

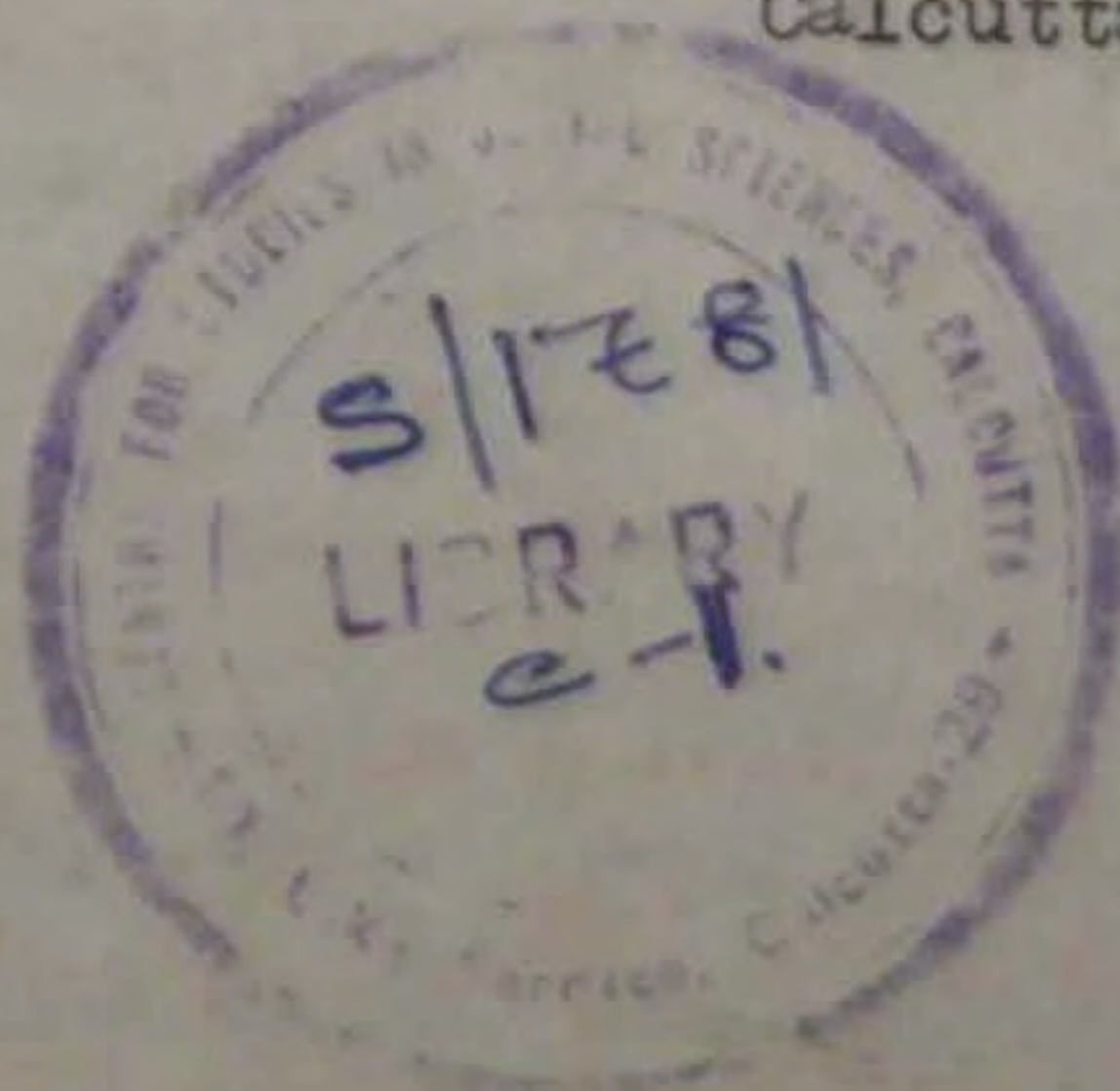
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