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Occasional Paper No. 45

THE INDIAN NATIONAL QUESTION :  
A CONCEPTUAL FRAME

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Occasional Paper No. 45

The Indian National Question : A Conceptual Frame

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The Indian National Question :  
A Conceptual Frame\*

Amalendu Guha

I

As concepts, 'nation', 'nationality and 'nationalism' -- these defy any rigorous definition in terms of form and content. Various attempts at defining these terms have run into difficulties. Of the available definitions of a nation, for instance, one by Stalin appears to be so far the best. But this, too, is not fully satisfactory. The crucial factors contributing to the formation of a nation or nationality have not always been the same. Nor can these be so precisely enumerated as Stalin attempted to do.<sup>1</sup> The Swiss nation is multi-lingual, but not the German. Jewish nationalism had no actual territorial foothold or base to start with, while all other nationalisms had. As an event, however, the growth of nations/nationalities and nationalism relates necessarily and sufficiently to the modern world -- to the epoch of capitalism and its market formation process.<sup>2</sup> Nationalism could be unitary or federal in spirit, authoritarian or democratic, expansionist or self-contained, aggressive or defensive, depending on the specific circumstances of that process.

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The manifestation of national consciousness was first seen in the consolidated feudal monarchies of western Europe when these countries were involved in the process of eliminating feudalism and developing capitalism. The task before a rising capitalist class then was to get rid of its own country's restrictive feudal regime so that a free market, coextensive with a definite culturally-politically unified or unifiable territory, could be brought into existence with popular support. Generally, language -- a means of inter-dialectal communication -- emerged as a crucial factor for realizing such a market. Conditions of unification had to be created through collective will and conscious effort. For political ends, the rising bourgeois class made, or tended to make, its own people aware of their distinct cultural-political identity. It managed to invent suitable myths and used idioms and symbols to transform this identity consciousness into a powerful and purposive spiritual sentiment. This was nationalism. It helped the young bourgeois class to mobilize the people for conquest of state power. The national movement, it launched, pulled down feudal barriers. It led to the establishment of a nation-state and a free national market co-extensive with it, both needing continual protection from external pressures. The same process, with some variations, was also seen later in countries penetrated by colonialism; there the national movement primarily aimed at pulling down the colonial barriers for conquest of state power so that capitalist transformation of the relevant society could proceed unhindered. Thus, historically viewed, nationalism was, and continues to be, more than mere patriotism or love for one's own country.

In less developed and late-developing countries outside western Europe -- where economic backwardness and intermingled populations often remained a more formidable hindering factor -- the course of nationalism, though

basically the same, had other notable features. As in western Europe, here too, the drawing-out of peasants into the market and their mobilization -- however limited it might have been -- remained a major issue for the nationality formation process. But there was more of compromise with the feudal elements here; and a relatively larger initiative was left to the enlightened gentry and the bureaucracy. This resulted in a cult of authoritarianism, as one found in Prussia and Japan. In countries under foreign rule such as Poland, the anti-foreigner character of the national movement was often relatively more pronounced than its anti-feudal character. However, even in such countries, compromises and collaboration with colonialists were not altogether absent. Moreover, in a multi-ethnic situation, the development of nationalism acquired certain other features that were not common to the west-European model.

The varying roles played by the bourgeoisie, the gentry and the peasantry in the leadership and mobilization of the masses decided the nature and course of the movement. Even within a single long-drawn national movement, there could be, accordingly, different phases. In the case of Poland for instance, Lenin noted in 1914 :

German oppression has welded the Poles together and segregated them, after first awakening the nationalism of the gentry, then of the bourgeoisie, and finally of the peasant masses (especially after the campaign, the Germans launched in 1873 against the use of the Polish language in schools). Things are moving in the same direction in Russia, and not only with regard to Poland.<sup>3</sup>

Lenin, however, had no occasion to further elaborate his point; and, in his own life-time, there was a revival of the Polish gentry nationalism in its worst form. The opposite happened in Ukraine. In their struggle for nationality, language and 'Ukrainian' land, the peasants there were able to isolate the secessionist gentry and merge

their national movement into the workers' struggle for socialism and internationalism.

Peasant nationalism has attained new significance since then. No doubt, the stirring of the peasantry was due to a large-scale capitalist transformation. Yet such a concept is found useful for understanding the developments in China, Vietnam and several other third world countries, where the industrial bourgeois class had remained extremely weak -- weaker than in Poland or even India -- both before and during the declining phase of world capitalism. In such countries the nationalist reaction to feudalism and imperialism largely asserted itself not through the bourgeoisie, but through the numerous peasantry -- a peasantry firmly allied to the numerically weak industrial proletariat and other radical forces. Thus, nationalism, once a weapon of the rising capitalism, came in this form to the help of rising socialism. Where it did not as in South Korea and Taiwan, the concerned bourgeois had been able to take advantage of its strategic position in global politics for collaboration with Imperialism on the best possible terms.

Of whatever variety it may be, nationalism still continues to be a powerful ideology and emotion all over the world, its socialist parts not excluded. It is becoming increasingly clear that national conflicts, prejudices and exclusiveness even in socialist countries like Russia, China, Vietnam etc. will take time to wither away even after their economic base is gone. Indeed, once born, nationalism like caste outlook dies hard and persists at the super-structural level. Whether Timur is as much a national hero in Uzbek history as General Suborov is in Russian history, whether the outnumbering of the Kazakhs by Russians as citizens in the former's homeland, Kazakhstan, infringes their self-determination, or whether the recent exodus of Chinese settlers from Vietnam is indicative of national

With this general background in mind, we shall now discuss the development and nature of the Indian national question, highlighting some of its major features. It may be noted here that India is comparable more to East Europe than to West Europe in this respect.

## II

There was no nationalism or subjectively conscious nationality in pre-colonial India. Not that objective marks of identity (such as a common language, race, script, typical psychological make-up, belief-system etc.) indicating a territorialized community of culture were not there. Such things might have even been casually taken note of. The concept of Bhāratavarsha, extending from the Himalayas to the Seas (āsamudra-himāchala) and peopled by the descendants of Bhārata (Bhāratasantati), for example, was an ancient one that still persists in our heritage. Madhavadev, a 17th century Vaishnava saint of Assam, for an instance, even took pride in his birth in Bhāratavarsha in his Nāma-ghosā, a book of verses. But there was no term in any Indian language, in times ancient or medieval, that could convey the meaning of any of such terms as nation, nationality and nationalism. New terms had to be coined when the necessity was felt after the coming of the British, as Ravindranath Tagore pointed out long back.<sup>4</sup>

What about the regionalized communities of culture that were developing in medieval India and were found as crystallized units immediately before the British conquest? At the regional level, one could point out to the orientation of the Marathi people of the 17th-18th centuries to the concept of swarajya (own state) and, still earlier, to that of Maharashtra-dharma (a Marathi way of life and cod



of conduct). Similarly one could refer to the rise of the Sikh state. In fact, in 1952 E.M.S. Namboodripad did even talk of the formation of a 'nation' (?) in late medieval Kerala on the basis of its community of culture.<sup>5</sup> One could likewise project the feudal monarchy of Assam, where the Assamese had developed a distinct language, some kind of a sense of collective pride and a concept of traditional frontiers in course of their struggle against the 17th-century Mughal expansionists, as an embryonic nationality.<sup>6</sup> However, in the absence of germs of bourgeois formations, hardly did these communities then produce any ideology of nationalism with a focus on desirable structural transformation. They were not exposed to new productive forces, existing or anticipated. Hence, far from developing into nationalities, they underwent disintegration or stagnation.

