings. Around these core meanings many characteristics get attached or detached depending upon how possibilities in a situation get materialised. Following from the above, almost as a corollary, is the fourth point: historical categories with easy applicability in the phase of expansive capitalism born out of indigenous forces in society may no longer have exact correspondence to the situation born out of retarded and distorted forms of capitalist development in Asian-

African countries in the colonial and imperialist phases. To remain bound to the historically determined meaning of these terms is to miss the essence of the historical process now underway. One must therefore, accept a certain ambiguity of meanings of the terms and the indeterminacy of the process as necessary to analysis. It is neither easy to predict the shape and extent of capitalist transformations nor the time of revolutionary success and till such time, capitalism will continue to grow with unforeseen consequences for the social formation.

I have a feeling that lack of careful attention to some of these changed features is at the root of controversy among certain scholars of eminence on the national question in India. Let us pause here to briefly examine a few aspects of this controversy -- aspects that have become central, as much of the debate takes off from these premises. The intention here is not so much the criticism but an effort, however tentative at this stage, to re-discover the lost theoretical ground.

Take Irfan Habib for instance,²⁶ He predicated his discussion of the question on a sharp distinction between a nation and a nationality. By treating what to Lenin is only a tendency as a necessary feature for all times, he argued to the effect that a nation has to have a sovereign state or else it needs to be classified as a nationality. A nationality to him is one where the "urge for a separate sovereign state is either (a) not fulfilled, or (b) is moderated".²⁷ Accordingly he says, "such people are usually termed 'nationalities', not nations, in Marxist usage".²⁸ Moreover, the nationality itself to him is a bourgeois phenomenon as is clear when he says: "there was no basis for the emergence of nationalities before the British conquests, because there was no trace of any emerging bourgeoisie".²⁹ It is unclear how these distinctions are, as Irfan Habib asserts, "Marxist". The basis for such assertions is the implicit assumption that the consequences of capitalism for the national question are ~~of capitalist nature for the national question are of~~ unidirectional under all historical conditions. This seems to be a variant of the Luxemburgian error which Lenin so systematically undermined. The

assertions seem to be arbitrary both if one bases oneself on the writings of Lenin or follow the Marxist methodology rigorously. Irfan Habib however uses these uncalled for distinctions for a correct criticism of EMS Namboodripad.

Namboodripad without getting drawn into such distinctions takes a position that is equally untenable. In his examination of the national question in Kerala³⁰ he assumes the prior existence of a "nation" as a necessary condition for the emergence of national awareness and national movements. Basing himself on Stalin's oft-quoted famous definition of nation he meticulously searches out and finds all the characteristics of what Stalin says constitutes a nation.³¹ Incidentally, he finds what he discovers for Kerala to be widespread in India at that time: "...folk culture was flowering into national culture in Maharashtra, Bengal and other parts of India".³² A clear instance of this phenomenon was "The great Shivaji and other national heroes were coming out as champions of a new form of social and state organisation - an organisation based on national language and national culture - although many of them were also national oppressor in relation to nationalities other than their own".³³ And therefore "the process is thus similar to what took place in Europe..."³⁴ It is intriguing in the face of an overwhelming theoretical consensus among Marxist scholars, that a national movement is an outcome of capitalist development and yet a nation is sought out as existing prior to capitalism. Moreover the assumption is that the pattern of Europe has to repeat itself. It seems to me that such a searched out pattern is, in plain and simple language an analytical superimposition on a reality that is so different. It is difficult to accept this contention of Namboodripad in face of the world-wide evidence so meticulously used by Lenin in his arguments. There is also no methodological basis in terms of which such a contention becomes tenable nor the kind of evidence that can clearly establish a case. In the absence of the development of capitalism, a community displaying characteristics that are more or less "national" and providing the future basis of a movement could have existed. But it is doubtful if one could talk of national

question as a problematic at that time if, as Lenin says, (as quoted above),
the "leap" is made at the time of bourgeois revolutions.

When the crux of the matter, is capitalist transformation then, as an aside, it is useful to note here that even if the potentiality of capitalist development existed before the incorporation of India into British colonial empire no one has so far shown that capitalism had started growing in India. The controversy is only about its possibility and not about its actual beginnings.³⁵ One can, therefore legitimately talk of the national question in India only after the transformations subsequent to colonial conquest.

Now when we are caught up in the problem I think it futile and misleading to get lost around the definitions of concepts and terms and a search for their equivalents in the social phenomenon. It is very useful and relevant here to recall Engels warning that we will never find any "fixed, cut-to-measure, once-and-for-all applicable definitions in Marx's works".³⁶ He immediately adds what is very important for us here that "It is self-evident that where things and their inter-relations are conceived, not as fixed, but as changing, their mental images, the ideas, are likewise subject to change and transformation, and they are not encapsulated in rigid definitions, but are developed in their historical or logical process of formulation".³⁷ Lenin similarly uses terms, in the correct Marxist way, to locate the unity of concepts and phenomena that is ever-changing and therefore we cannot find in his use of concepts and terms any cut and dried meanings. In the way he employs them, terms and concepts change their meanings to mirror the changing phenomena and their ever changing inter-relations. For our context this is revealed in a significant sentence where Lenin says : "It is autonomy that enables a nation forcibly retained within the boundaries of a given state to crystallise into a nation".³⁸ The nation here is, significantly, both prior to as well as the result of the process of crystallisation.

Attention to this, and such other, extremely useful nuances in Lenin following the novel use of terms in Marx³⁹ would not have led to an escalation

of this unnecessary controversy. Unnecessary because it has not added, in any way, to our scientific understanding of the problem. If at all, it has led to an emphasis on inconsequential issues and a neglect of vital historical processes underway. Due to this, the issue has become, from a theoretical viewpoint, bereft of any relations with the social reality. To put this in a concrete way, the actual treatment of the national movements, which, in many instances, is extremely incisive, has no necessary relation with the initial terms that are employed and defined. Let us take another concrete case of analysis.

Partha Chatterjee, in an otherwise insightful piece of analysis on Bengal⁴⁰, proceeds to build up his argument, like Irfan Habib, in terms of Eurocentric pre-suppositions. Nation he takes to be, -I think, rightly, - a phenomenon of the capitalist era. It is an outcome, according to him, of homogenisation, in terms of economic imperatives, of a pre-existing "cultural community" in a state formation by the bourgeoisie.⁴¹ But he finds a good many of the characteristics assigned generally to a nation existing within these cultural communities. He therefore, calls such a community "already possessing a distinct and common cultural identity in the pre-capitalist era, a nationality".⁴² The complete divergence, in his position and the one Irfan Habib takes, is clear and is indicative of the confusion in the way terms have been employed. But this is not the most important aspect for analysis; from this he is forced into an anomalous position when he asserts that characteristics assigned to "nation" should actually belong to "nationality". Accordingly, he argues that Stalin assigns to nation the "characteristics which should properly apply only to the "nationality".⁴³ He further observes that these land him (Stalin) "in all sorts of conceptual difficulties when discussing the national question in eastern Europe".⁴⁴ It is true that it was Stalin, unlike Lenin or anyone of those in the debates with him, who went in for a detailed elaboration of the characteristics of nation and gave a "once and for all" definition as well as distinguished it from nationality. But what is not clear is how the conceptual difficulties, correctly identified, could be avoided if the

characteristics found to inhere in one are transferred to the other concept in a sort of musical chairs of concepts.

Such a conceptual muddle hinders the process of understanding. There are no methodological criteria to decide one way or another. In the absence of any criteria, amorphous evidence from history can be, as pointed out earlier, used to support many such positions but does not establish any; it just cannot.

It seems to me important to stress here that in making sharp logical distinctions between vague historical categories and then freezing the concepts of all the openings for phenomenal attributes to enter in as meanings in the frame-work of dialectical understanding one commits more than a mere epistemic error. One also takes up, surreptitiously, an ontological position. One does so by viewing social reality as rigid and closed, whereas motion and flux are taken to be axiomatic in Marxist dialectics. Moreover, hypostatization also possibly occurs; one begins to move from concepts to reality and not vice-versa.

To come back to our problem, the precise determination is provided by the very nature of the incorporation of different parts of the world into the world capitalist system, first, through colonialism and later, more profoundly, due to imperialism. It is determination in the sense of the stage from which crystallisation towards nations-nationalities begins where these are not prior to, but remain intergal to, -in their formation, -the national movement. To clarify : the initial awakenings and the subsequent heightening of these and the emergence of movements took place in states and societies which were not only, in many cases, of diverse social-national compositions but also at different levels of identity formation from a "national" angle. It was in this situation that ill-defined groups having distinct but unstable national features were thrown into a historical flux (not of their own making) of which national awareness and national movements manifesting a variety of hitherto unknown forms were a part. In a great many cases in the third world such national movements themselves became instrumental in welding these people into crystallised national groups. Capitalism in the third world/societies having as yet

Such a flexible, open attitude is a dialectical necessity if we want to scientifically grasp the extreme complexity and ever new forms in which the the national question in the new nations is manifesting itself. Stalin's theoretical position that "it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be lacking and the nation ceases to be a nation"⁴⁸ or its reverse "It is only when all these characteristics are present together that we have a nation"⁴⁹ has led to unnecessarily rigid schematization which makes the dialectical handling of complex situations extremely difficult. Moreover, it is this that leads to conceptual difficulties and not, I feel, the attribution of characteristics that belong to "nationality" to "nation" as suggested by Partha Chatterjee. Having said all this, the central point about Stalin's definition that modern nations cannot be defined in terms of culture or such other related criteria, taken singly, remains valid. From the valid assertion of equating it with capitalism to closing the terms and then treating the category of nation as something prior and necessary for a national movement to arise seems unwarranted.

To sum up the point, I would suggest, at the risk of raising a serious controversy, that this confusion is largely due to an exclusive reliance on the writings of Stalin. Stalin asserts, on repeated occasions, that the nation emerges at a definite period - "the process of elimination of feudalism and development of capitalism is at the same time a process of the constitution of people into nations",⁵⁰ Or, "Modern nations are the product of a definite epoch - the epoch of rising capitalism".⁵¹ In clear contrast Lenin equates the same period with the rise of, as distinct from nation, national movements - "throughout the world, the period of the first victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked up with national movements".⁵² Or, "developing capitalism knows two historical tendencies in the national question. The first is the awakening of national life and national movements, the struggle against all national oppression, and the creation of national states ..."⁵³ The difference as revealed in the choice of terms used like emergence of "nations" in the case of

Stalin and the awakening of "national life" and "national movements" as Lenin stressed is subtle but extremely significant with many implications both for understanding and practice. But this will take us towards a different field so let us cut short the argument; needless to say national movements can arise without there being fully-developed nations so long as some distinct national features, however dormant or unstable otherwise, exist among people in a contiguous region at the time of its incorporation into the networks of a capitalist system. Given the weakness of contemporary third world capitalism it is immaterial whether such a community of people constituted an ethnolinguistic community, a nationality or a nation. In the dialectics of the movement and struggle then, such a community in itself can be a sufficient basis for a future nation - nation in the sense Stalin employs the terms. But the reverse is not necessarily true. There can be nations without a national movement being its necessary concomitant. It is logical to assert here that one can talk of the national question only when national movements have emerged and it is here that the historical evidence is conclusive, there cannot be national movements and consequently the national question before the advent of capitalism. This brings us to the impact of British rule and the development of capitalism in India.