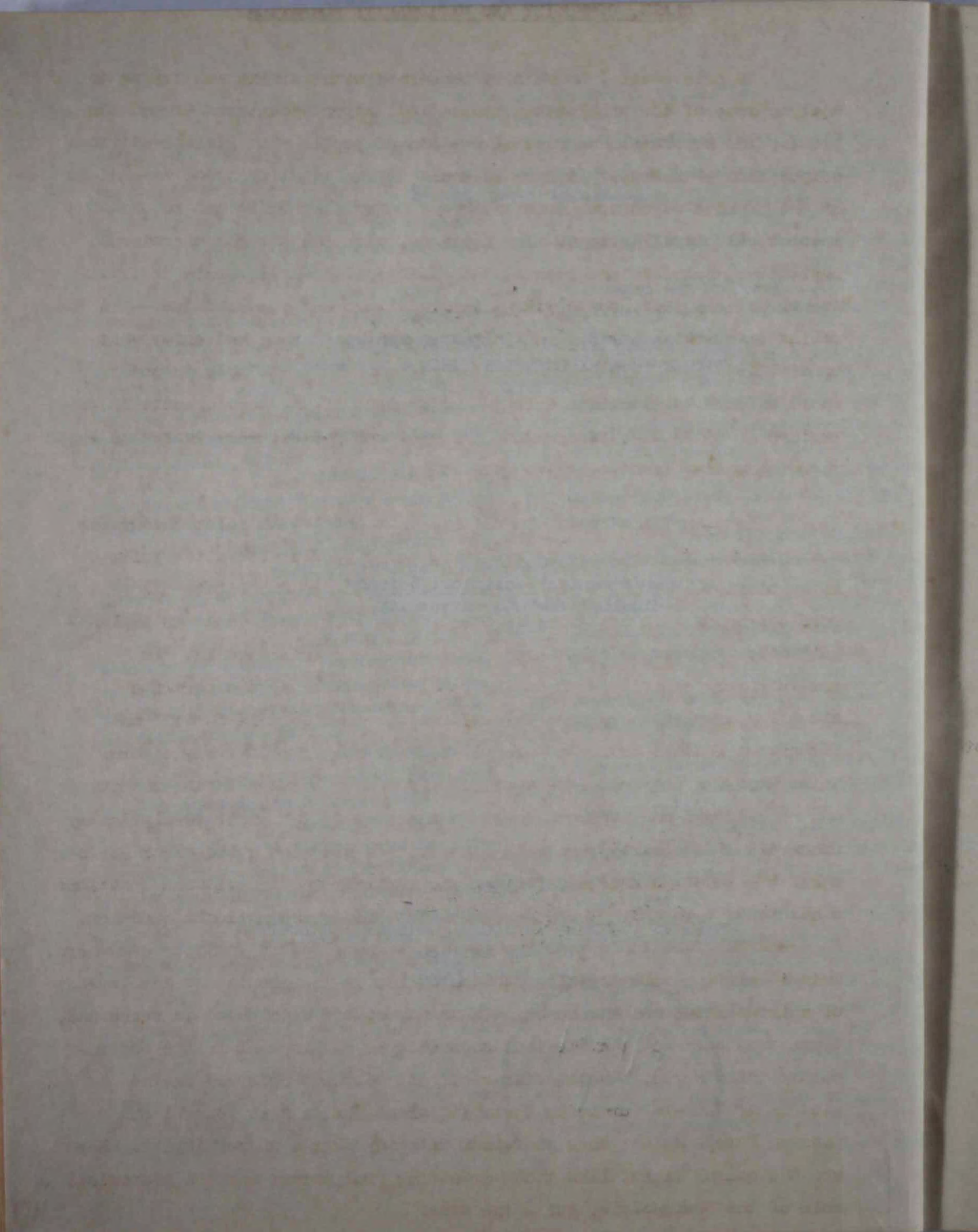
CLASS, COMMUNITY AND NATIONALITY FORMATION:
A THEORETICAL EXPLORATION THROUGH TWO CASE
STUDIES