What came out of the medieval regionalization process in India were clusters of objective identity marks (language, script etc.) that could have been used to distinguish regional-cultural communities from one another. But conscious efforts to that end were hardly visible. In contrast to bonds of kinship, (such as tribe, clan and caste) and religion, other identity marks remained dormant until the bourgeoisie of the 19th century picked them up to symbolize their people's territorywise unity in order to forge solidarity on that basis. They formulated a political programme, however limited and deceptive, with a focus on desirable structural changes, and they created mass sentiments in its favour. Needless to say that the concerned classes -- generally the bourgeois -- failed to percolate these sentiments on any substantial scale down to the grassroots of the peasantry, because of their limitations. Things began to somewhat change only with the rise of Gandhi leadership and the left parties after World War I.

In its own interest, the British rule unified India's remote and heretofore disparate parts through a network of railways and communications, a centralized administration and a widened market linked with the British industries. India's largely new, but yet unconsolidated bourgeoisie of diverse ethnic groups (engaged in trade and industry, as well as in professions and services) were all encouraged to collaborate with foreign capital and enterprise. However, the port-orientation and colonial alignment of the market network somewhat weakened and distorted the nationality formation process. At the sub-regional, regional and pan-Indian levels, the bourgeoisie were operating in a subordinate role. Nevertheless, by and large, they were objectively opposed to the foreign domination over the home market. For they, themselves, needed it for their own development. This oppositional role of theirs was not necessarily revolutionary in action. Neither was it consistently uncompromising. Throughout the early 19th century and, particularly, in 1857, when there was widespread organized resistance to Firangi (European) rule by the peasants and patriotic sections of the feudal class, neither these bourgeoisie nor other middle class elements did side with them. Rather they collaborated with the British on tactical considerations. They took the path of soliciting an increasing share of the market and local political power through a peaceful and constitutional movement. This movement attained a degree of militancy, punctuated with occasional outbursts of revolutionary terrorism during the early twentieth century.

On the whole, the Indian bourgeoisie continued to give expression to their discontent against the British rule and highlight the unity of the Indian people in their struggle against it. This is how the two major concepts of Indian nationalism -- swaraj and swadeshi -- evolved in course of the foreign capitalist penetration. Despite compromises and tactical collaboration, this ideology and

programme of political and economic emancipation remained, on the whole, anti-imperialist; though not anti-feudal to the same extent. Militant peasant struggles, anti-feudal as well as anti-colonial, and the bourgeois's then concern for the progressive realization of swaraj and swadeshi -- these did not mix well. This was because the men in trade, industries, professions and services were some way or other, themselves linked with the network of feudal and colonial exploitation of the peasantry.

Put into the melting pot of colonial oppression, the diverse ethnic elements came closer to each other than in pre-British times. A process of bourgeois class formation, transcending barriers of caste, religion and tribe, started. Through the alchemy of this intermingling process, however limited under the colonial constraints, there appeared simultaneously two streams of national consciousness. One pan-Indian; and the other, regional. The former was professedly based on observed pan-Indian homogeneities of culture -- such as a common all-India tradition and history, economic life and psychological make-up and the accepted unifying role of Sanskrit, Persian, English and Hindustani by turn - and also calculations of advantages of an India-wide market. The other consciousness was professedly based on the relevant region's distinctive homogeneities and demands for substantial or exclusive control by the sons of the soil over its resources and market facilities. In both cases what was said to have been observed and was professed, could have been even based on mere myths. But myths do have a role in promoting nationalism and did not drop from the sky. The two processes, respectively linked with the yet unconsolidated big bourgeois and regional small bourgeois interests, more often than not complemented each other; and despite conflicts, they tended to merge. An average Indian of the upper and middle classes identified himself at ease with both. During the latter half of the 19th century, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay of Bengal, Mahadeo Govinda Ranade of Maharashtra and Anandaram Thekival-Phukan of Assam -- they all articulated

this duality of our national consciousness, which cuts across all narrow community feelings based on creed, caste or other kinship affinities.<sup>7</sup>

Class forces at work behind this two-level articulation of nationalism need a further explanation. Because of uneven developments, the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie (consisting of traders, mill-owners, professionals, bureaucrats etc.) of certain regions and ethnic origins were more capable than their counterparts in other regions and other ethnic groups, in the matter of seizing the limited business and job opportunities in an open India-wide market. Hence they stood, in general, for an ideology that would uphold a unitary nation-state, more or less modelled on the British practice. There was however no immediate open conflict with the relatively retarded bourgeoisie of the backyards; the latter were just coming up and were yet to articulate their grievances effectively. Bounded by Moderate constitutionalism at all levels, the bourgeois aspirations did not yet provide scope for such open conflicts either. From its birth in 1885 till about the turn of the century, the National Congress continued to deliberate exclusively on subjects deemed to have an all-India importance. Until then the national ideology was, by and large, secular and modernist; but its anglicized values had limited application and relevance to the Indian realities. The vision of a united India, to quote a historian, was 'fragile and superficial' throughout the 19th century.<sup>8</sup>

Deeper below at the regional level, there were not only forces of regional-linguistic nationalism, but also a parallel trend of pan-Indian Hindu and Muslim revivalisms, respectively feeding themselves to some extent on the myths of an Aryan past and a pan-Islamism. The utter lack of concern for a federal scheme, universal adult suffrage and regional autonomy in the projected vision of one India soon ran into difficulties ~~in the~~ early in the 20th century. For,

without such provisions hardly could the aspirations of the regional bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry be accommodated in their respective regions, the Muslim-majority ones included. The form of polity that was conceived by the early nationalists did not thrive on the given realities of life. It only anticipated the market aspirations of the embryonic big bourgeoisie of India, not of the regional middle and small bourgeoisie.

The challenge from regional nationalism was not felt much before 1917. But the challenge from an Islamic revivalism, no less than that of the Hindu revivalism, was increasingly felt, still earlier since about 1905. Spearheaded by the Muslim League, this reaction crystallised into a parallel proto-nationalism that aimed at maximizing political advantages for the Indian Muslims, not only through ideas of federal decentralization and other such secular means, but also through separate communal electorates parallelly built into the political system. It was an attempt at artificially dividing the people according to 'national' curiae. These seeds of divisiveness, fertilized by British patronage, later germinated by 1940 into the concept of a separate state/states for the Indian Muslims in contiguous territories, where they formed a majority and whereto Muslims of other parts of India could gravitate. We call this Muslim reaction proto-nationalism, since it also tended to overcome casteism, localism and even pan-islamism in its own sphere and tried to project the Indian Muslims as an India-wide distinct community of culture, gravitating to a defined homeland and language (i.e. Urdu). The 19th century Aligarh Movement had, in a way contributed towards this trend. The Hindu reaction helped it crystallize. Pakistan was born. Later, the emergence of Bangladesh by way of splitting Pakistan in 1971 on a linguistic basis, showed how false the concept of a nation based on religion was and what dangers the religious exclusiveness and separatism were fraught with.