IV

I do not intend here, nor am I equipped for, to trace in any detail the development of capitalism in India. I would confine myself to highlighting only those aspects of the development under the impact of British rule which have a direct bearing on the evolution of national question in India.⁵

At the level of the economy, the nature of its development during the colonial period has had its inevitable implications for the national question in India. The entire period of about 200 years of the colonial regime has been clearly demarcated into several stages largely determined by the laws of development of British capitalism itself.⁵⁵

The more visible indicators of a 'national' awareness appeared only in the early second half of the last century when the import of British industrial capital was yet to be accomplished in a big way. The next half-century saw a full-scale stabilisation of British Capital in India in a few industries along with a faster development of 'social overhead capital' - transport and communication being the core sectors here.

When India entered the 20th century, industries and trade centres had grown largely around the port cities with industrial investment concentrated around Calcutta (jute) and Bombay (cotton textiles). As Bagchi points out, both these centres accounted for a major part of aggregate industrial investments and yet their share in the national income was insignificant, and hence, modern industry was in the nature of an enclave economy. In addition to this, most of the other enterprises were in the nature of extractive industries largely concentrated in eastern India.⁵⁶ What was equally significant was the development of railways and modern transport which effectively linked up the interior to the port cities,⁵⁷ facilitating the development of commodity production and exchange relations as well as giving a spurt to the growth of agricultural raw materials, geared to these industries. The consequent commercialisation of agriculture also laid the basis, as Irfan Habib suggests, for the development of landlord and rich peasant agriculture along with the pauperisation of small proprietors contributing to an increase of landless labourers all over India.⁵⁸ Railways thus integrated the heterogeneity of different types of production units and economic regions into an "economic interacting system".⁵⁹ Linked to this, there was an increase in the parasitical pressure on expropriation of agricultural surplus through trade, finance and money-lending capital and this facilitated the accumulation of money in the hands of traders and moneylenders. Agriculture got encapsulated by capitalism without any profound transformation taking place in the forces of production. Pavlov is right when he observes that a symbiotic relationship "between capitalist structures and pre-capitalist ones runs through the sphere of accumulation".⁶⁰ Even this limited and highly distorted development of modern industry largely followed and hastened the

process of "de-industrialisation" in most regions of India. It was more complete in certain regions than in others with different consequences for the subsequent growth of industrialisation and class formation. The more successful development of indigenous capitalism in western India, as shown by Bagchi,⁶¹ was partly due to this factor and partly it was due to the survival of the Indian merchants involved in large-scale trade. Moreover, as limited industrialisation followed the earlier massive de-industrialisation it resulted in a great increase of pressure on agriculture with widespread repercussions for rents, shares and wages. The impoverishment of agriculture also had implications for the origin of the industrial working class, and, as recounted in details by Sukomal Sen,⁶² their particular work conditions, social-national composition, wages, etc. In a way, this went a long way in conditioning the response of the working class and peasantry in several key areas of political mobilization.

Even after the war, under the twin impacts of the weakening of British imperialism (and the fears of loss of Indian market to other imperialist powers) and the growth of powerful mass movement for freedom when industrial capitalism under Indian bourgeoisie expanded much more rapidly, the basic relations already established between agriculture and industry did not change, Bagchi points out that the growth of large-scale industry in eastern and western India did not stimulate the agricultural productivity in these regions. On the other hand, the growth of agricultural productivity and output in certain regions, like Punjab, did not lead to any substantial growth of large-scale industry before independence. Bagchi argues that the colonial economy imposed a "dual disjunction" between the growth of agriculture and the growth of industry inhibiting the possibilities of growth of sub-economies in which the two could stimulate each other.⁶³ Upto independence, modern industry kept growing both commodity-wise - steel, cement, sugar (refined), paper, vegetable oils, chemicals, etc.⁶⁴ and area wise - Delhi, Kanpur, Madras, Madurai, Coimbatore, Ahmadabad, and later to Gwalior, Bhopal and Indore, etc.⁶⁵ In this pattern of development, certain areas, which remained completely untouched by modern

industry, were Punjab, Baluchistan, ~~North-west frontier province~~, Sind, etc. in the north-western border region and East Bengal, as well as certain other interior regions, in spite of the fact that investments in agriculture in some of these areas were higher than in other places and therefore domestic market was better for industrial goods.⁶⁶ Among these regions, in all the areas which were either overwhelmingly Muslim or Muslim majority areas modern industry did not grow. Moreover, apart from uneven development in regional terms, the development was very uneven in terms of communities and ethnic groups in developed areas also; e.g. the Muslims and tribals were much less affected by these developments. All this had a deep impact in complicating the movements of people in different nationalities as well as in splitting it up both before and after independence.

From the perspective of the development of national question in India it is also important to note the origin of the Indian capitalist class. The indigenous entrepreneurs in modern industry both before and after world war I came from erstwhile commercial groups who had accumulated capital through trade, finance and money-lending. Shirokov correctly observes that this largely determined the social mentality of the Indian bourgeoisie and forced it to be on the side of "caution and easy profit".⁶⁷ As such, it also determined the "sequence of priorities" of this class as and when new opportunities opened. Bagchi further points out that the easy mobility of trading capital between different fields of profitable investment also got translated into a mobility between different regions of India.⁶⁸ As an aside, it is also interesting to note that the controllers of large business and industrial houses in Pakistan later as well came from amongst the Memons, Bohras, etc - the traditional Muslim trading communities who migrated to West Pakistan after partition. These mobile groups of capitalist did not as a class belong to any one national group or, more appropriately, did not treat any demarcated national region for favoured treatment. They moved all over the country wherever opportunities for maximizing the return on investment were easily available. They thus became, in a real sense, a pan-Indian bourgeoisie but without the revolutionising

potentialities of the bourgeoisie as in western Europe at the early phase of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. These new industrial capitalists also kept up their links with agriculture through rent, trade, money-lending, in short, through efforts to control the fiscal apparatus of agriculture.

Development of capitalism under colonialism-imperialism takes its own toll. Economically it makes the sway of capital over society impossible to achieve and socially the pervasiveness of the bourgeois revolution is lost and, therefore, historically the creation of social unity on new modern basis cannot be thought of as the economic basis of what is called "modernisation" is lacking. Toward the end of the colonial era in India, we find that the industrial revolution and the capitalist transformation was far from complete. In the phase after independence, building upon this base, acute regional unevenness in both industrial and agricultural development has come to be a stable feature of Indian economic growth. The states that developed large-scale modern industry have continued to occupy the leading positions in the statewise share of aggregate industrial investment although west Bengal seems to be fast slipping from the ranks of a leading industrialist state and Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh are gaining in relation to Tamilnadu. On the other hand, the states that have achieved substantial progress in agricultural production and productivity have not had industrialisation on any significant scale. Even the extent of monetisation and commercialisation of agriculture remains fairly uneven among the Indian states today. This is an important determinant of the extent of erosion of pre-capitalist structures of economy and social power in rural society.

The comparative roles of the working class and the peasantry in their response to several important issues and problems have varied widely on many occasions. The 'sons-of-the-soil' argument, for example, has taken on one meaning in Maharashtra under Shiv Sena, a completely different one in Assam, and yet another in Telengana in the recent past. The land question or the agrarian question in general has not been relevant to Shiv Sena but quite relevant to

the recent Assam agitation. The fact that the Akali Dal at times emerged as a major force in Punjab by championing the causes of the Punjabi capitalist landlords and rich peasants along with Sikh religion, is yet another example of a highly extraordinary situation, where demand for cheaper electric power for irrigation pumps, or low input and high output prices went hand in hand with obscurantist slogans. In west Bengal, on the other hand, Anna Bengali ("we Bengalis") has failed to make any impact.

Each situation has been determined by a wide range of factors, including the history of the democratic movement in these regions. But in this history itself, as also in the present day situation as such, the differential nature of the development of the economy of a region has contributed towards the emergence of a relatively distinct sociology of political response, with its necessary connotation for the national question.

The confusing complexity of this mass response has to be kept at the back of the mind in analysing the national problem in India. In imperceptible ways these become a part of everything else that is part of politics in India today. Using this as a backdrop, I will look at a few concrete aspects of the national question in India not in order of their significance but in terms of their closeness to the capitalist transformation experienced by the Indian society.

V

One of the unintended consequences of the British rule was that capitalism developed first in and around the port-cities and therefore affected those areas more where the population that later crystallised into distinct national groups constituted in each case only a small proportion of the total population of India; it was everywhere less than ten per cent of the total population of the country. It was also a fact that the industrial bourgeoisie in these areas did not belong to or could not become the representative of any of these national groups. Where it was not British it came from the traditional

communities of traders and money-lenders who, in the course of British rule, grew rich while adding new members who sometimes belonged to local populations like landlords. When industry grew and spread, this pattern did not change significantly. They went wherever the rate of return was the highest and never treated any province as their own. They were, from the beginning, the bourgeoisie of an all-India nature. Given these facts, it was historically not possible for^a "dominant nation" to emerge in the classical central and East European pattern. The one region - the Hindi belt - with the largest linguistic group comprising about one-third of the total population of the country, suffered from two disabilities. First, the standardisation of language and associated culture among the masses was far from complete as has been the case with many other national languages. Secondly, in terms of modern economic developments, it has remained, as it still is now, relatively backward. Even the bourgeois groups, who belonged to some areas of the Hindi belt, had, and still have, most of their economic investments concentrated in different nationally demarcated regions of India. This, in fact, foreclosed all possibilities of a dominant nation emerging in India. So the multi-nationality that emerged and later crystallised into nations with the formation of linguistic states was of a different type than the one Lenin was confronted with; it was free of the relations of oppressor and oppressed nationalities. The only context of oppression prior to independence was the colonial oppression which was an externally imposed factor and not one of relationships between national groups themselves. With the gaining of independence, the national question in India is on a footing that is entirely of a new kind. It cannot be conceived of, as pointed out earlier, as belonging to any of the categories talked of by Lenin. Here was a situation with profound implications for theory. But, then, theory lagged behind actual practices. It was only much later that Marxist scholarship caught up with the situation. Ajit Roy, in the late sixties for the first time clearly formulated the issue.⁶⁹ Later, the major communist Party, CPI(M), broke off^{from} the tradition and, while recognising this fact, dropped the right of self-determination from its programme.⁷⁰

In actuality, the concrete situation had long shown that the demand for secession was never an issue. In the way the national question in India emerged. The bourgeoisie, from the beginning being of an all-India nature and there being no oppressor nation, when the bourgeois inspired freedom movement became powerful no national group did or could feel the historical urge or necessity to secede, notwithstanding Pakistan. In fact, one can look at the Indian independence movement or Indian nationalism representing the interests of the multi-national society as a supra-nationality phenomenon. It was so in the sense that it articulated the organically related common needs of a large majority of people belonging to all the national groups in India. We can speak of it in this way in the sense that the unification of India in a vital economic sense, quite apart from the politico-administrative unification, had been an evolving feature that deepened with time. The restricted political platform for constitutional agitation, erected in the shape of Indian National Congress, reflected, in part, the underlying fact of this growing unity as well as became instrumental in its furtherance. Much later, when, under Gandhiji's leadership it acquired a mass character, it did so by aggregating the interests of all the classes and by involving the main spokesmen of the different national groups. More than anything else, the long drawn out mass movements forged and strengthened Indian unity at the grass-roots by providing common, concrete aspirations to the Indian people. What took shape was a common reference world for ordinary people representing both their contemporary concerns and the traditionally inherited notion about India and its culture. While it represented a consensus, it was much more than a mere consensus. One can talk of the unity, forged through mass movements, as more than a consensus, because ; consensus can be an outcome of elite understandings even in the absence of mass involvement and understanding or may continue to exist due to mass ignorance or apathy about the issues involved or due to absence of organisation, etc. Anti-imperialism and the struggle for political independence provided the basis for the common struggles and active cooperation of the masses and the ruling classes that did cut across the nationality barriers; a short-term congruence of interests in which the initiative always remained with the ruling classes.