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In this paper I am chiefly concerned with raising and trying to analyse some of the problematic theoretical aspects centered around the breakup and separation or crystallisation of people with similar national composition or makeup. As such it would try to identify those dimensions of the problem which are important in a country like India and require theoretical clarifications. For instance, with the advance of retarded capitalism, how does one look at the historically varying role of traditional or religious communities-- their culture and consciousness-- in the making or breaking up of potential nationalities? When and under what conditions factors like these acquire salience and when they do not? I would attempt to elucidate this in the context of the developments in two regions of India viz. pre-partition Bengal and contemporary Jharkhand which throw revealing light on these questions.

It cannot any longer be claimed that Marxist-Leninist theory for the understanding of national awakening among people within the multinational states or about the factors that impede or facilitate the unification of this awakening is adequate in every respect as an explanatory aid. In certain other areas of theoretical understanding for revolutionary activity such as the peasant question or the agrarian situation problems have been investigated in considerable detail and integrated into theory. As a result we know now in relatively clearer terms what are the concrete-specific differences between India of today and Central and Eastern Europe at the time of the great revolutionary upheavals of the early twentieth century. We are also quite clear as to where the received understanding on the agrarian and the peasant questions needs to be reworked. The same cannot be said of the national question. No comparable debate on this problem has taken place in India or elsewhere. This is all the more striking because as far as the growth and development of nationalities and the consciousness associated with these is concerned, there have been too many deviant sequences of development in the contemporary third world. The earlier recurrent patterns observed in the history of Western Europe or their different variants in Central or Eastern Europe do not seem to repeat with any degree of regularity. Nor are the causal links, like those emanating from market and the historical role of the bourgeoisie, quite the same.

Theory as it stands today is based largely on well known analyses of this problem undertaken during the times of massive revolutionary upheavals in central and Eastern Europe culminating in the great October Revolution in Russia. Problems of understanding arise not due to this but because the received theory has come to be seen in quite a faulty light. It has blurred the difference between precedent and essence. Most of the formulations advanced at that time by Lenin or Stalin are generally taken as theoretical axioms; the methodological consequence being that we deduce from conclusions reached in another era and place rather than disentangling the interrelations within the existing social reality. Those formulations would prove to be rather more useful as theoretical resources. As resources there is implicit in those formulations a way of looking at objective reality, the dialectical method of disentangling complexities, the inherent class pre-suppositions, the logic of exposition etc. To make fruitful use of previous scientific works and to avoid explanatory snags it is necessary to distinguish between theoretical modifications and methodological orthodoxy. Theoretical modifications are, I believe, a necessary part of scientific advance while some form of methodological orthodoxy is an essential element of serious scientific endeavours as eclecticism cannot be conducive to rigour.

This paper is an attempt at a preliminary analysis of these problems. It is divided into a number of parts. In the first section the most obvious characteristics and trends from these regions have been presented; in the second, a few of what seem to be the main theoretical posers are raised; in the third and the fourth sections details of the patterns of development from the viewpoint of national question are examined; and lastly, the fifth section is in the way of conclusions.

The way politics centered around the questions of national aspirations evolved in pre-partition Bengal and is evolving in contemporary Jharkhand is loaded with implications for the theory on national and political unification of people in multi-national societies in the third world countries. An examination of the processes of national crystallisation--separation or amalgamation-- in these areas may be of use in clarifying a number of issues of theoretical relevance. This in turn would help in understanding the salience of specific factors that facilitate or impede, and the conditions under which they acquire salience, the political unification and cultural accommodation among people belonging to the different national streams within the Indian state.

Bengal much more than many other linguistic-cultural zones in India had all the markings or, to borrow a phrase, "identity-marks" of what historically grows into a nationality. A developed language and linguistic unification across communities with a growing literary tradition within a compact region, a more or less unified politico-administrative unit with a degree of autonomy from the Central empires of regional aspirations marked its existence. The colonial state, bourgeois in its overall thrust; also generated economic forces that led to a specialised modern economy which integrated the diverse regions and strata of Bengali society into it.

Yet inspite of the presence of all the common properties or attributes which go to constitute a nation-nationality with the popular stir and awakening created by the capitalist transformations in society, instead of moving towards a unified national group with a common urge for territorial demarcation and common aspirations its politics got more and more split along the lines of religious community eventually leading to the partition of Bengali speaking people into two states. The split between Hindus and Muslims and between Hindus and Namasudras the growth of separatist feelings among Muslims has called forth a great deal of research and some theorising. Still the picture from the point of view of the theoretical understanding of the national question remains far from clear.