Under such stresses and strains, the dominant platform of the Indian bourgeoisie, the Congress, gradually realized that the Indian realities - its many languages, two major belief-systems, many tribes, imperialist intrigues and, above all, weak bourgeois formations -- did not fit well into the 'Island' model that had been emulated. From around 1917 or so, they began to increasingly appreciate the advantages of having autonomous linguistic units within a federal structure. This appreciation and the concerns for peasant mobilization and for Indian languages spoken by them, were associated as much with pressures from below as with the phenomenal rise of Gandhiji's leadership within the Congress movement. In form and content, Indian nationalism remained, by and large, federal in spirit since then. The concept of linguistic states struck its roots firmly by 1931 when the Congress Declaration of Rights was adopted. India's multinationality (many-nationality composition) was indeed recognised by the Indian Constitution, implicitly if not explicitly, through the provisions for fairly autonomous linguistic states and Sixth Schedule tribal areas, with the scope of further constitutional adjustments in Centre-State relations in their favour, under the pressure of popular struggles for a consistent democracy.

### III

The brief outline, as given above, suggests that after a false start and drift for years, the Congress was forced to take note of the complexities of the nationality formation process and make gestures to accommodate regional aspirations within the frame of a united India. Other political parties, barring those having an anchorage in religion and revivalist values, had also more or less the same approach. Although this change of outlook failed to arrest

the Muslim League-sponsored separatism and eventual creation of Pakistan, it succeeded in maintaining the territorial unity of the rest of India. Constitutional provisions that were adopted to deal with India's national question were amended from time to time with a view to extending regional autonomy. The amendments were in fact concessions wrested from the big bourgeoisie by the people through their democratic struggles at the regional level. Indian constitutional provisions in respect to national question were indeed somewhat influenced by the Soviet practice. This happened despite basic differences in the two countries' structures of economy and polity and in the historical circumstances, respectively antecedent to their nationality formation processes.

The Russian national process could be traced back at least to the 17th century when its bourgeois formations began to appear. It attained maturity by the late 19th century and was continually associated not only with a pan-slavonic movement but also with a colonializing thrust -- west, south and east of the Russian homeland. In reaction to this thrust, many subjugated peoples also attained their respective national consciousnesses. The Czarist Empire was indeed a prison-house of oppressed nationalities. The Russians were dominant in it not only numerically, but also politically, economically and culturally. They were an oppressor nation and others, oppressed nations and nationalities. Hence, in the democratic struggle against State power symbolized by the Czar, the unity of nations/nationalities that was built had to be based on the recognition of a right to self-determination (i.e. secession), not ~~just~~ demands for autonomy only.

Also a prison-house of nationalities, India presented somewhat a different situation during the 19th-20th centuries when its nationalities were taking shape in course of their capitalist transformation and democratic struggles against British imperialism. None of these nationalities was in an overall dominant position vis-a-vis the others. Big and small, they forged their unity in struggle and strengthened it by invoking from their common past, eco-symbols of emotional integration and shared cultural values. The basis of this unity was neither religion, nor a concern for regional self-determination with a right to secede, but an urge to achieve a free, united India on the basis of autonomy and consistent democracy. This had to be so since the Indian big bourgeoisie wanted an unfettered India-wide home market and hence would mobilize country-wide popular support towards this end only on such terms.

The point needs a little more elaboration. The Russians constituted more than 43 per cent the population of the Czarist Empire, as they still do (now 53 per cent) in the USSR. This weight of numbers was one important facet of their dominance. The Hindusthani (Hindi and Urdu) speakers in India now account for some 43 per cent of India's total population, and hence their numerical importance is apparently comparable to that of the Russians in their own Union. However, in the matter of developing a unifying culture and literature, the Hindusthanis, unlike the Russians still remain far behind the country's other smaller (but more consolidated) nationalities. This continues to be so despite the flowering of Urdu for a while in the past and the use of Urdu in Roman script as a common language in the erstwhile British-Indian army (and also in Subhaschandra Bose's Indian National Army). In fact, the nationality formation process amongst the Hindusthanis, and for that matter also amongst the Punjabis, has remained extremely halting, weak and problematic, as compared to the process in



some non-Hindusthani regions. This is because of the relatively late penetration of capitalist market forces and lesser intensity of capitalist transformation in the Hindusthani-speaking regions, and for other reasons. It is not yet clear whether the Hindusthanis are emerging as a single unified nationality or as several such nationalities. In any case, attempts at promoting Hindusthani (written both in Devanagari and Urdu scripts, or in Roman script) as India's national language, are now a thing of the past. Instead, Hindi, written in Devanagari, has been constitutionally posed as the alternative to English as India's link language, to be progressively realized subject to general acceptance. In the case of the Punjabis, their 'we-consciousness', based on a common language etc., remained always weak and tenuous. Eventually, their nationality formation process got disrupted and distorted, as it failed to overcome divisive religious influences.

The position of the Hindusthani nationality/nationalities in the economy, bureaucracy and army of British India also was anything but one of dominance. This remains true even after the British quit. According to a crude analysis made in 1967 by Ajit Roy, only 33 per cent of total assets of India's 75 top monopoly houses, listed by the Monopoly Inquiry Commission, was accounted for by the Hindusthani houses (Marwari houses 25% and non-Marwari Hindusthani houses 8%). The Gujarati houses had a larger share, as much as 37 per cent of the total assets, though the nationality, they represent, accounted for less than 5 per cent of India's total population. Another 13.5 per cent of the assets continued to be controlled by foreign houses (all British except one.)<sup>9</sup> Besides, the interlocking of Indian capitalists at all levels and their dependence on western multinationals for technology and markets abroad make it pointless and impossible to isolate the big bourgeois of this or that nationality as the sole villain in India.

Like capital, the bureaucracy and army, too, are of composite character. Of the 41,663 class I and Class II officers of the Union Government of India, as of 1967, only 18.3 per cent belonged to the four major Hindusthani-speaking states of U.P., Bihar, M.P. and Rajasthan while the shares of Tamilnadu, Punjab, West Bengal and Maharashtra ranged severally between 13.7 and 9.7 per cent each. Quite disproportionately to its population resources, non-Hindi speaking Punjab maintains a significant role in the army; and, together with some coastal states, also in the navy. In 1970-71, for instance, Punjab accounted for 2.5 per cent of India's total population, but its share of all non-commissioned officers and jawans, recruited for the Indian army in that year was 17.5 per cent as against a 34.2 per cent share of the aforesaid four Hindi-speaking states. Recruitment from Gujarat was one of the lowest, at 1.4 per cent of the total, though the Gujaratis together with the Marwaris are in a somewhat dominating position in the economy through the monopoly business houses they control. These are only stray examples as to how dominance is composite and diffused, and not monopolized by any single nationality<sup>10</sup>. Rather, dominance -- economic, political and cultural -- is largely exercised by higher caste-groups (of more than one religion) that transgress regional and nationality frontiers.