In the growth of this multi-national unity, if the structural pre-requisite was the all-India market and the pan-Indian bourgeoisie, the active lead was provided by the new strata that emerged out of the English system of education; itself geared to the over arching interests of the colonial system. It was this "class", comprised of salaried strata and professional groups, that became the spokesman of the all-India national-movement as well as of the various rival forms of national consciousness. Apart from the bourgeoisie, this was the only group which in its outlook and perspective transcended the bounds of nationalities, yet was firmly rooted through a variety of ties to the indigeneous society. It was not purely oriented to the future but also always appealed to the traditional sentiments of people and played upon the vague inherited sentiments of being Indian. This in no small measure, contributed to the popular sentiments of unity. There was no necessary coincidence of interests between the two - the bourgeoisie and the middle classes - all along the spectrum of interests; in fact, the divergences were pronounced on many important issues. But the articulation of historical tendencies and popular urges showed a marked similarity at critical points. There was no fundamental change in this relationship at different phases of the struggle against colonial bondage even when the peasantry was actively involved. It is in this specific sense of complementarities that one can characterise the national movement as bourgeois and not in the sense of its leaders being agents of the bourgeoisie. This also partly explains the ease with which the middle classes could maintain their effective command of the mass movements. Yet, this in itself, does not make Indian nationalism, or, for that matter, third world nationalisms, unique as has been made out in some writings. For example, Barun De argues that Indian nationalism had much less to do with the intentions or role of capitalist classes but was rather a product of anti-colonialism, in which the shattered ambitions of middle classes were the motive forces. 71 To talk of it as determined by capitalism or bourgeoisie is a case of, according to him, "over-determination". With a different emphasis and perspective, Bharranjan Ray also takes the position that although European nationalisms were a product of the bourgeoisie, nationalism in India was due to the

penetration of British political authority and colonial economy and not of the bourgeoisie as in western Europe.⁷² Common to both, from different intellectual perspectives, is the view that it was more an independent response of the "middle classes" or "professional elite" which gave birth to the ideology of nationalism. Barun De, in a significant passage, says that the "egalitarian agitations" of the middle classes "turned into national movements or freedom struggles, or socialist liberation movements against the colonial order of international capitalist inequality. While imperialism could only create subordinate elites, colonialism dialectically spawned a subaltern middle class intelligentsia, whose ideology was forced 'y rude shocks to its innocence into anti-colonial nationalism."⁷³

Looking at or emphasising the role of the middle classes in any historical process by counterposing it to bourgeoisie when capitalist development is a historical tendency or to the main social classes in the social process of production is theoretically untenable and empirically inadequate. The contention is untenable because it erases the difference between the social content and the subsequent historical direction of these movements, which was already clear at that time itself. Explained in terms of the rude shocks to its innocence it makes matters of state power later a totally volitional matter. It cannot explain why all "socialist liberation movements" after victory, moved in the direction of abolition of private property in the means of production, and why most other "freedom struggles" tried to establish or encourage capitalist development even if it meant naked repression of people in the interests of the ruling classes. It is untenable because it destroys all criteria of distinctions. In a way, it is an overriding assertion and cannot, as it stands, become an argument. The inadequacy of the formulation seem to lie in the fact that it equates the energies and forces that make up the mass movements with those who stand in the front and articulate. In all the third world countries it had been the modern literate groups who generally took the lead. They are not only the product of the third world's incorporation in to

the world capitalist system and the initial forced development of capitalism there but also of a strata largely assimilated to the bourgeois world through their outlook and aspirations. They were in a sense the perfect example of what Marx called the political and literary representatives of the class.⁷⁴ Their historical role in India, notwithstanding all the variations imposed by the specificities of the context, was not dissimilar to that of middle classes elsewhere in the third world depending upon the epoch that we examine. In spite of being more numerous and relatively stable in India they never became strong enough to be treated as an independent class. Occupying positions mostly in the tertiary sector they were also dependent on classes related directly to the process of social production. It could not be otherwise in the political sphere too. Their political strength was their ability to win over or detach the main social classes from the given configurations of power.

Within these limitations, they became, on the one hand, the torch bearers of their cultures and champions of the awakening of different nationalities everywhere and, on the other, given the peculiarities of the Indian development, ~~the main spokesmen of the political development~~ the main spokesmen of the trans-or supra-nationality Indian freedom struggle. During this phase the contradictions between these two aspects did not, or could not, become significant as they did later after independence. The specific determination was provided by, mediated in different regions by a variety of factors, the strength of the Indian bourgeoisie whose area of operation was the multi-national Indian market. It was in the structure of occupations and opportunities created by this that the middle classes moved - in terms of their hopes, aspirations and inhibitions as well as dissatisfactions and oppositions. Prior to independence their role was of a dual nature. They were the champions of their respective national culture whether in Tamil Nadu, Bengal, Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat etc. and were also the ones who could see and articulate the all-India connections and needs of these movements. Given the conjunction of historical factors there were no objective grounds to perceive any fundamental contradiction between the two. In view of the all-India connections the

anti-colonial freedom movement naturally acquired a greater salience; and therefore, the various national movements and the national question in general remained ^{subsumed} in the struggle for Indian independence. But this particular form of historical articulation does not warrant the conclusion that the ideology of Indian nationalism had little to do with the bourgeoisie or the capitalist transformation under way. Quite contrary is the case. What it does indicate, however, is quite a different set of correlations of indigenous capitalist classes with other class forces in Indian society and with imperialism.

The ideology and the actual pattern of development of nationalism in India goes to prove, I would contend, the historical validity of the Leninist formulation on the national question. Here is what Lenin says :

"For the complete victory of commodity production, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, and there must be politically united territories whose population speak a single language Therein is the economic foundation of national movements. Language is the most important means of human intercourse". 75

The key determinants here are commodity production and, for its needs, a (large) home market, and towards that a language community by providing a natural ground for national consolidation is taken hold of by the bourgeoisie. The language community, from the point of view of historical logic in the development of capitalist social formations, has been a contingent factor. At a particular point of historical time what may be contingent in a long-term sense may become necessary in the short run. By this it cannot be treated as a necessary component of all historical developments.

When the home market is not a national market, as in the case of India, but a multi-national market the pan-Indian bourgeoisie is forced to skip the language issue in the orthodox sense; it acquires an altogether different connotation. The laws of the motion of capital in their impact on various nationally distinct regions and groups will have incredibly complex impacts and reactions. Their political manifestation vary widely at different points of

time. Before independence, they manifested different relationships between the supra-nationality Indian nationalism and the various regional movements of cultural awakening and national rejuvenation. After independence, these have assumed distinct modes of articulation around the demands for regional autonomy or struggle for separation from larger groups or demands for special protection of regions and groups, etc.

In the entire range of manifestations, the multi-national market as an expression of the continuing nature of capitalist development remains the determining factor and the control of the growing all-India market does not require the development of any Indian language in the way it was necessary in western Europe. The pan-Indian bourgeoisie no longer needs to champion the cause of any Indian language; that is no local language any longer historically intervenes as a necessary condition. The growth and expansion of agency houses and the institution of sales and company representatives who are recruited from different regions coupled with the fact of simultaneous advertising in many languages can act as a sufficient basis for the process of buying and selling and for commercial intercourse. The free flow of commerce in the classical age of competitive capitalism based on small enterprises was dependent upon direct interpersonal communications and hence the importance of respective national languages for market consolidation. Monopoly Capitalism or imperialism no longer bound to national boundaries evolves its own sophisticated mediums of impersonal communication; the scale of production necessitates this. Therefore, not language per se but particular languages as such have a different historical salience for the consolidation of market; i.e., in the changed physical potentialities of exchange state and other infra-structure for market have become more important than specific national languages. This is not very different when we look at the pan-Indian monopoly bourgeoisie in relation to the multi-national Indian market.

The need for the unification of communication exists largely at the apex and as far as the Pan-Indian bourgeoisie is concerned this minimal requirement can be easily met by the English language. In this context, the democratic demand for regional languages is either opposed by the big bourgeoisie or at best is reluctantly conceded as was evident during the language agitations in the 1950's.⁷⁶ In this context, sections of the big bourgeoisie may have a preference for one of the Indian languages for their minimum needs as and when the demand for the ouster of English gains ground and has to be conceded. From this to infer that it champions the cause of Hindi will be fallacious. The stand of the Indian state for an all-India link or "official" language is more due to the pressure of the largest language group in the country and not because of the needs of the big bourgeoisie. As such, on the language question the needs of the Indian state and the big bourgeoisie do not exactly coincide. It is reasonable to assert that the fight for regional languages and for the complete equality of these languages is a people's cause in no way directly related to the requirements of the bourgeoisie. In fact, the efforts to have a privileged position for specific languages in different regions and discriminations against national minorities seem to be backed up by the locally dominant groups including the regionally based non-big bourgeois groups. This also makes the struggle for equality of languages a part of the democratic struggle against exclusiveness and regional chauvinism.

All this shows that the causal chains between market and language and capitalist transformation and national question in countries like India are different from what they were in western Europe in the era of progressive capitalism. The changed nature of these causal relations also militates against the possibilities of the demand for self-determination becoming a general historical urge among the major national groups in India although there may be a weak basis for these here and there. The absence of oppressor-oppressed relationship among different national groups provides the best objective basis for carrying on the struggle for the multi-national unity of

India. There is no clear objective ground for raising the demand of national self-determination and treating a secessionist movement as necessarily a part of the democratic cause. Quite the contrary may also be the case.⁷⁷ But the objective basis of unity does not preclude nor necessarily contradict the growth of regional movements.

It would be worthwhile here to take a closer look at the demands for state autonomy in the multi-national context of India. It is reasonable to assume that the struggle for and the eventual solution of the national question in India will partly centre around these. When the right for self-determination has no historical basis, autonomy in the multi-national states becomes, to reiterate Lenin's point, a "general universal principle of a democratic state."⁷⁸ It therefore assumes an importance in restructuring the institutional basis of politics in India towards greater and more meaningful democracy; of course, within the limits imposed by a bourgeois landlord state.