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The scenario in Jharkhand is interesting for the opposite reason. Here is a region where none of what are called the necessary historical political conditions for the rise of nationality-oriented political movements among the people existed; this remains true even today. Yet the political history of more than half a century there shows continually evolving advances towards such a condition. The underlying tendency, as will be seen soon, during the various successive phases, has been in the nature of leaps from ethnic towards extra-ethnic dimensions as manifested in the various Jharkhand movements.

The region, as ethnographers and administrator-scholars from Col. Dalton and W.W. Hunter onwards and anthropologists from S.C. Roy to Royburman, Vidyarthi, Sochchidananda, Sinha, etc. have shown, is a mosaic of related but diverse tribes and an aggregation of tribal and non-tribal cultures.¹ The more important tribes are Santals, Mundas, Oraons, Hos, etc. belonging to what Dalton classified as Kolarian and Dravidian tribes. Most of these tribes do not have written language or a common literary tradition though they are rich in their folklore. They speak distinct dialects belonging to two major language groups.² In the last two hundred years since the establishment of the colonial state, these tribal groups never had a common state or one politico-administrative unit and whatever similarities their earlier polities may have had these have been in a state of total dislocation during this period.

In addition, the large non-tribal segments of the population in the region like the scheduled caste groups, Kurmi-Mahato peasantry, "Momins" (Muslim-weavers), etc. have been a part of the tribal universe of discourse³ and activity. They belong to this region as much as the tribes, and share in the same kind of economic exchanges which are equally disadvantageous to them all vis-a-vis the outside exploitative elements. The languages or dialects of these non-tribal groups are different from those of the tribal groups⁴ and, as in the case of tribals, these groups too do not possess a written language or literature. All these groups, tribals as well as non-tribals, have a very undiversified and undifferentiated economy with a low technological productive base and concentrated wholly in agriculture and primary manufacturing. Given this level of

cultural, social and economic development and living in close proximity to relatively highly developed national groups with a vastly greater development of productive forces, the people of this area might have been expected, with the growth and development of capitalism and modern economy, to have got amalgamated in the adjacent advanced national formations in terms of their natural affinities. This is how Engels had perceived the problem in relation to what he had called the "non-historic" nations. This was also the understanding and prediction of anthropologists, like N.K. Bose,⁵ G.S. Ghurye,⁶ etc. Decades after this was predicted, there is little evidence to suggest the likelihood of this possibility materialising. If anything, there are clear tendencies to the contrary. In fact a reversal away from assimilation -- discernible prior to Independence -- has been taking place.⁷

In view of this, it would be of interest to note the character and internal dynamics of the various popular revolts or movements in these two regions, their mode of articulations and struggles and of their evolution over the last two hundred years or so.

In the case of Bengal, it has to be noted that the communal splits and the communal exclusiveness that had clearly appeared in the politics at turn of this century is all the more noticeable and perplexing. It is so because right through the early phases of the consolidation of colonialism, the popular upsurges among the peasantry against the depredations, loot and surplus extraction by the colonial state and its agents were essentially of a non-communal character, however much they may have been rooted in the respective communities. The Fakir-Sanyassi rebellion (1770's), the Titu Mir revolt and Faraidi movements of Shariatullah and Dadu Miyan (1820 onwards) the Indigo revolt (1860's) and the Pabna peasant disturbances⁸ (1870's) -- to name the more important ones -- were either jointly fought out by the peasantry among the two major communities of Hindus or Muslims, or, when it was not so, were not directed against the other community. Even if it is true, as the detailed evidence in the studies cited above shows, that the grass-root mobilizers in these popular upsurges were largely drawn from one community or the other, the fact remains that the different religious communities found grounds enough to struggle together

or side by side. The demands made or slogans raised during these revolts concerned the peasantry in general and were in no way confined to the exclusive demands of Hindus or Muslims. So it is with the targets chosen during the course of demonstrations and attacks; they attacked with impunity the symbols of state or the agents of state power like landlords or money-lenders.⁹ Whatever may have been the historical limitations of such popular revolts, one does not find exclusiveness or hostility based on communal-religious grounds---the political basis of separatism as it could be discerned in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This absence of exclusiveness was not confined to just the mass upsurges or popular revolts. It also found a parallel expression, although in a much more muted form, at the level of elite activities where, even though without any links with mass aspirations or even understanding of the causes of peasant revolts, one finds a considerable degree of joint endeavours and community-based cooperation. One can easily identify a number of institutions or spheres of activity where the leading elites among the Hindus and Muslims acted together.¹⁰