One important difference, not yet sufficiently highlighted, between the Soviet and Indian national situations, lies in the matter of their conceptualization of nationhood. A nation is constituted by a single nationality (or arguably, one could say, also by a group of nationalities), when that single nationality (or group) forms, or is desirous of forming, a sovereign state. The Japanese provide the example of a single-nationality nation; and the Canadians, of a two-nationality nation. A number of nationalities, integrated within a common political system, is as much a feature in India as in the USSR. Both

are officially described as Unions, and both have a unified army as well as a common citizenship concept. However, the concept of citizenship is not exactly the same in the two countries. In the USSR, each Union Republic, unlike in India, has also its own republican citizenship and the right of granting citizenship. The absence or presence of a nationality's right to secede in the Constitution also leads to a basic difference at the formal conceptual level in constitutional terms. This is so, even if it is conceded that in the Soviet Union this right is now more formal than real, because of a high level of integration already achieved over the last half a century by virtue of its socialist planning and a single party system. In India the concept of nationhood is, in constitutional terms, all-inclusive and singular; in the USSR, it is plural. By usage, official or otherwise, the former is called a 'nation' (or sometimes, as a union of nationalities, but never as a union of nations), while the latter is said to stand for 'nations'.

What distinguishes the Indian case from the Soviet one is the former's historically evolved two-level national consciousness. India is not just a sumtotal of nationalities, as the USSR is; but something more than that. Alongside of the nationality consciousnesses at the regional level, there has also been a parallel Indian national consciousness that transcends the former and stands on its own legs. It emerged from the bourgeois's discovery of a historically evolved identity of culture and common tradition -- real or imagined to be so -- coextensive with the whole Indian territory and people inhabiting it. The Indian personality, indeed, reflects a simultaneous footing in two communities of culture, two streams of consciousnesses - one Indian and the other regional; the set and the subset. An average Marathi or Assamese or Bengali tends to describe himself at ease also as an 'Indian', as we already noted. But to describe what was common to a Russian, an Uzbek and a Georgian, there was no such similar value-loaded nationality-indicating term in the Czarist Empire.

Later, since the 1930s, the term 'Soviet' was put into use as a common label to serve the purpose (e.g., Soviet people, Soviet citizen, Soviet land etc.). Though in terms of its latest Constitution, the USSR is an 'integral federation' (Article 70) with a single unified army and one party system, it claims to embody not a common nationhood, but only "the state unity of all its nations and nationalities together for the purpose of jointly building communism". Incidentally, the distinction made between the categories, 'nation' and 'nationality', continues to remain vague in contemporary political science in India and elsewhere. Marxists do make a distinction between these two categories but how it is made is not clear. Besides, much confusion, semantic in origin, stems from their use as interchangeable terms. We shall again discuss this problem in Section V of this paper.

#### IV

Not that the right to self-determination of nationalities was never pressed for or its recognition demanded as a matter of principle in free India. There had indeed been, from time to time, secessionist (to secede from India) movement even. But all these have so far happened only at a frivolous level or in the border regions of the Indian territory. Frivolous when the united CPI mechanically demanded such a right for all nationalities during the late 1940s and the 1950s as a matter of principle; or when the Dravida Munnatra Kazhagam still later actually demanded secession for Tamilnadu. Such demands had to be dropped or pushed under the carpet within a few years in both the cases for lack of mass support. The secessionist demand for Khalistan raised recently by a section of the Punjabi Sikhs, also, apparently awaits a similar fate. For, the relatively mobile Punjabi Sikh bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie have little to gain from

their insulation within a tiny territory. Far from being oppressed, the community enjoys a higher share of all opportunities, that could be offered by a united India, than what their relative numerical strength justifies.

A concern for the right to self-determination is now found on a more serious and persistent basis only in some of the thinly-populated border tracts of northeast India, amongst very small nationalities. These were all late entrants into the British colonial system and hence still preserve some of the remnants of primitive communism. Left untouched by the Indian railways, and almost so also by administration, these were kept insulated from contacts with the rest of India and the Indian freedom movement. Hence their isolation and alienation from the broad stream of the Indian tradition, culture and thoughts.

The hilly parts of northeast India therefore present a different setting for the national question.<sup>11</sup> In Nagaland and Mizoram, for example, the process of tribes transforming themselves into nationalities started only in the 1940s by which time there had already appeared indigenous middle class elements within them. These immature nationalities, rather tribes in transition, do not yet share the sense of belonging to the wider Indian community of culture at large, as the Bengalis or the Assamese do. With the increasing elimination of communication-gaps and isolation, and following political-administrative reforms, a shift in the attitudes of the Naga and Mizo peoples is, however, already taking place over the post-independence years. The Indian Constitution had to be amended several times under popular pressure to accommodate their urge for autonomy and raise the status of their respective Sixth-Schedule tribal areas to that of constituent States. Further negotiations between the Union Government and the rebel groups are in progress for resolving the national contradictions in a peaceful manner. Besides, it is also being increasingly felt in these remote

regions that the toiling people of all nationalities, big and small, have a common cause to make against the bourgeois-landlord rule and neo-colonial intrigues that have kept India's national question unsolved. Even in Nagaland or Mizoram, the solution of the national question depends on the feasibility of nationality-formation by way of integrating their several tribes, speaking as many languages, at the local level.

Also a border tract left outside the British-Indian railways network and centralized administration, the State of Jammu and Kashmir is yet another crystallised unit where the question of the right to national self-determination was seriously raised. Such a demand originated long before 1947, in course of the Kashmiri people's anti-feudal, democratic struggles against the British-backed Maharaja's rule. Jammu and Kashmir's isolation is, however, only relative and is totally unlike that of Nagaland and Mizoram. In all historical periods, Kashmir remained, and still remains, very much integral to what constitutes the corpus of Indian tradition, culture and thoughts. Because of its anchorage in Indian heritage and in a united democratic movement directed against a common enemy, it reacted sharply to the partition of India on religious basis. It decided to join the Indian Union, while still looking forward to a special autonomous status within it. Given the choice between Pakistan and India, the leaders of the Kashmiri people opted for the latter, with hopes that bourgeois-democratic reforms would be easier to achieve there than in Pakistan.

Even if we assume that border states like Kashmir, Nagaland and Mizoram and, for that matter also Sikkim (annexed in 1975) and Manipur, fall out of or do not share the wider national consciousness that arises out of an awareness of the pan-Indian cultural homogeneities, these may be deemed as exceptions, somewhat similar to the autonomous regions like Tibet in the People's Republic of China. These

exceptional cases, each having a small population, surely raise questions of political significance, but they do not crucially influence the fate of India's over-all democratic/ State of Jammu and Kashmir, alone, accounts for less than one per cent and the other four frontier states together, for less than half per cent of India's total population. We therefore reiterate that Indian nationalism, while combining many autonomous nationalities and their several regional nationalisms (variously called as sub-nationalism, little nationalism, local or narrow nationalism etc.), has also a separate dimension of its own, independent of the totality of such nationalisms. It is also based on the shared feeling of all Indians of belonging to a India-wide community of culture, which can be distinguished from other such communities of the rest of the world by a pool of identity marks. When the early Bengali and Assamese nationalists faced the problem of coining appropriate terms to signify their newly-acquired national identity/identities, they used the words, 'jāti' and 'mahā-jāti', in two different senses. The word 'jāti', which earlier meant 'caste', now stood for a constituent 'nationality' and the word 'mahā-jāti' exclusively for the 'nation'. For example, as early as 1926, the concept of the two-level consciousness was idealized by an Assamese nationalist as follows :