Barring a few, most of the demands for state autonomy, in simple class terms, seem to be an outcome of contradictions between different sections of the ruling classes. The interests of the all-India big bourgeoisie and non-big bourgeoisie or landlords may not always coincide. The development of capitalism necessitates, as one of its conditions, the formation and consolidation of larger markets for commodity production. This necessity plus the other requirements of big capital demand growing centralisation. The centralisation of state power is in part a reflection of this law of centralisation inherent in the capitalist path of development. The centralisation of state power however generally proceeds faster, than its economic counterpart, in under-developed, crisis-ridden capitalist economies as is revealed in the experience of most third world countries. India in spite of its democracy is no exception to this trend although here it has generally taken place in constitutional garb. Such a centralised state looks after the interests of the entire ruling classes - a class coalition in which one or the other class plays a leading

role by the very logic of the alliance situation. Evidence from the colonial phase of transformation shows, that it is the all-India big-bourgeoisie that has historically assumed such a role.

It may so happen at times that the non-big bourgeoisie may be objectively hampered by the operation of the laws of market which favour big bourgeoisie and thus impede the growth of locally placed non-big bourgeois groups. Or, it may also happen, particularly in situation of economic crises, that the state is unable to dole out concessions to the dominant landed interests or it may not be able to do so uniformly in all the states. This is likely to lead to conflicts of interests within the ~~same~~ ruling classes across the regions. In another way, certain in-built tendencies of capitalist development in India have, since independence, increased regional disparities than help overcome them. Areas which were agriculturally more developed before independence have experienced faster rates of growth in agricultural productivity compared to other regions. Prabhat Patnaik has shown how the lopsided developments in the wake of "green-revolution" have led to region-wise disparities along with class-wise and crop-wise imbalances.⁷⁹ The experience with industrial growth has also been similar. In spite of massive public sector investments, largely confined to "social overhead capital" and "basic industry", the initiative has remained with the capitalist class or the "private sector". In fact, it seems reasonable to argue that the Indian bourgeoisie is neither objectively capable of nor subjectively interested in overcoming regional disparities. The natural tendency of capital makes in move to areas that are more developed, provided saturation level has not been reached, where capital intensive industry becomes relatively less capital intensive as compared to backward regions. Under the impact of such laws of motion of the economic system there is the visible consequence of growing differences in the level of development between different distinctively demarcated national regions.

Under circumstances like these, the locally placed ruling class groups seek greater powers for themselves through the regional parties in power or in opposition so that these can be used to further their own interests when their interests are perceived as not being best served by the all India ruling class parties. This is one objective ground on which regional movements thrive and seek greater autonomy for the states.

Alternatively, the deepening economic crisis and the mounting mass discontent may so strengthen the left opposition parties in some states that they are in a position to give an electoral rebuff to the manipulations of the ruling classes. When such parties come to power or bid for power in certain states then the necessity of fighting for state autonomy arises out of very different class compulsions. The efforts of the left parties to struggle for democratic economy and democratic polity are obstructed by a centralised state. For the class preferences of the working class and the peasantry to meet with even partial success effective autonomy is a minimum necessary condition. This is the other objective ground on which movements for state autonomy have grown.

It follows from the above that the big bourgeoisie, being the leading partner in the class alliance that rules India and exercising its control and operating through the centre and its decision-making organs, will be extremely reluctant to concede greater powers to the states in any meaningful ways. The centralised state remains a prime necessity for its unhindered growth. It may be better able to meet the demands of the regionally placed ruling class parties by granting greater concessions like more funds, better distribution of budgetary allocations under plan heads, etc. The situation is complicated by the strength of the left parties in certain states of India where they happen to be in power. The very logic of the class preferences of the working classes and peasantry involve the use of state autonomy for undermining the material basis of power of the ruling classes.

The left-democratic concept of state autonomy therefore poses a challenge to the very structure of state power itself where the division of powers between the centre and the states is directly linked to the question of hegemony of different classes. Here lies one other reason for the resistance to the demands for state autonomy.

But in a crisis ridden situation, the monopoly capital may not be in a position to even meet the limited demands of the regionally placed ruling class groups. Moreover, in a situation of stagnation when all sections of capital cannot grow or expend with equal ease the non-big capital is under increasing attacks from monopoly capital. The organised pressure for more state protection and privileges for non-big capital may come from parties that are oppositional but function generally within unified-all-India-class-preferences. This demand and the tensions generated by such shifts in the relationship between the central government and the state movements led by Akali Dal or AIDMK/DMK or National Conference can form a complimentary objective condition for left-democratic parties.

One can here see how the question of state autonomy is linked to the national question in India. The conditions that facilitate the struggle for democratic economy and democratic polity are also the conditions that help the struggle for the equality of languages and provide the best opportunities for the development of the cultural level of the people. It is this tie which shows that any satisfactory solution of the national question is integrally tied up with the struggle against the dominance of monopoly capital and its allies. The faster the space of democratisation of the economy the more rapid would be the development and consolidation of nationalities. The more the struggle for democracy weakens and the pace of democratisation slows down the greater will be the suspicions and bickering between and among different national groups and more the opportunities for the bourgeoisie to whip up chauvinism and exploit the genuine demands of people for its own reactionary ends.

In the Indian conditions where there are no historic grounds for secession, the demand for the right of self-determination makes no political sense. It can only be ^asource for the reactionary and imperialist manipulations and of confusion for ^{the}people. On the contrary, in such a situation, complete autonomy for all national groups within the Indian Union becomes a prime necessity for democracy, as is centralisation for big bourgeoisie, and to strengthen the grass-root basis of unity. Any uncritical repetition of the demand may lead to misunderstanding and a misapplication of slogans as happened when the one serious challenge to Indian unity came in the shape of the communal demand for Pakistan. But to grasp this in the context of the national question in India we need to go into the agrarian situation without which communalism remains difficult to comprehend.

The agrarian question, given the particular nature of the capitalist development noted earlier, became and remains the crux of the democratic revolution in India.⁸⁰ Without a correct understanding or handling of the agrarian question it is difficult either to clearly grasp or democratise the national question and without a radical solution of the agrarian problem it is not possible to expect any lasting solution of the national question. The persistence of semi-feudal relations of production in agriculture provides the social basis for the continuing hold of pre-capitalist ideologies among the rural population. The historic compromise between the emergent bourgeoisie in India with landlordism of a semi-feudal type was the ground for the caste-based development of new classes in rural India. New classes emerged from among the old traditional castes and the class dynamics took the form of inter-caste struggles in rural India. Prakash Karat⁸¹ has surveyed the emergence of this phenomenon with its implications for the national question in different region of India. Successive efforts at land reforms since 1950s have done little to wipe out pre-capitalist features from agriculture.⁸² This has left open the possibilities of the caste-based vertical mobilization in Indian society. Coupled with the importance of the religious factor in Indian society, conservative social mobilization has become a stable fact of political life in large parts of India.

With the hightened pace of capitalist developments since independence it is reasonable to assume that the local bourgeoisie, as distinct from the all-India big bourgeoisie, must have grown in number. It is reasonable to assume so because capitalist development which of necessity involves increasing centralisation of capital can also give rise to such intra-class differentiations. The pace and extent of such differentiation or its opposite tendency depends upon how exactly and wherefrom capitalism is developing. So also have the "middle classes" grown with the abnormal growth of the tertiary sectors. Coupled with the fact of educational expansion through a top-heavy educational system the number of aspirants to middle class positions has gone up much more rapidly. It was in their interest to fight for linguistic states to secure control over local-regional markets and/or local administration. All these classes and strata could rely upon the local landlords for whom the question of local languages is generally important given their cultural pre-dispositions. So long as it suited their interests they involved the masses-peasants-in their fight for regional languages and the creation or consolidation of national - linguistic states. Mother tongue being important for common people for self-expression it evolved spontaneous response as well. The use of local languages being important also for the creative development of people, it was a democratic movement. The situation has changed with the formation of national-linguistic/^{states} within the Indian Union. Now the ruling class groups use their power to frustrate the democratic aspirations of people as well as to exercise their hold over people to involve them in chauvinistic movements in their fight for "special priviliges" vis-a-vis the all-India big bourgeoisie. The bourgeois landlord classes use the deep rooted and widespread hold of pre-capitalist ideologies and pre-modern sentiments of ordinary peasant masses to build up movements around caste, communal and regional-chauvinistic slogans. Movements like anti-reservation stir, forward vs. backward castes, sons-of-the-soil chauvinistic agitations like Shiv Sena etc., or even agitations based on vague historical memories of people like Telangana or Vidharba or Marathwada etc. are essentially built up by using the deepening discontent of people.

These are used as screens to hide the failure of the ruling classes where such slogans provide easily visible targets or scapegoats for the ruling classes to divert the anger and exasperation of the people. So long as semi-feudal relations prevail in agriculture they provide, on the one hand, a social basis for such ideologies to thrive on and, on the other, subject the peasant masses to the forces of economic dependence, political compulsions and pressures towards social conformity - ready-made tools for the ruling classes to keep people in bondage. Short of a revolutionary destruction of such social forms, the only force that can act as a brake upon these modes of political articulation is the ability of left forces to decisively intervene in the situation; but these factors in themselves represent the major obstacle on the growth of popular movements.

On the basis of the above link one can rightly emphasise the dependence of the capitalist classes on semi-feudal agriculture as of decisive political importance. For the bourgeoisie there is, first, the undoubted significance of landlords as allies for political hegemony through competitive policies, but even if competitive politics is given up there is no reason to believe that the bourgeoisie can push through with its bourgeois revolution in an authoritarian setting. Evidence from a large number of third world countries also shows that the capitalist classes have found themselves in a position of extremely cautious dealings with the dominant rural groups. Nothing in the situation suggests that India can provide the world with an exception. The capitalist classes have to be so cautious, as Bagchi neatly sums up, "since by the very nature of their development and their fear of the peasantry and the proletariat of their own countries in the epoch of the socialist revolution, the capitalist classes of the Third World are on the adjust to the demands of the property-holding strata in control of sectors characterised by pre-capitalist relations; the resistance of the latter against a rapid rate of transfer of resources to capitalist accumulation aggravates the difficulties of the capitalist classes of the Third World".⁸³

The strength of this factor cannot be easily questioned. Growing contradictions between and the eventual split in the alliance of the ruling classes will automatically narrow down the social basis of support of the leading element—bourgeoisie—and thus will weaken its rule. Moreover, since the heightening of contradictions has the potentiality of throwing a section of the erstwhile allies on the side of popular movement the bourgeoisie is forced to compromise for the fear of revolutions. Therefore, historically, the only development that can put a brake on chauvinistic twists that peasant masses are prone to is the growth of left influence which can unleash their strength for democratic struggles and for social emancipation. Such a process having not yet materialised on a national scale a number of other sets of problems connected with the movements of people belonging to religious communities or tribal groups require specific attention. To reiterate the point, it becomes necessary to attend to these groups in the context of the socially and politically divisive consequences of the capitalist development in India and not just because these are distinct religious or tribal groups. I will look at the Muslim minority first.