The historical writings show that it was only after the suppression of the Indigo revolt that the first traces of communally exclusivist political demands appeared; and these took a much more definite form only after the successful repression of the peasantry in the wake of the Pabna rent-disturbances. What explains this shift to communal exclusiveness? It is important to remember that this change in the tone and content of politics also involved and coincided with a drastic shift in the dominant styles of politics from popular initiatives and militant mass struggles to elite manoeuvres and calculations of loss and gain. It is also important to note that this was the time of the beginning of constitutional concessions in the shape of District and local Board elections and so on. In trying to unravel the causal chains and understand this process one needs to go back a little into certain aspects of the history of Bengal. But before doing this, let us pause for a while and look at the other case---that of Jharkhand---which in its broad outline seems to be in sharp contrast to that of Bengal.

In the region called Jharkhand (comprising the Chota Nagpur area and Santal parganas in Bihar), there were also, like in Bengal, during this entire period starting from 1770 and extending over a long period of time, massive popular revolts which displayed a collective ferocity and mass initiative rarely witnessed in other places; at least with such consistency. Most of these popular revolts fall into two types. The earliest ones were massive out-bursts of spontaneous resistance led by the Rajas or Chiefs against the efforts of the British to subjugate the areas and to assess them for purposes of revenue or to forcibly evict some of the tribal chiefs from their land. These outbursts started within individual tribes but often also got linked up with others in general conflagrations.¹¹ The later revolts were much more confined to single tribes. In the detailed accounts available of the more important ones like the great Kol Rebellions (1819, 1831-2),¹² the Santal Insurrection (1855)¹³ and the Birsa Munda Rebellion (1895)¹⁴ show that these were more the result of a sense of exasperation and a sense of loss of community due to the depredations of traders and merchants, money-lenders, land-lords and so on and the consequent land alienation. They were no longer led by the Rajas or Chiefs, who had by now in any case lost their relative economic preeminence. These were inspired by exceptional individuals within their communities and we also gather from the historical accounts that there was an element of divination as, for example, in the manner of inspiration of Bir Singh or Kanhu and Siddhu among the Santals or Birsa Munda among the Mundas. Claims of being ordained by their respective gods was the source of initial inspiration and provided the basis for popular self mobilisation. Because of such a mode of articulation, the manner of communication and the symbols of mobilization there have also been characterised as Messianic, revivalistic, cultural restorative, chiliastic, etc.¹⁵ Such a characterisation deflects our attention from the sources of discontent among the people and the causes of popular upsurge. Whatever the initial inspiration, the main thrust of all these rebellions was the restoration of alienated land, and to exploitation and loot and the re-assertion of the lost dignity of the community. We therefore find that the main targets of attack were the traders, merchants

and money-lenders; the outside usurpers of land and rapacious landlords, that is, what came to be known in local terms as Dikus— the outsider--exploiter-- one who lacks in those attributes that make of us into human-beings. None of these movements, it may be noted, had any element of what is called revivalism in the precise sense, like in the case of Arya Samaj or spiritualism like with the Ramakrishna movement. Nor can they be described as messianic for they did not seek to establish any new religion or sect. Nor again, were they to be characterized by mobility aspirations of the Sanskritization sort. They were out and out agrarian movements seeking emancipation from oppression and exploitation by the rapacious agents of primitive capitalist accumulation.¹⁶