Let all nationalities (jāti) of India follow their own paths. The Brahmaputra, the Ganga, the Yamuna, the Kaveri, the Sindhu -- let all of them flow down along their respective courses. Let there be no attempts to merge one with the other. Finally all will converge in the Indian ocean, that is, the Indian nation (mahā-jāti). Troubles will increase if any other method is resorted to for creating the Indian nation (trans. ours).<sup>12</sup>

Because of the distorting influences of diverse economic interests, this ideal of Indian nationalism is not however, free from deviations in real life. Calculations of advantages of a highly centralised and integrated Indian market often prompt India's monopoly capital to project

nationalism as an Indian 'great nationalism', not mindful of the aspirations of the smaller constituent nationalities. This is reflected, for example, in the attempts at reviving the concept of a Hindu Rashtra; at minority-baiting; at prescribing a presidential form of government for ailing India; at imposing Hindi as a compulsory national language, if possible; or at depriving constituent states of appropriate measures of financial resources and autonomy. On the other hand, the calculations of the advantages of reserving the market and job opportunities of a region exclusively for its 'own' people -- a thing championed by the relatively fragile regional small bourgeoisie -- tend to distort nationalism into a regional 'little nationalism', not mindful of the over-all all-India national interests. Despite these pulls in opposite directions, Indian nationalism has by and large remained nearer the norm, while simultaneously combining and transcending regional nationality consciousnesses and continuously fighting in that process casteism, tribalism and other forms of narrow community feelings, both at all-India and regional levels.

The nation-building process in India remains however yet immature and incomplete. Since the cultural and economic development of the regions and nationalities is uneven and since a persistent over-all economic stagnation hardly allows for any increase in the size of the divisible cake, forces of secessionism are raising their heads. In the absence of a breakthrough in the economy, secessionist tendencies might break out more widely and frequently in future than now. But the problem of unevenness is more caste group-wise -- cutting across nationalities -- rather than nationality-wise. Hence, such secessionism has little chance of success in whipping up mass sentiments of any major nationality on a stable basis, as was possible in Bangladesh. In Assam, seemingly a likely case in this respect, this has been evident only recently. Secessionism has been firmly and widely disowned there even by the little nationalists themselves,



barring a few extremists.<sup>13</sup> There the movement professedly aims at driving out a sizeable section of the toiling immigrant population, rather than assimilating them. No demand for increased regional autonomy as such or right to secede from India has yet been raised from this platform.

Yet another major influencing factor that acts in favour of Indian nationalism is the Indian industrial proletariat's stake in the matter.<sup>14</sup> Having emerged out of a mixed population of various national groups, intermingling all over India in cities, mines and plantations, it has a vested interest in preserving Indian unity. Itself a product of assimilation under compulsions of the very conditions of life, it generally stands for assimilation on the widest possible scale, although workers under bourgeois influence might go astray. Indeed, in the era of the waning world capitalist system of today, divisive bourgeois nationalism as such can no more be deemed democratic and legitimate (as it once used to be), and it needs to be subordinated to the general, world-wide struggle for people's democracy and socialism. Rosa Luxemburg's arguments against the recognition of the right to self-determination (secession) of nationalities by the working class of a centralised State, where a possible hegemonic role for itself was already within its sight, were not acceptable to Lenin in 1913-16 on quite valid grounds. But we live in a different world today. More than a third of the human society having meanwhile become socialist, national democratic movements are now a part of the global struggle for socialism. Hence, some of the old arguments of Rosa Luxemburg appear to have acquired fresh relevance in the present situation.<sup>15</sup>

Paradoxically, the national question today has visibly become a matter of 'great' concern and a special field of operation for the neo-colonialist policy-makers of the metropolitan countries. In their efforts to perpetuate the domination of monopoly capital they are, on the one hand, building up a network of transnational

corporations all over the world, and on the other, are coming out as super-champions of umpteen varieties of separatism and ethnic consciousness with a view to disrupting the working class unity in their own countries and the nationality formation processes in third world countries. Much of recent academic research on the national question is motivated and sponsored by interested imperialist quarters. They do so with a view to providing justification for a 'divide and rule' policy and inspiring secessionism in countries non grata. Such research reiterates the old theme that the nation-building process in the liberated colonies is a fiction, that what is real is the ethnic pluralism and that the going process of assimilation or intogration is not worth taking note of.<sup>16</sup> India continues to be a melting pot of castes, tribes, communities and nationalities. Its nation-building process is not yet at that more or less complete and comfortable stage when Indian nationalists could afford to be less sensitive to the wide variety of foreign interventionists -- some of them missionaries and investigating social scientists -- who indulge in activities prejudicial to national integration.<sup>17</sup> For a study of the national question in India today, and for that matter in many other countries, an analysis of the world forces at play has indeed become all the more important. But a thorough probe of this kind is beyond the scope of this short paper.

V

Some Clarifications and a Summing-up

The distinction presumed between a 'nation' and a 'nationality' in all Marxist discussions is somewhat crucial for our above conceptual framework of Indian nationalism. It is there in Stalin's treatment of the

national question, but with no sufficient clarity. "Stalin unfortunately attributes to the 'nation' all those characteristics which should properly apply only to the 'nationality'. This leads him", writes an Indian Marxist political scientist, "in all sorts of conceptual difficulties when discussing the national question in eastern Europe".<sup>18</sup>

To get out of this confusion, the same author refers to Engels. According to him, Engels explicitly recognizes 'nationality' as a pre-capitalist structure -- a 'community (gemeinschaft), already possessing a distinct and common cultural identity in the pre-capitalist era', as in the case of the Germans.<sup>19</sup>

Various kinds of ethnic communities, on the basis of tribal (kinship) and religious ties etc. could surely emerge and be gradually transcended by more complex linguistic-cultural communities in pre-capitalist times. But that Engels accepts any such community as a 'nationality' even in the absence of any signs of an emerging capitalism (along with a rising bourgeois class) is doubtful. It could indeed be accepted so only after a section of it (embryonic class) had become conscious of the advantage of mobilizing the relevant community feelings to their class benefit. This could happen, we believe, only in a society where seeds of capitalist relations had already started sprouting. In other words, a nationality is not a pre-capitalist structure, but an emerging capitalist structure -- a less developed form of a developing nation.

Engels implicitly makes this distinction clear when he refuses to put the label of a nation on "the entire German people" so long as "the low level of industry, commerce and agriculture ruled out any centralization" of these people.<sup>20</sup> At that level they impliedly formed a nationality --- a formation that was more than a mere community of culture, but not yet identifiable as a nation. This kind of distinction is, perhaps, also implied in Stalin's discriminate use of the two terms in his categorization of a people as a nation or a nationality. In English, the words 'nation' and 'nationality' can be used interchangeably and this is often done even in scientific writings. But such interchangeability between 'natsionalnost' and 'natsya' is not permitted in Russia.