The communal problem in the shape of Hindu-Muslim conflicts has remained as serious today as it was at the time of independence. The presence of large Muslim minorities within different national groups in India, especially the Hindi belt, has further complicated the national problem in India. The Muslim community, unlike ^{other} religious groups, has inherited a peculiar store of historical memories and after the partition is a victim of an equally peculiar amalgam of fears and inhibitions and bravado; over and above these there is a strong sense of community solidarity historically determined and reinforced both by theology and politics.

It has historically worked as an impediment, as it does now, in the crystallisation of national groups into distinct entities with a clear-cut identity of their own. The most obvious manifestation of this was in the pre-independence period when the Muslim presence in large numbers in different

national groups made it difficult to unify the peasant movements with the different national movements and to keep the supra-nationality Indian nationalism united all over northern India including Punjab and Bengal. The landlord dominated communal mobilizations in most of this region, grew into parallel movements of the Hindus and Muslims. Among the Muslims it developed separatist aspirations over time as well. What is interesting to note is that in spite of the general backwardness of regions where Muslims constituted an overwhelming majority like in Sindh, Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province (NWFP) there was never any popular involvement with the demand for Pakistan; in fact, in some parts of these areas the popular leadership of Muslim masses never reconciled to the idea of Pakistan even in 1947. In Bengal and Punjab, even though Muslims constituted a majority with concentrations in somewhat demarcated regions, the communal politics was, for a greater period of time, more in the nature of community oriented demands. It did not become communal separatism as in U.P. or Bihar till quite late in the day when it got fused with Muslim League politics and the demand for Pakistan.⁸⁴

It is a well known historical fact to which reference has been made earlier that modern industry did not grow in Muslim majority areas and that they remained economically backward in spite of favourable factor endowment like in Punjab or Eastern Bengal. Yet, it was precisely in these areas that the movement for self-determination or secession either did not emerge or had weak popular sanction. What took shape as Muslim communalism was, in spite of different specific roots in different regions like Bengal or Punjab, landlord led Muslim mobilizations (the plural needs emphasis) and only a regionally specific part of it became "separatist" and that too largely in areas where Muslims constituted minorities, however large.⁸⁵ Landlord led mobilization was, however, not something unique to Muslims. It was a common feature of Indian politics then and has not become uncommon even now in most regions. What was certainly crucially different with this mobilization of Muslims in the pre-independence phase was the fact that Muslim landlordism could not be united with the all-India bourgeoisie as the rest of the landlord classes

could. It is this that was instrumental, more than anything else, in keeping the Muslim masses away from the all-India movement for independence. This assertion does not invalidate the presence of other contributory factors which reinforced this separate mobilization, e.g., one can mention their sense of under-representation in the tertiary sector, the ruination of handicraftsmen, the structural downward mobility of the community in northern India, etc. It was only in 1945 or later that the community oriented political formations like Krishak Praja Party or Unionist Party moved into the Muslim League. Even so, the demand for Pakistan did not become anything of a national movement; the demand had a weak popular basis in areas like N.W.P.F., Baluchistan, Sind even as late as the time of independence. So the demand for Pakistan had no basis to be treated as part of even a partial democratic solution of the national question in India.

But in the creation of Pakistan, as distinct from the politics that demanded Pakistan, the aspects of nationality in N.W.P.F., Baluchistan and Sind got combined with the communal aspect in Bengal and Punjab and uncompromising separatism of U.P., Bihar, etc. This dimension and its intricate expressions in the contemporary politics was unfortunately not clearly analysed by the Marxists and the Communist Party of India.⁸⁶ What baffles one is that this happened in spite of a rich corpus of theory and class and national cues in the seminal writings of Lenin. The then prevailing confusions and misunderstandings and the historical evasion that it involved apart, it raises an important question : why did the demand for Pakistan meet with acceptance, however reluctantly, by the Congress led movement for Indian independence. The question is important for two reasons. First, the demand was conceded at a time when the Muslim-Hindu divide as expressed in the electoral and constitutional politics of limited franchise and elite manipulations was being contested by the massive displays of unity of Hindu-Muslim masses in popular agitations and at the level of "barricade" politics. Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that at the time the Muslim League leadership including Jinnah were losing their grip over the situation.⁸⁷

Why then the panic among the "nationalist" leadership of that time? This directly leads us into the second reason for asking the question. An investigation of this question, however suggestive at this stage, may provide us with interesting clues as to how the ruling classes treat problems of "national unity" when such unity seems to run counter to their interests. A clue of this type can then be of use in understanding the limitations of the contemporary role of the ruling classes in India in relation to the long-term secular tendencies among different national groups.

Partial evidence as well as the logic of the situation suggests to me that it was in the interest of the all-India big bourgeoisie to accept partition of the country. Three sets of circumstances and their possible political spin off seem to me to have been decisive in its acceptance of the demand for Pakistan. To put it briefly and a bit schematically, first, researches in history have provided ample evidence by now to show that there was a growing common perception and fear among the Indian bourgeoisie and imperialist-capitalist interests of the growing militancy and potential radicalisation of mass movements in India then.⁸⁸ There could not have been more clear evidence of this than the naval revolt, the police strike, and the general strike of industrial workers and, more important, the spread of massive peasant movements under the Communist Party's leadership in Telengana, the Tebhanga movement in Bengal, Travancore-Cochin, etc. and their mortal fear of more such developments over which the moderate leadership of the Congress Party had little or no control. Secondly, the violence, especially in Calcutta, in the wake of the direct action call given by Jimmah in 1946 and if this was the forerunner of things to come, then the bourgeoisie, primarily interested in market and profits, was rightly apprehensive and fearful of the loss of market and disruption of trade and commerce. Moreover, it is not unreasonable to assume that a climate of anarchy and violence provides, particularly in colonial situations, a more favourable atmosphere for radical movements to thrive on and expand. These two sets of circumstances were, or could be, the basis of short term fears and were sufficient grounds for the bourgeoisie to panic.

Along with these there was also a factor of long-term significance and this is the third set of circumstances. Here it is difficult to point to any concrete evidence but absence of evidence does not necessarily invalidate an argument; there is also the logic of the situation to go by. In the context of the landlords as the necessary allies of bourgeoisie for sustained mass support, it seems to me reasonable to deduce that the Indian bourgeoisie was doubtful of its ability to politically unify the Muslim masses under its leadership in the foreseeable future. The above assertion does not seem unreasonable given its failure to win over as allies the Muslim landed gentry and the stable fact of landlord led social and political mobilization in the Indian politics. If this line of reasoning has any validity that the Indian bourgeoisie was capable of somewhat long term calculations, however vaguely, then it is possible to say that it was genuinely apprehensive of exercising its hegemony or domination over state-power in independent India; at least, in stable way.

Here a clarification of sorts is in order : such an interpretation of bourgeois calculations or, rather realisation, can be advanced only on the plausible ground of bourgeoisie's awareness of the powerful hold on the peasant masses whether Muslims or Hindus of the emergent landlord classes within the rural society and hence of their importance for mass support. Moreover, the fact that at each stage of qualitative leap in the politics then the Muslim constitutional politics was getting more and more estranged from the mainstream anti-colonial struggle. This had been so all through after the honey-moon of Non-Cooperation-~~Khilafat~~ phase. Periods of lull were always followed by political developments that widened the gap between the constitutional positions of Muslim leadership and the Indian National Congress. All these sets of circumstances together, provided the calculus of immediate fears and long-term prospects to its decision to accept partition as a historic necessity for its class rule - a necessity because other things being equal an undivided India certainly would have provided a larger market and source of

raw-materials. But, other things being not equal it was necessary to concede to the demand for Pakistan for sake of political hegemony. As an aside, stable social basis of class rule was necessary if its ambitions to become an independent capitalist class were to materialise in independent India. That it did not and could not is an altogether different question into which we need not go here; in any case, the logic of its development has been worked out in impeccable detail by Prabhat Patnaik.⁸⁹ To come back to the point, in this limited and qualified sense one can talk of truncated independence as a grand compromise and not in the sense of sham as a number of ultra-left groups characterise it. Nevertheless, the compromise is indicative of the inherent limitations of the Indian ruling classes, especially of its leading element, the all-India big bourgeoisie, which force them to compromise with forces that may not be in the long-term national interests. This inherent tendency of the Indian bourgeoisie shows itself repeatedly after independence when it finds an objective complementarity with forces of social reaction to combat people's power. Herein lies a factor of importance that undoubtedly complicates the national question in India. Thorough democratisation of the national question has to surmount this obstacle.

Therefore, partition and its aftermath did not lead to any lessening of communal tensions and strife. Quite the opposite happened : it left a trail of bloodshed and bitterness with long-term repercussions for Indian politics. Even today, more than three decades after independence, the secular tendencies are not strong enough to help overcome the communal virus. Both Muslim and Hindu communalisms and revivalist tendencies in the communities are as strong as ever with the result that the homogenisation of national groups on secular lines has not occurred. The national groups remain divided and fragmented on communal grounds. This is so in all the states of India where there are large Muslim concentrations; the differences across the states in the strength or otherwise of the communal division is dependent upon a variety of factors including the strength of left forces.

The situation while being complex and far from reassuring everywhere may have particularly serious potentialities in the Hindi belt, especially in western U.P. where the concentrations of Muslims are quite large in a contiguous area. In a portion of this area the concentration is so large that Muslims constitute more than a "national minority". There seem to me to be strong grounds to single out this area. In this region, a clear interlocking of factors, both of a historical nature and contemporary origin, seem to be taking place. There is first the persistence and heightening of Hindi-Urdu tussle along with growing divergence between the two languages in their vocabulary, literature, metaphors and similes. All this adds up to a considerable difference when scripts are also different. Moreover, the fact of crass discrimination against Urdu language cannot be denied. Urdu has become slowly over time, due to both political and economic reasons, and for all practical purposes, a language only of the Muslims; this notwithstanding pious declarations about its composite character. In practical terms, discrimination against and denial of equal status to Urdu is perceived of as cultural discrimination against Muslims. All this adds up to subjectively perceived cultural oppression. Secondly, there is a deep-rooted feeling, bordering on conviction, among Muslims of being discriminated against in jobs and other employment facilities; not groundless in view of the government circulars that have come to light through disclosures in/parliament in 1977-78 regarding debarring of Muslim from certain jobs. Similar complaints have been found to be not untrue about Muslim applicants seeking licenses and loans. All this coupled with the fact of historical backwardness of a large part of the community and, perhaps, some downward nobility are perceived as economic oppression. Thirdly, the fact remains undisputed that an overwhelming number of handicraftsmen in this region are Urdu speaking Muslims. There is scattered evidence which suggests that over the years there has been a revival of this kind of economic activity due to middle eastern trade as well as the interest of foreign tourists in e.g. brassware, etc. As a consequence of this increase in trade and commerce, it is conceivable, as preliminary investigations suggest, that a commercial bourgeoisie of sorts has emerged from among

the more enterprising elements among Muslims. It is also perhaps not groundless that this section of the bourgeoisie is getting into greater economic competition with the established traders who happen to be non-Muslims. Given the strength of the communal ties, it seems that the Muslim traders have an easier access to the Muslim handicraftsmen and with their links with middle eastern trade have grown rather fast in business. If this evidence has any basis in fact then it is reasonable to infer that a bourgeois aspiration to grow and prosper has taken root among a section of the well-to-do Muslims. For an emergent bourgeoisie political unification of the community under its leadership provides a definite means of advancement. All this combines with the fact of the persistence of the hold of Muslim landlords over the Muslim masses. Here is, or can be, a potent combination of an emergent bourgeoisie in alliance with the traditional landed gentry playing up the oppression of Muslim masses to politically unify them under its leadership and using language, culture, economic discrimination and religious susceptibilities to weld the community on a competitive basis for furthering its own material interests. In this region of western U.P. given the interlocking of factors - Language, community, economy and politics - plus the historical memory of continuous riots since the 1920's, the possibility remains open of Muslims developing national/^{-ity} aspirations. To clarify : it is not being suggested that Muslims per se constitute a nation or a united community which would be a repetition of the unscientific theory of two nations which has been duly buried by the unfolding of history. The argument is only limited to the fact that in certain regions where there is an interlocking of factors, in a given contiguous territory, that historically have been potent in giving a people a distinct national awareness oppression, persecution, and discrimination have, or can, create incipient tendencies towards that. Such a tendency obviously cannot operate in all regions, i.e., like Kerala or Bengal or Tamil Nadu where language and cultural distinctions are absent. In these areas it can only lead to communalism or community-oriented politics. But crystallisation towards nationality orientations has a basis in regions like western U.P.