The distinction is not merely one of the stage of development, but also one of perspective related to the relevant stage. A.R. Kamat, Indian Marxist thinker, therefore, follows Karl W. Deutch in defining a nationality as "a people having some characteristics which go towards the making of a nation, and who are striving for a measure of political, economic and cultural autonomy...". He (Kamat) further observes that it "may (or may not) develop an alternative centre of allegiance among the people, strive for recognition as a nation and struggle to form its own distinct nation-state."<sup>21</sup> We are in agreement with him.

In this paper India is projected as a many-nationality State -- a union of nationalities, big and small, at their different stages of development. None of these, however, yet itself forms a nation; nor an autonomous development towards such a singular formation within any of these is yet in sight. At the same time, under big bourgeois-landlord rule, the Indian economy continues to remain backward and exposed to neocolonial intrigues. The tangled national question, a reflection of this backwardness, also remains unsolved for lack of democratization of the society on the basis of an extension of regional autonomy up to the grassroots. Keeping these specificities of the Indian case in mind, we have however ventured to argue that not only a nationality (as it normally happened in west Europe, e.g., in the case of the Irish), but also a union of nationalities/national groups (as in the case of the Swiss and the Canadians) could be transformed into a nation through its stable association with a unified Statehood, desired or realized. India, in our view is a many-nationality state. Since the State unity is based on what is universally recognized as Indian nationalism, there is no harm in saying that several nationalities together form the Indian nation in making.

Quite obviously, at this last tentative formulation, many Marxists may point out that Indians possess a commonality neither of language, nor of economic life and mental make-up; and hence, the concept of a developing Indian nation is difficult to accept. To this our answer is that ingredients of a nation or nationality cannot be so precisely and mechanically listed, nor are the latter easily identifiable. A sense of community of culture, and/or of nationhood, could evolve in appropriate historical circumstances on the basis of any few of a wide range of common characteristics widely shared by an ethnic group, not all (e.g. script) being mentioned by Stalin. We have already explained in Sections II & III how India's bourgeois national leaders discovered unity in diversity and an objective basis for their pan-Indian nationalism in the country's real or supposed common traditions and common past. To them, a typically Indian mental make-up was as real as its regional sub-types. This has wide acceptance even now. As to how common is the economic life remains difficult to determine both at the regional and pan-Indian levels. In any case, industry, commerce and cash-cropping in India bear a considerable imprint of centralization that widens what is common in Indian economic life.

Kamat, who projects India like us as a union of nationalities, stops short of calling this collective body 'a developing nation'. He is, however, aware that none of them can so far be called a nation by itself in the defined sense of the term, though he would not mind if one talked of a 'united nations of India' either. He asserts that, though the right of self-determination is impliedly inherent in them, "it is in their own interests not to exercise it, nor to harp on it", and <sup>he</sup> rightly holds that such issues "need to be considered in their historical, socio-economic and cultural contexts and cannot be universalized like mathematical propositions."<sup>22</sup> Years back, having precisely reconsidered these very contexts, the Indian communists had indeed deleted

from their programme the clause guaranteeing nationalities a right to secede -- a right that had remained enshrined therein until 1964 in imitation of the Soviet model.<sup>23</sup>

The fact that there is an objective basis for the growth of an Indian nation, both independently co-existing with and, at the same time, integrally including the federated nationalities (as is tentatively upheld in this paper) is, however, hardly recognized by Marxist intellectuals and scholars. Nevertheless, the "we-consciousness" as Indians is so real that even they are prone to refer, by way of sheer habit or otherwise often to the 'Indian nation' and to 'national integration' in their speeches and writings. For instance, the aforesaid CPI(M) document on the national question of India scrupulously avoids any mention of 'nation' or 'nations' in the Indian context, and only talks of 'nationalities' and 'sub-national currents'. By implication, it is reluctant -- and rightly -- to equate nationalities with nations and maintains conspicuous silence regarding the location of the nationhood.<sup>24</sup> Yet another document from the same party, while focussing on the situation of Assam, views the disruptive stand of the Assamese "narrow nationalists" to be against "the integrity of the nation", i.e., obviously the Indian nation.<sup>25</sup> Our formulation is free from this kind of semantic confusion.

If the foundation of the Indian (pan-Indian) national consciousness, based on certain homogeneities, is weak, it is no less so in the case of the regional national consciousnesses. Take, for example, the informed observations of A.M. Dyakov, a Soviet Marxist scholar. In 1948, he included the Hindustanis, Rajasthanis, Biharis and Punjabis in the category of "forming nationalities". But, later in 1963, he observed, especially with respect to the first three groups that

"the populations of these regions have not developed an awareness of national affinity. They regard themselves as Indians, but if a more specific question is asked, they name their State" (emphasis ours).<sup>26</sup>

Within years after Dyakov wrote this, Punjab was further split in 1966 into two States, ostensibly on the question of the script and language, but actually on a religious basis.

Thus, of the twin streams of national consciousness in India, the pan-Indian one appears to have a more solid basis than the regional one, in several cases. In fact, a dozen or so of the major Indian nationalities, representing linguistic groups, varying in size from 9 million (Assamese) to 236 million (Hindustanis) people according to the 1971 census, together account for 94 per cent of India's total population. They occupy contiguous territories, living often in a mixed society, and largely share a common memory of what happened in that history. They also share many common traditional and modern values and are exposed to powerful and centralized modern communication media. They were all oppressed under and fought together against the British imperial system, while continuing to acquire new cultural values in that process and together still fighting the big bourgeois-landlord rule for their radical transformation. This fact brings into focus the interrelationship --- these nationalities as the component parts and the collective body of the Indian people or, (if one would prefer to put it like that) the nation as the whole. Through a process of interpenetration and fusion, the particular memories, sentiments, attitudes, styles of art and experiences acquired from each other -- all these tend to shed their particularities and are being increasingly universalised at the all-India level. If so, one could conceive of centralization and autonomization at the same breath. One need not miss the wood for the trees.

What is true of the bigger nationalities (a 94 per cent of the Indian people) is also largely true of the small nationalities, though they are relatively more isolated from the whole, because of their tribal ethnicity and/or habitat in difficult border terrains. One has to note, for instance, that neither Jammu and Kashmir, nor Manipur, nor Nagaland -- in 1971 these had populations, respectively numbering 46, 11 and 5 lakhs -- is a unilingual crystallized unit. On linguistic-cultural considerations, the first in its unoccupied portion is too obviously a collective body of three district units -- Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh; and, if reorganized on the same considerations, Manipur (Meitei land) would be reduced in area to one-tenth of what it is today. In Nagaland, there are fourteen tribes and as many languages/dialects, none of which shows yet any sign of developing as a means of inter-dialectal communication. English at the elite level, and Nagamese (pidgin Assamese) at the common man's level, serve at present the purpose of a link language. The Naga national movement is yet to overcome the various tribes' separate identity consciousnesses.

In Mizoram, the Lakhers have a distinct language other than Mizo and live in a compact area, and so do also the Buddhist Chakma tribe whose language is a corrupt form of Bengali, written in a different script.

All this shows why indiscriminate insistence on the right of national self-determination today is meaningless. The 'principle of nationalities', if over-stretched, is harmful in the national and international situation that India has been facing since her independence. Incidentally, what Engels thought in 1866 of the utilization of the small nation movements by Bonapartism and Czarism for their own benefit against European democracy may be relevant here in the context of the small nationality movements in India. Lenin writes in 1916 :



"Engels emphasizes that the proletariat must recognize the political independence and 'self-determination'... of the great, major nations of Europe, and points to the absurdity of the 'principle of nationalities' (particularly in its Bonapartist application), i.e., of placing any small nation on the same level as these big ones".<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the secessionist movements of the small nationalities of the border tracts as such or any talk of their right to secede is tenable neither on practical considerations, nor on grounds of Marxist theory. It is conveniently forgotten by some that even in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, autonomous small nationalities are not given this right. In the People's Republic of China, where the Han nationality, occupying less than half the territory, constitutes 94 per cent of China's total population, ~~and of~~ the minority nationalities -- the biggest of them, the Zuang (of the province of Guansi) numbers ten million and ten of them more than one million each -- have also no constitutional right to secede. While enjoying maximum possible autonomy in respective autonomous regions, they are regarded as component parts of 'the collective body of the Chinese people', represented by a 'Unitary State' -- the People's Republic of China.<sup>28</sup> In the absence of any particular dominant nationality like the Hans in India, the collective body of the Indian people -- we believe -- has been developing as a composite nation, alongside of its component nationalities, under certain favourable historical circumstances.

Finally, a word about whether the small and backward nationalities of India could be economically, culturally and politically dominated over and oppressed by sections of the big and advanced ones (who jointly control the seventyfive monopoly houses and the State machinery). The answer is yes, a sort of 'national' oppression can not be ruled out, particularly in the areas inhabited by the tribal people.<sup>29</sup>

However, in that case, their emancipation lies not in self-determination (secession from India), but in autonomy and thorough-going socio-economic and cultural transformation to be achieved through a united struggle of the toiling peoples of all Indian nationalities against the stranglehold of bourgeois-landlord rule. Self-determination, as a slogan, does not help but disrupt such a united struggle. Besides, because of their general backwardness and non-viable size, the small emergent nationalities of the border tracts undergo considerable risks of relapsing into more primitive conditions, inter-tribe conflicts and exposure to imperialist wolves, if isolated from the collective body -- the developing Indian nation (mahajati).<sup>30</sup>

India, to Marx in the 1850s, was a "country not only divided between Mohammedan and Hindu, but between tribe and tribe, between caste and caste, a society whose framework was based on a sort of equilibrium, resulting from a general repulsion and constitutional exclusiveness between its members."<sup>31</sup> Yet this aggregate of "various races, tribes, castes, creeds and sovereignties" constituted, he observed, "the geographical unity of what is called India", having "ethnographical, political and military frontiers" -- its "natural limits" -- which the British empire-builders took two centuries to reach.<sup>32</sup> The Indian army that the British organized within this framework became "the first general centre of resistance which the Indian people was ever possessed of".<sup>33</sup> More often than not, Marx also used the term 'Hindu' in its wider sense to stand for the Indian people.

What first appeared as a mutiny in the army was, according to Marx, a widespread "Indian revolt" of Hindus and Muslims who had combined in 1857 to project the last of the Mughals as the symbol of their common past and their common urge for a united, sovereign India.<sup>34</sup> Since that first War of Independence, the concept of one India has continually played a determining role in diffusing inter-group languages

of communication (e.g., Urdu), in consolidating common cultural traits into an Indian social personality; in widening the horizons of an average Indian's motherland-awareness and, finally, in giving a purposive direction to the two-level national process in our cohesive poly-ethnic society. For a comprehension of this two-level process of unity in diversity, the Marxist applies the dialectical method. It simultaneously combines the macro and micro points of view, treats the parts and the whole always together as a historical relationship and rejects the sociologist's one-sided emphasis on the grassroots of ethnicity ('gentile ties'), as one finds in the current studies of the so-called 'ethnic process'.

Despite retarding influences of religion and tribalism in India, nationalities went on developing there and getting integrated into the simultaneously emergent "Indian people" (or, as we are inclined to put it so, the 'Indian nation') following the appearance of capitalist relations. "The political unity of India, more consolidated and extending further than it did under the Moghals was the first condition of its regeneration. That unity, imposed by the British sword", Marx said in 1853, "will now be strengthened and perpetuated by the electric telegraph".<sup>35</sup> That unity -- what remained of it after the Partition of 1947, we may add -- has indeed been substantially preserved and further strengthened in the subsequent period of one and a quarter century of new technology and mass communication media.

## FOOTNOTES

1. See J.V. Stalin, "Marxism and national question", Works, Vol.2, 1907-13 (Moscow, 1953). His emphasis on one language could however, according to us, be overlooked in cases where easy market communication is made possible by historically evolved widespread bilingualism/multilingualism (as in the case of Switzerland) or the wide acceptance of a common link language. Although Soviet scholars are currently critical of Stalin's definition, they still hold, like other Marxists, community of language as an essential condition for the making of a nation/nationality. The case of the Swiss nation is only an exception to them.
2. "The market is the first school in which the bourgeois learns its nationalism". -- *ibid*, p.316.
3. Quote from V.I. Lenin, "Right of nations to self-determination", Vol.20, 1913-1914 (Moscow, 1964), p.453n.
4. For relevant comments by Tagore in 1919 see Ravindra-Rachanāvalii (in Bengali, Centenary Edn., Govt. of West Bengal, Calcutta), Vol.15, pp.284-5.
5. See E.M.S. Namboodiripad, The National Question in Kerala (Bombay, 1952), pp.51-58. A more community of culture should not have been mistaken for a nationality or nation in making, as Irfan Habib rightly pointed out in "Emergence of nationalities" in Social Scientist, (Trivandrum), 37, August 1975, pp.16-17.
6. Through the active agency of the Ahom royal court and the popular neo-vaishnavite movement, a consolidated and distinct Assamese-speaking community of culture was developed by then, into which tribes and other smaller communities merged or tended to merge.
7. For my earlier, not quite satisfactory, attempts at conceptualizing this duality, see "Great nationalism, little nationalism and the problem of integration: a tentative view" in Economic and Political Weekly, Annual Number, Vol.14, Feb., 1979.
8. S. Sarkar, The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal (New Delhi, 1973), p.494.

9. Ajit Roy, "Some aspects of the national question in India", Marxist Review (Calcutta), October 1967, p.22 and "National question in India and pre-revolutionary Russia", Social Scientist, n.5, pp.21-32.
10. The relevant data on the Government officers (source : United News of India, 1967) are taken from Table 1 of Ajit Roy's Social Scientist article, n.9, and those related to the army are from Table 1 in Prakash Karat, "Theoretical aspects of the national question" in Social Scientist, n.5, pp.5-13.

The aforesaid issue of the Social Scientist is focussed on the Indian national question. Incidentally, some of my points were earlier effectively made by Roy, Karat and Irfan Habib in this very issue.