Further crystallisation towards a separate nationality awareness of its opposite tendency of assimilation in the larger nationality groups will be dependent upon how persecution-oppression works or is successfully combated in terms of the openings available for radical emancipation or major changes taking place in the material conditions of the people of this region.

In the larger context of India, the persistence of socio-economic backwardness of Muslim masses, the continuing hold of landed gentry wherever it exists, and the influence of emerging bourgeois elements will keep the communal problem alive. Reinforcement to this is constantly provided by Hindu communalism led by RSS. What is more dangerous in an immediate way is the inability or half-heartedness of, and deliberate neglect by, the state power to stop and control the riots which represent blatant attacks on the life and livelihood of common people. RSS and other forces of obscurantist militancy do seem to have a hand in riots but what is more ominous is the growing complementarity of interests between the otherwise secular sections of the ruling classes and the obscurantist forces in the persistence of communal (as also caste) riots. The objective complementarity is precisely due to the fact that if riots help the Muslim and Hindu sectarianism to grow they also divide the toiling people on communal lines. Communal divisions hamper the growth of radical possibilities and weaken chances of the people seizing the political initiative. Such divisions do not ^{seem to} matter to the so called secular elements among the ruling classes so long as their political leadership succeeds in aggregating the Muslim and Hindu sectarianism for purposes of political power. In the latest political sociology of riots one can discern an interesting pattern. If one coercive instrumentality of the state power indulges in killings—Moradabad— or if it deliberately neglects it—Bihar Sharif, etc.— then another coercive instrumentality of the same state power moves in to check it and bring it under control and reassures the victims of riots. The net result for the ruling classes is the paradox come true : we will have the cake and eat it too. The problem therefore is not just obscurantism and revivalism per se but the complicity of the ruling classes as well. The complicity is not merely one of passively allowing the persistence

of the socio-economic roots of communalism but also of active compromise, like at the time of partition or now as at the time of riots, with such forces for the sake of its material interests. Over and above everything else, the communal riots in India weaken and put a brake on the long-term secular tendency towards the regionalisation of Muslim masses. Instead, they have given rise to, I suspect, a creeping pan-Indian feeling of being Muslim among the masses.⁹⁰

Such processes of separate crystallisation, incipient and halting in case of Muslims, may have a stronger basis in the tribal belts today. In these areas, territorial contiguity of people and their cultural dissimilarity and linguistic differentiations get combined with a distinctive impact of modern capitalist forces. Due to this, the tribal belts today represent a much more direct aspect of the national question.

Some of the tribes in India have had a more definite and historically determined mode of existence than Muslims in general. They were also least disturbed during British rule and the subsequent development of capitalism. After early rebellions, British Administration took special care to treat them as protected areas and they were allowed to maintain separate institutions and laws nearer to their own traditions and ethos. In spite of the protective laws the tribes could not be kept totally immune both from the impact of the developments of market forces and money commodity relations and the inroads of British administration, modern communications - roads, railways, post and telegraph -, some educational expansion, etc. The impact was delayed and slower but nevertheless it slowly incorporated the tribal economies into the market forces and administrative networks and continues ever since then giving rise to new social forces in the tribal society. Three major influences have been noted; first, the breakdown of the communal mode of production; secondly, limited development of commodity production especially through forest products like lac, timber, etc.; and thirdly, the entry of merchants and moneylenders and the consequent intensification of exploitation.⁹¹ Land grabbing by the process of alienation through money-lending went hand in hand

throughout the period and continues now.⁹² With the "restricted transfer of land from tribals to non-tribals" and between the tribals themselves like the chiefs and the upper stratum there "grew up a rich stratum" within the tribal society.⁹³ Hardly any section of the tribals except some few at the top gained anything out of this development. Even in tribal regions rich in natural resources, like the Jharkhand region, where considerable industrialisation has occurred, tribals have hardly been the beneficiaries;⁹⁴ they failed even to gain entry into working class except as lowly paid unskilled workers. In fact, the data suggest a situation of continuous pauperisation without even the marginal effects at lower levels of entry into working classes etc. as in other non-tribals regions where modern industry grew. It is a fact that in new industries, including the ones in public sector, the proportion of blue and white collar workers has increased in relation to the unskilled categories. This means that the employment prospects are bleaker among the less educated social groups including tribals. The cumulative effect of all these developments was a disturbance of the internal harmony or rhythm of tribal life and a deep-rooted suspicion of outsiders and the modern networks. Unlike in other regions, the absence of even a numerous indigenous middle class - the spokesmen and beneficiaries of capitalism - worked as an impediment on the slow integration of these areas with the rest of the society. It is only in the case of "tribals" both in the bordering regions as well as in the interior of the country that one discerns all the distinguishing features of an oppressed nationality without there being any oppressor nationality.

Relative isolation, intense exploitation and a sense of deliberate neglect and discrimination coupled with a different mode of existence has put in motion a tendency towards the crystallisation of feeling, among them, of a group with distinct national composition. Rise of tribal movements among these people have helped them to come closer and many sub-tribes are in the process of assimilation into distinct overarching tribal identities. Evidence from Jharkhand seems to point to such a process.⁹⁵ Attempts are also being made to develop a distinct language or languages.⁹⁶ Through a different

configuration of circumstances and historical events a similar process has been occurring among tribes of North-Eastern-India⁹⁷ and the political content of this struggle, as well as its handling by state power in India has generated, to borrow a term, a "parallel nationalism" among some of these tribal groups.

Capitalism, in alliance with rural vested interests, is bound to intensify exploitation and alongwith it the sense of persecution and oppression. Situations of this sort provide an opportunity to the newly arisen bourgeoisie or the educated strata with bourgeois aspirations from among the indigenous groups of these ethnic communities to unite the people under their leadership to wrest concessions for themselves. Bourgeoisie, or bourgeois elements from among the emergent groups with its allies, either captures the cultural movements of the people or builds them up by involving the people, and diverts them into directions which pits them against people of another nationality. By such tactics the sense of oppression among the people is heightened but the source of oppression remains disguised. Nevertheless an objective basis for the consolidation of people as different from others is created. Oppression, and the sense of it, welds people together and separates them from others. Lenin's observation on certain similar situations is relevant here : that "oppression welded" people together and "separated" them from others.⁹⁸ A moribund capitalism accentuates differences and is incapable of amalgamating differences in a natural process. Such was the case in the period of progressive capitalism in Europe. This process of amalgamation of pre-existing groups with national features into larger nations led Engels to refer to them as non-historic or non-viable nations. Engels was referring to a tendency of the expansive capitalism that was breaking down national barriers represented by small national groups some of which were being assimilated through a natural process into the great, and what became the viable, European nations. Unfortunately, this has led some writers like Michael Lowy⁹⁹ to question the very terms Engels had employed as "un-Marxist" on the ground that these are metaphysical. Unfortunate because the reason that seem to have led Lowy to do so is based on careless analysis. His logic too seem to be only about semantics and therefore not historical.

This is due to looking at the language describing a process as language concerned with concepts with definite meanings once-for-all. Engels was looking at a process whereby groups with national characteristics were being amalgamated into other groups with related national features within which new and massive productive forces had been released. This was the process whereby the historic (de-facto) nations of Europe were created. To analytically grasp this process Engels employed a language out of the existing vocabulary and terms to call those "nations" that got established as historic and those that disappeared as "non-historic". The process was still on and therefore Engels prognosticated about certain other nations that may similarly disappear in view of the ongoing capitalist process of expansion which was amalgamating people in terms of their natural sympathies and language. Lowy, I find, reduces and transforms the descriptive language of Engels into that of definite concepts as in logic or model building. Hence the discovery of metaphysics where there is none. On the other hand, the inaccuracy of Engel's predictions where they concerned the specific nations, of which an unnecessary lot has been made by Lowy, which did not disappear from history but crystallised into separate stable entities does not point to any fallacy in the method employed by Engels. It is only indicative of the indeterminacy of any socio-political process in the short run.

Today because of the retarded and politically divisive nature of capitalism in the third world countries a similar process cannot operate on its own force, unless and until left forces as agents of history can decisively intervene. On the contrary, the tendency would be for these groups referred to by Engels as non-historic to crystallise into separate distinct national groups and to demand separation from the original national groups within which they have an unstable existence. It is important here to recall Stalin who remarked that in the event of major developments "in India scores of hitherto unknown nationalities, each with its own language and its own distinct culture, will emerge on the scene."¹⁰⁰ The tendency in areas where tribal concentrations exist in contiguous regions will be one of separate

crystallisation of these hitherto ethnic groups. So long as the left movement is weak in these areas the tendency also may be one of chauvinistic articulations and as Lenin so clearly foresaw, "opportunism in the national question will of course find expression among oppressed nations otherwise than among oppressor nations".¹⁰¹ But chauvinism in itself cannot be a ground to deny the "historical legitimacy" of these movements even when one has to politically combat them. It only provides grounds to oppose those movements and the ground is as sound as the one when the left opposes mass movements with fascist trappings. It is also important here not to get caught in questions of whether the people behind these movements are already crystallised into nations or not in terms of the rigid criteria of what constitutes nations¹⁰² but it will be useful politically to treat them as part of what constitutes our national question.¹⁰³ Such a position has its pit falls too. It is never easy to know before hand all the possible relations between the struggles of toiling masses and the forms that the national urges of such people take, caught as they are in the whirlpools of capitalist upheaval. It is only in the sphere of political activity that one can hope to get clues to overcome such difficulties.

VI

To conclude : this paper has been more in the nature of an exploratory exercise; both methodologically and in terms of substantive issues. There are a number of questions which have not been touched at all; viz. the separatist movements in regions like Telangana or similar stirrings in Marathwada or Vidharba, etc., or the question of national minorities in different national regions. Certain other issues have been dealt with very briefly and in a somewhat tentative manner; notably the communal and tribal questions where considerable empirical work as well as problem clarification is badly needed. What I have attempted to do is to see : (1) why is the national question, at all, relevant today ? and (2) How should one approach it ?

As for as the first question is concerned, the foregoing analysis has pointed to certain historical forces which lead to two inescapable conclusions. First, a self-perpetuating regional unevenness, both before and after independence, often indentified with national boundaries provides a major cue to the more manifest national problems in India. By an extension of this logic, even within a state, when this unevenness coincides with a series of contiguous districts made up of distinct population compositions or with historically distinct regions it complicates the problem by giving rise to separatist aspirations or nationality claims. Here, in these backward regions, where the Bengal-Maharashtra pattern of development has not been gone through, it can be a peoples upsurge for identity-possibly national identity. The diverse manifestations are caused by diverse sets of factors -- interrelations and respective salience varying regionally. Nevertheless, the key question is : how does one unify these with a number of heterogenous democratic movements which are Pan-Indian in character. To come to the second point, it is important to look at it through capitalist transformations in the third world countries in this era of imperialism. Capitalism has become not only a moribund force all over, but in the third world its growth and expansion has also been marked by retardation and distertions. All this has radically altered the social implications of capitalist transformation. It has resulted in a perpetuation and aggravation of pre-existing social divisions in society along with the creation of new ones. By the fact of these, it does not any longer unify and amalgate people but divides them and generates separatist tendencies and aspirations. Concrete manifestations of this display a confusing variety and complexity of forms making analysis a really challenging task.

But all this is taking place in a situation relatively free of national domination or identifiable oppressor nations. Moreover, imperialism in crisis to maintain or strengthen its stranglehold over the third world tries to weaken and divide modern states and use them for reactionary ends. The divisive national urges of small nations today are in general not progressive. Without however renouncing self-determination in principle but treating it merely as

contingent, the basic task today should be to unify and strengthen the unity of diverse national and ethnic groups vis-a-vis imperialism and internal reactionary manipulations. The principle of national-state autonomy and decentralisation and devolution within autonomous units provide the basis to wage struggle to build and reinforce unity.

As far as the question concerning the approach is concerned, the nature of capitalist transformation seems to me to be the most important theoretical dimension for situating any discussion of this problem in the perspective of historical time. Its importance is considerable and its neglect may lead to serious problems of identification and specification. This is what makes it theoretical. The nature of capitalist incorporation and the subsequent content of developments in what has now become the third world has led to a situation where social forms have emerged before the maturity of the elements that constitute a social reality. Immaturity of elements — one or more — that constitute a social reality, for example a nation, can become the cause of controversies about the identification and naming of that reality quo reality. Concretely, in our case, on the continuum of national crystallisation, the language or culture or whatever else may not reach maturation before a people insist upon or force recognition as a nationality; other contingent factors being in favourable combination. To elucidate : the use of the term retarded capitalism points to an organic analogy — but, to caution, only as an analogy. Like in a living body, so here too, retarded growth ipso facto implies underdevelopment or absence of maturation of certain organs and/or elements of a system. This should mean, in other words, that in many cases today all that came to characterise a nation may not reach maturity or be present in their fullness. But, by the fact of this, any analytical refusal to recognise them as such will be a case of gross historical error.

within such a situation, variations in the indeterminacy of factors between regions or nations may be wide but variability (range of variations) is determinable. Therefore, even though, identification as well as generalisations of empirical patterns may pose problems yet broad theoretical formulations may be possible; such that can facilitate understanding and guide research. But the theoretical formulations cannot be deduced from or predicated upon previously set meanings of terms or categories nor upon received, and somewhat ossified, ways of viewing reality. It seems to me imperative to confront afresh the social world of nations, nationalities and national crystallisation in all the variations of their attributes in terms of the dialectical presuppositions of the Marxist method and the class and national cues available in the writings of Lenin. Within the range of my readings, I feel convinced that the writings of Lenin on this problem remain seminal. ¹⁰⁴

Footnotes

1. A detailed study of the patterns of growth and consolidation of national states in Europe is available in Charles Tilly (ed.), The Formation of National States in Europe (Princeton, 1975).
2. For a comprehensive, though slightly tendentious, summary of the debate then see Michael Lowy, "Marxists and the National Question", New Left Review, No.96, March-April 1976, pp.81-100.
3. "Dominant / Oppressor" and "Oppressed" as terms are used in a specific sense where one nation within a multi-national state comes to enjoy overwhelming privileges. It represents an interlocking of economic, political, cultural and linguistic factors in terms of which one nation comes to subjugate and exploit a number of other nations like Tsarist Russia then or Pakistan, prior to Bangla Desh, more recently.
4. Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-determination"; all references to Lenin and Stalin are from a compilation Selections from V.I. Lenin and J.V. Stalin On National Colonial Question, Calcutta Book House, 1975; p.23. Henceforth referred to as Selections.
5. Ibid., p.19.
6. Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Questions", Selections, p.2.
7. Ibid., p.9 (Emphasis in Original).
8. Ibid., p.9 (Emphasis in Original).
9. Lenin. "The Discussion on National Question summed up", Selection, p.44.
10. Ibid., p.50.
11. Lenin, "Right of Nations to Self-determination", Selections, p.19.
12. Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question", Selections, p.9.
13. Lenin questioned a specific stand of Marx on the question of Poland when circumstances changed; he did on exactly the same criteria Marx had employed earlier; "Right of Nations to Self-determination", Selections, p.25.

14. The three types, according to Lenin, are : first, the advanced capitalist countries -- western Europe and United States -- where progressive bourgeois national movements came to an end long ago. Secondly, countries of Eastern Europe -- Austria, the Balkans and Tsarist Russia where the bourgeois democratic national movements emerged in twentieth century leading to national struggle. It was here that the right of nations to self-determination was both a part of the struggle against national oppression and a weapon to unite the proletariat of both the oppressor & oppressed nations. Thirdly, all the colonies and semi-colonies where the bourgeois democratic revolutions had begun and the precise forms that these were to take were till then not quite clear. In respect to these, liberation from colonial bondage meant nothing other than self-determination. See his "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations", Selections, p.37-38.
15. Ibid., p.29 n. (emphasis in original).
16. On this point Barun De makes some very insightful observations. He makes the critical point that for all their progressive content none of these movements really went beyond a particular religious community and therefore their sweep, as he right observes, was not the entire society. The creation of a new social unity on secular foundations like in western Europe was beyond their scope; this, I feel, was the critical discriminating feature of European renaissance. See his "A Historiographical Critique of Renaissance Analogues for Nineteenth Century India", in Barun De ed. Perspectives in social science I : Historical dimensions. (Oxford, Calcutta, 1977) pp. 178-218. See also E. Chelyshev, "On the Question of India's Cultural Unity and the literary process in India" in New Indian Studies By Soviet Scholars (USSR Academy of Sciences 1976), p.82-92 where he refers to these and similar movements as "ideology of enlightenment" (p.88) or "typologically partly similar to Renaissance culture" (p.86); etc.
17. While being progressive and protestant these movement had, I feel, a very strong non-rational aspect as well. Unlike the European protestant movements which gave centrality to individual understanding and conscience, the bhakti movements in India preached a total surrender to ones personal god or "Guru". This aspect of the bhakti movement has been referred to as "regressive" by Miharranjan Ray in his Nationalism in India, (Aligarh, 1973), p. 38-39.
18. For Example, Miharranjan Roy finds that by fourteenth century most of the Indian languages were formed, see, Ibid., p.14-32.
19. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, The National Question in Kerala, PFI, Bombay, 1952 p.53-58.

20. Irfan Habib, "Emergence of Nationalities", Social Scientist, 37, August 1975, p.18.
21. Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question", Selections, p.9.
22. Ibid., p.10 emphasis added.
23. Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-determination", Selections, p.19.
24. Ibid., p.26, Emphasis Added.
25. Ibid., p.22.
26. Irfan Habib, op.cit., p.14-20.
27. Ibid., p.16.
28. Ibid., p.16, Emphasis Added.
29. Ibid., p.18.
30. EMS Namboodiripad, op.cit.
31. Ibid., p.53-58.
32. Ibid., p.59.
33. Ibid., p.59, emphasis added.
34. Ibid., p.59.
35. The literature on the problem is considerable; both for and against. For a sample see R.P. Dutta, India Today, 1947, for the view that India was well on the way towards a capitalist revolution. The opposite view is best represented in Irfan Habib's, "Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Moghul India", Enquiry, N.S., Vol.VIII, No.3.
36. See Engels preface to Capital Vol. III, p.13.
37. Ibid., p.13-14, ^{in the} emphasis added, that is what Engels wrote to show how errors creep in/understanding Marx if one makes "the false assumption that Marx wishes to define where he only investigates". Ibid., p.13.

38. Lenin, "The Discussion on Self-determination summed Up", Selections, p.46, emphasis added.
39. For an extremely well researched and incisive analysis of the ways in which Marx uses his term and concept in the course of building his arguments, see the brilliant work by Bertell Ollman, Alienation; Marx's Concept of Man in Capitalist Society, (Cambridge, 1971), esp. part I
40. Partha Chatterjee, "Bengal : Rise and Growth of a Nationality", Social Scientist, op.cit., p.67-82.
41. Ibid., p.67-82.
42. Ibid., p.68.
43. Ibid., see note 3., p.81.
44. Ibid., note 3, p.81.
45. Cheng Chih-i, "A Discussion of The National Question in the Chinese Revolution and of Actual Nationalities Policy (draft)" in George Mosely ed. & trans., The Party and the National Question in China, (MIT Press, Massachusetts, 1966) p.36.
46. Ibid., p.34.
47. Ibid., p.36.
48. Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question", Selections, p.69.
49. Ibid., p.70.
50. Ibid., Selections, p.73. emphasis added.
51. Stalin, "Theses on the immediate tasks of the Party in connection with the National Problem", Selections p.124. (emphasis added).
52. Lenin, "Right of Nations to self-determination", selections, p.14, (emphasis added).
53. Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question", Selections, p.6. (emphasis added). The second tendency that Lenin talks off has to do with "the development and growing frequency of international intercourse in every form, the break-down of national barriers, the creation of the international unity of capital, of economic life in general, of politics, science, etc." ibid.