11. For an understanding of the northeast India and its problems, see S.K. Chaube and others, "Regional development and the national question in northeast India", Social Scientist, n.5, pp.40-66. Also see Bhaben Barua, Language and National Question in Northeast India (Bani Prakash, Gauhati, n.d.), pp.1-40.
12. Quote from Presidential address delivered at the 1926 annual conference of the Assam Sahitya Sabha at Dhubri by Benudhar Rajkhova (1872-1955).
13. Amalendu Guha, "Little nationalism turned chauvinist : Assam's anti-foreigner upsurge 1979-80", Economic and Political Weekly, Special No. October 1980; also, "Little nationalism turned chauvinist : a reply" and "Little nationalism turned chauvinist : a summing up", *ibid*, 25 April 1981 and 23 May 1981, respectively.
14. This had particularly been noted in the 'Note on national question' in the CPI (M) Work Report (Political) of the Central Committee to the Ninth Congress ... (Calcutta, 1972).
15. See, Rosa Luxemburg, The National Question : Selected Writings (H.B. Davis, ed., New York, 1976).
16. For instance, Myron Weiner wrote his controversial book, Sons of the Soil : Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India (Princeton, 1978), with financial support from several US agencies including the Behavioral Sciences Research Branch of the National Institute of Mental Health and the Rockefeller-Ford Programme for Population Research. This book, motivated by America's concern for India's mental health and interest in ethnic tensions, had wide circulation in Assam and lent ideological support to the

xenophobia and outburst of chauvinism that broke out there and persisted through 1979-1981.

17. While upholding the legitimacy of and the right to national self-determination in the era of bourgeois-democratic revolutions, Lenin did not fail, in his Critical Remarks on the National Question, also to point out :

"The economic development of capitalist society presents us with examples of immature national movements ... and also examples of assimilation of nations. The proletariat, however, far from undertaking to uphold the national development of every nation, on the contrary, warns the masses against such illusions, stands for the fullest freedom of capitalist intercourse and welcomes every kind of assimilation of nations, except that which is founded on force or privilege" (emphasis ours). Collected Works, Vol.20, p.35.

18. Quote from Partha Chatterjee, "Bengal : rise and growth of a nationality", Social Scientist, n.5, p.81n.
19. Ibid, pp.68 and 81n; words in quote are Chatterjee's. Contemporary Soviet scholars also think that "the term natsionalnost has a broader range of meanings covering not only capitalist and socialist nations, but also peoples of pre-capitalist class formations". See I.R. Grigulevich and S.Y. Kozlov, ed., Races and Peoples : Contemporary Ethnic and National Problems (Moscow, 1974), p.36n; also see ibid, pp.197-99 and Yu. V. Bromley, "Toward typology of ethnic processes" in Sociological Studies: Ethnic Aspects (Moscow, 1974), pp.8, 19n and 16-17.
20. F. Engels, "Decay of feudalism and rise of national states", appended to The Peasant War in Germany (Moscow, 1974), pp.178-88, cited by Chatterjee. From the 14th to the 16th century, notes Engels in this book, commercial capital had transformed the natural economy of the European peoples and rendered the political system of feudalism redundant. "Since the leaders and masters of this process were the merchant capitalists, the creation of these national ties" said Lenin in another context, "was nothing else than the creation of bourgeois ties". -- Collected Works, Vo.1 (Moscow, 1963) p.155.

21. Quotes from A.R. Kamat, "Ethno-linguistic issues in Indian federal context", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.15, June 14-21, 1980, p.1061. Kamat refers to pp.78-80 in Nationalism and Social Communication (New York, 1953) by Deutch for the definition of a nationality. In ordinary usage, by the term 'nationality' is meant either a nation or a "race forming part of one or more political nations" (Concise Oxford Dictionary). Neither of these meanings is conveyed by the Russian term 'natsionalnost'; the latter has somewhat a different meaning. See n.19.
22. For quotes, Kamat, n.21, pp.1061-62.
23. "Note on national question", CPI(M) Work Report : 1972, n.14, p.95.
24. Ibid, pp.95-103.  
Two terms - 'nationality' and 'sub-nationality' -- are used in the CPI(M) document, but how to distinguish them has been left vague. On the other hand, the other term 'nation' is scrupulously avoided throughout the document.
25. Quote from the CPI(M) Central Committee's resolution on 'situation in Assam', People's Democracy, Vol.5, 8 Nov., 1981.
26. Quoted in Baris I. Kluyev, India : National and Language Problem (New Delhi, 1981), p.54.
27. <sup>of</sup> ~~One~~ ~~the~~ three 1866 articles by Engels on the Polish question, ~~xxxxix~~ cited in V.I. Lenin, "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed-up", Collected Works, Vol.22 (Moscow 1964), p.342n.
28. For quotes and general reference, Fei Hsiao Tung, "On the social transformation of China's minority nationalities" (mimeographed paper in English presented at the Asian Symposium on Intellectual Creativity in Endogenous Culture", sponsored by United Nations University and Kyoto University, Kyoto, 13-17 Nov. 1978). For access to it, I am indebted to my colleague, Barun De.

For the evolution of the Communist policy on China's national question, see Chang Chih-i, A discussion of the National Question in the Chinese Revolution and the Actual Nationalities Policy: Draft (Peking, 1956), reproduced in translation in George Moseley, The Party and the National Question in China (Massachusetts, 1966), pp.27-159.

29. In its note on the national question, the CPI(M) emphasizes that "the tribal people and more particularly the small border nationalities, in several respects, suffer not only from crass class oppression but also a sort of 'national' oppression, at the hands of the other more advanced nationalities". Its programme therefore states :

"The tribal areas or the areas where population is specific in ethnic composition and is distinguished by specific social and cultural conditions will have regional autonomy with regional Government within the State concerned and shall receive full assistance for their development".

A resolution adopted in its eleventh congress at Bezwada, 1982, once more highlights this policy. Limited autonomy is, however, always a step to still greater autonomy. It might later lead even to self-determination. On this point, see Lenin, n.27, pp.344-5.

30. The Jharkand problem could be largely solved by creating compact autonomous areas within the States of Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal on the Tripura model. However, a complete solution of the problem of ethnic conflicts, as elsewhere, is not possible without a radical transformation of the country's economy. The term 'nation' can not be satisfactorily translated into any Indian language. Nevertheless Tagore thought, one could coin the term 'adhi-jāti' in Bengali, for the purpose. See n.4 above. Later, we find him suggesting the term 'mahājāti', apparently, for the same purpose. In Hindi and Marathi languages, the term 'nation' is translated as 'rashtra' -- a word that stands for 'State' in Bengali and Assamese.
31. Quote from "The future results of the British rule in India", New York Daily Tribune, 8 August 1853.
32. Quotes from "The revolt in the Indian army", *ibid*, 15 July 1857 and "The East India Company - its history and results", *ibid*, 11 July 1853. In "Indian question", *ibid*, 14 August 1857, Disraeli is reported by Marx to have explained the causes of the 'national revolt' in terms of a change in the British policy towards "the different nationalities of which India consisted".



33. Quote from "The revolt in the Indian army", n.32.
34. Ibid; also "Indian revolt" *ibid*, 4 August 1857 and "The Indian question", n.32. True that Indian merchant capital and other middle classes did not give any support to, rather opposed this revolt. But its driving force was undoubtedly the disaffected peasantry and rural artisans who looked forward to freedom and a reduction of their land taxes, despite their being led by zamindars and princes. Later, these middle classes, too, began to take a sympathetic note of this great event while coming forward with a modern ideology of nationalism.
35. Quote from "The future results of the British rule in India", n.31.

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