54. The debate on the possibilities of development of capitalism in India has gone on. Without going into details, my position, tentatively, is to go along with Irfan Habib "Potentialities of capitalist development in the Economy of Mughal India", Enquiry NS, Vol.III. No.3.
55. For a discussion on this see Irfan Habib, "Colonization of the Indian Economy 1757-1900" Social Scientist, Vol.III, No.8, March 1975, p.23-53.
56. Amiya Kumar Bagchi, Private Investment in India; 1900-1939, Cambridge, 1972, Ch.I, pp.3-24, also p.424.
57. A.I. Lewkowsky, Capitalism in India : Basic Trends in its Development, PPH. Bombay, 1966, p.45.
58. Irfan Habib, "Colonization of Indian Economy, 1757-1900" Op.Cit., p. 42-44.
59. V. Pavlov, "Indias Socio-Economic structure from the 18th to Mid-20th Century", in V. Pavlov, V. Rastyannikov, and G. Shirokov, India : Social and Economic development, Progress Publications, Moscow, 1975, p.78.
60. Ibid., p.23-24.
61. Amiya Kumar Bagchi, "Reflections on Patterns of Regional Growth in India during the period of British Rule", Occasional Paper No.5, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1976 published in Bengal Past and Present, Vol. XCV, Part 1, No.180, January-June, 1976) p. 28-33; all references to page nos. here and later are from the Occasional Paper. See also his, "De-industrialisation in India in the Nineteenth Century : some Theoretical Implications", Journal of Development Studies, Vol. 12, No.2, 1976.
62. Sukomal Sen, Working Class of India : History of Emergence and Movement, 1830-1970, (Bagchi, Calcutta 1977).
63. Bagchi, "Reflections on the pattern of Regional Growth in India during the Period of British Rule", Op.Cit., p.51, for details see section V of the paper.
64. Bagchi, Private Investment in India, op.cit., p.434.
65. Ibid., p.434.
66. Ibid., p.433-37.

67. Shirokov, "Industrialisation and the Changing Pattern of India's social and Economic System, in India : Social and Economic development, op.cit.,
68. Bagchi, "Reflections on the Pattern of Regional Growth in India during the Period of British Rule", op.cit., 51.
69. Ajit Roy, "Some Aspects of the National Question in India", Marxist Review, Vol. I, No.41, October 1967.
70. Communist Party of India (Marxist), "Note on the National Question", Adopted by the 9th Congress, Madurai, 1972. It states : "there is no compelling reason why it should be obligatory to insert this slogan in our programme, and that, too, when we cannot postulate the division of Indian nationalities into what are called oppressor and oppressed, and when the big bourgeois-landlord Government on the one hand and several chauvinist and jingoist groups - in different nationalities on the other are endangering working class unity by fostering separatist and disruptive forces, thus pushing into the forefront of the proletarian party the foremost task of fighting against these trends", p.102.
71. Barun De, "Complexities in the Relationships between Nationalism, Capitalism and Colonialism" in Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya ed. History and Society : Essays in Honour of Professor Miharranjan Ray (Bagchi, Calcutta, 1976) pp.479-512, see esp. p.496-500.
72. Miharranjan Ray, Op.Cit., p. 10.
73. Barun De, Op.Cit., p.499, emphasis added.
74. This is what Marx observes about them : "in their minds they do not get beyond the limits which the latter do not get beyond in life, they are consequently driven, theoretically, to the same problems and solutions to which the material interest and social position drive the latter practically. This is, in general, the relationship between the political and literary representatives of a class and the class they represent". Karl Marx, "Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" in Marx and Engels, Selected Works in Three Volumes; see p.423-24, Vol.I.
75. Lenin, "The Right of Nations to self determination, Selections, op.cit., p, 14, emphasis added.
76. It is interesting to note have that the leading members of the Indian bourgeoisie organised in FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry) have always felt alarmed with whatever they thought would strengthen regional or state forces. It is revealing that even a decade after the formation of linguistic states they had not reconciled to the aspirations of linguistic groups. In 1969 the President of FICCI

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moving the "Resolution on National Integration and Business Community" remarked that the two most serious constitutional and administrative blunders committed by the Indian state are : first, the adoption of a federal constitution and having done that it way secondly, a serious mistake to have reorganised the federating units into linguistic states, see Proceeding of the 42 and Annual Session (March 15-17, 1969, New Delhi) p. 47-48.

77. This is how the main communist party in India CPI(M), looks at the problem : "The mere repetition of the slogan of self-determination of nations and nationalities which, of course, includes the right of secession, is tautamout to a concession to the disruptive forces of narrow nationalism and Chauvinism, instead of organising, educating and mobilising the working class against all such forces in the true spirit of Indian unity and proletarian internationalism" CPI(M), "Note on the National Question", op.cit., p.100; emphasis added.
78. See Note 15 above.
79. Prabhat Patnaik, "Current Inflation in India", social Scientist, Vol.3, Nos.6-7, January February 1975, p.27-32.
80. Among others, see, Prakash Karat, "Theoretical Aspects of National Question", social Scientist, 57, April 1977, p.13.
81. Prakash Karat, Language and Nationality Politics in India (Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1973) see Ch.I.
82. See among many others, Charles Bettelheim, India Independent (London, 1968) Ch.II and VIII; see also EMS Namboodiripad, The Economics and Politics of the Socialist Pattern in India/and calculation behind and the economic and social consequences of land reforms in India. P.C. Joshi's Land Reforms in India (Allied, Delhi 1975) contains a detailed survey of literature and has a very comprehensive bibliography.
83. A.K. Bagchi, "Relation of Agriculture to Industry in the Context of South Asia", Frontier, Vol.8, Nos.22&24, October 4 - October 18, 1975, p. 13, emphasis added.
84. In the case of Bengal, Partha Chatterjee shows how the turns and twists at the level of constitutional politics were related to the specific nature of demands of Muslim peasantry. See his "Bengal Politics and The Muslim Masses, 1920-1947", Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics (forthcoming).

85. On this point see, among others, Peter Hardy, The Muslims of British India (Cambridge 1972) esp. ch.9, "The two partitions : of British India and of the Muslim community" p.222-225.
86. See, G. Adhikari, Pakistan and National Unity (PPH, Bombay, 1944); or P. Sundrayya : Vishal Andhra (PPH, Bombay, 1946) where he bluntly asked the congressmen as to why they refuse to accept the demand of Muslims in Baluchistan, Panjab, Sind and Bengal when they could accept the demand of the Andhara nation. It is interesting that Bengal and Punjab on the one hand and Baluchistan and Sind on the other are clubbed together.
87. See Peter Hardy, op.cit., p.251-252.
88. See, in this connection, Junit Sarkar, "Popular Movements, National Leadership And the Coming of Freedom with Partition (1945-1947)", (Memoographed, Paper submitted at a seminar on Aspects of The Economy, Society and Politics in Modern India, 1900-1950, December 1980, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi).
89. Prabhat Patnaik, "Imperialism and Growth of Indian Capitalism" in Burt Sutoliff and Roger Owen, Studies in the theory of Imperialism (Longman, London, 1972), also published in Robin Blackburn ed. Explosion in the sub-continent (Pelican, 1975) and Mathew Curien ed. India - State and Society : A Marxist Approach (1975)
90. The position adopted here is different from that of Irfan Habib, "Problems of the Muslim Minority in India" Social Scientist, June 1976, as well as in Suneet Chopra's rejoinder to him under the same title in Social Scientist, September 1976. Habib assumes that given a variety of factors - historical as well as contemporaneous - and the fact of converse "psychological make-up" they already constitute a pan-Indian community. In contrast to this Suneet Chopra while rightly, perhaps, questioning a sense of such a community feels that given the heterogeneity of factors cultural, linguistic, etc. - such a sense of community cannot emerge. Such a view ignores the crucial role of politics, particularly the sociology of riots, in generating such tendencies among Muslims which go to negate the long-term secular tendency towards regionalisation.
91. See, K.S. Singh, "Colonial Transformation of tribal society in Middle India", Economic and Political weekly, Vol. XIII, No.30, July 29, 1978, p. 1227. The word 'Diku' signifying outsider-exploiter emerged around this time. Ibid., p. 1227.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid., p.1227-8.

94. See, Nirmal Sengupta, "Class and Tribe in Jharkhand", Economic and Political Weekly, (Vol.XV, No.14, April 5, 1980. pp.664-71.
95. Ibid., p.665.
96. Ibid., p.665.
97. See, Shibani Winkar Chaube, Sunil Munsri and Amalendu Guha, "Regional development and the National Question in Northeast India", Social Scientist, 37, pp.40-66; see also, Udayon Misra, "The Naga National Question", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XIII, No.14, April 8, 1978, pp.618-24.
98. Lenin, "Right of Nations to Self-determination", Selections, p.31.
99. Michael Lowy, op.cit., p.83-85.
100. Stalin, "The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East", Selections, p.181.
101. Lenin, "Right of Nations to Self-determination", Selections, p.20.
102. Harkishan Singh Surjeet in his recent well thought out attack on religious communalists and revivalists has ended up his polemics with a theoretical note on the national question. Two important dimensions are involved here. First, the efforts of these reactionary forces to divide the people both on popular issues and national grounds. The attack is both called for and sound. A group of people belonging to certain religious groups yet sharing the same language and culture and caught up in the same contradictions of capitalist development as others cannot be artificially separated in the name of religion and treated as nations or nationalities.

But, second, from this correct policy of opposing these forces to jump to a theoretical position and say that nothing else but Stalin's one definition - abstracted from many sided consequences of contemporary capitalist developments in the third world countries - provides the only basis in theory to Marxists is unwarranted - historically and logically.

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It is using, in my view, wrong arguments to defend a correct proletarian policy. It cannot provide, I feel, correct ideological underpinnings to mass movements. At its worst, it can create immense confusion among the ranks - confusion of a theological type when a revelation suffers obsolescence yet cannot be given up. Lenin's observation on Dutch & Swiss Comrades, on a different issue of imperialist war, has relevance here; in his "The Socialist Revolution and the Rights of Nations" Selections, n., p.37.

See Harkishan Singh Surjeet's series of four articles in Peoples Democracy of May 10, May 17, May 24, and May 31, 1981.

103. On this point see an extremely illuminating discussion in the context of the national question in China by Chang chih-i, Op.Cit., esp. p.32-38.
104. Sometime before the writing of this article I had the benefit of reading an extraordinarily insightful article by Eric Hobsbawm, "Some Reflections On the Break-up of Britain" New Left Review, 105, September-October 1977, p.3-23. I found it to be one of the more refreshing pieces of analysis, specific disagreements apart, on the problem of the national question. Although I could not cite it anywhere, it has influenced my thinking by the insights it gave me in making a number of my formulations. I acknowledge my debt to it. Secondly, one supposedly important work, supposedly because I have not been able to read it yet, A.M. Dyakov, The National Problem in India Today, was not available to me. Unfortunately, I am not in a position to say where my analysis diverges or tallies with his. I postponed finalising this draft hoping to get hold of a copy. I could not. This I hope will not prove to be too serious a set-back.

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SHIBANI KINKAR CHAUBE
18. বাংলা সংবাদ-সাময়িক পত্রে বার্তাচিত্রের ব্যবহার, ১৮১৮-১৮৫৮ (Use of Punctuation Marks in the Bengali Journalistic Prose, 1818-1858)
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19. The Medieval Northeast India: Polity, Society and Economy, 1200-1750 A.D. (forthcoming in *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. I)
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20. The Colonialist Premise in the British Occupation of Bengal: Contributions by Clive and Pitt the Elder, during 1757-59 (*Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Bhubaneswar, 1977)
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