Once these earlier 'tribal' movements had been suppressed, through the use of brutal military force in most cases, there was a period of lull in the politics of this region. But new social forces were taking shape, mainly comprised of the educated and neo-literates from among the ordinary people. These started making their presence felt from around 1915 with the formation of the Uhnati Samaj, and got a more definite form with the creation of Adibasi Mahasabha in 1938.¹⁷ The dominant style of politics now was of a constitutional kind--regular meetings and resolutions, memorandums, deputations and petitions, coupled with social reform and welfare activities.¹⁸ What was notable during this period unlike in Bengal where the opposite tendencies appear with the rise of constitutional politics, is less and less recourse to religious orientations and community symbols in the making of political demands. Organisation and creation of liberal-democratic institutions come to replace the earlier pattern of 'inspirational' politics. But the most striking feature of the period in the politics of this region is the rapid growth of movements centered not around ethnic bases but more clearly located in inter-ethnic mobilization. There is an increasing emphasis on inter-tribal unity; within single tribes, a narrowing of communal divisions based on christian, Hindu and tribal religions and a greater degree of communal collaboration; tribal and non-tribal unity through alliances and efforts towards united political action as seen in moves between Tribals, Scheduled caste Hindus, and Kurmi-Mahato peasantry and the Muslim weaver.¹⁹ The earlier historical

limitation of remaining somewhat confined to single or related tribes is overcome and exclusiveness of all kinds--religious, community-- based, etc.-- becomes less and less pronounced. In fact, the evolution of politics is in striking contrast to the example of Bengal.

Given these facts and the trends and tendencies it will not be correct to call the present situation as one of ethnic consciousness. What has been highlighted as trends towards unification should not be confused with splits and political divisions which are quite endemic in the region. When splits occur they have a tendency to appeal across the ethnic cleavages, an indication of the underlying unification process which is tran-ethnic in character. This has been their feature from the early 1930's with the split in the Unnati Samaj when the radical sections under Theble Oraon (a non-Christian Tribal) and Paul Dayal (a local convert to Christianity) broke off from the Samaj to form the Kishan Sabha. The same was the case when the Jharkhand party got split after 1963 when the dominant leadership of Jaipal Singh decided to merge in the Congress or again later in 1968 and onward when the reactionary elites manoeuvres under the leadership of Kartik Oraon to play the Christians against the non-christians.

In this exposition of the patterns in the history of these two regions, what comes out sharply is the failure of unified national movement to emerge in Bengal out of the social and political awakening. This was so inspite of the fact that all the objective preconditions were there in large measure. Instead the mass awakening due to the disturbing impact of capitalist transformations took the form of communally divisive politics and exclusiveness reflected on many occasions in communal violence and rioting.²⁰ In Jharkhand, by contrast, the absence of those preconditions did not become an obstacle in the evolution of the ethnic upsurges into inter or trans-ethnic movements demanding a state ever since their first such representation before the Simon Commission.²¹

The question then is : Why could not the given initial advantages become an asset in creating a unified, popular national movement in Bengal ? How, even in the absence of those conditions did nationality sentiments, however incipient, take shape in Jharkhand ? What explains such divergences from expected patterns of evolution ?

II

In the broad outlines of the two cases above where the evidence directs us towards generalisations of a contradictory type, what is the logical bearing of evidence for the dialectical understanding of historical events. How does one look for determinations or ask whether the causal chains shaping the events can emanate from the same underlying forces of overall social transformation ? The question also arises; given such cases as we have, how does one evaluate the importance of common properties in the evolution of national movements and nationality consciousness ? Extending the logic of such questions it is also necessary to ask : what is the epistemic status of a factor, say for example, the developing capitalist economy which is considered to be a necessary condition in the making of nations - nationalities ? Implied in this is also the theoretical problem whether the determinations emanating from capitalism are always unidirectional in nature; in other words, are these bound to be what they were in the earlier phases of history ? It is important to clarify this for the fact is that the national awakening in the third world countries has come about before those conditions under which maturation or full development of national entities could take place.

Under the conditions of national awakening in the third world countries, the salience of religion or community-bonds or other traditionally inherited forms of consciousness centred around pre-capitalist structures cannot be of quite the same type. Factors like these which earlier were swept aside by the unifying force of ascendant capitalism can give, and have given, rise to deviant patterns of development in the contemporary third world; the deviant may also be fundamentally different from what were the recurrent sequences of development of nationalities in the earlier phase of capitalism.

What we are witnessing in many ways now is the objective assertion of what were minor distinctions or idiosyncratic tendencies as dominant features. We have to seek to understand how these have come to become stable and determine many a historical variations. That is how religions for instance, while not being an attribute of nationalities historically, have become a factor in splitting potential nationalities into separate national formations. Thus, under certain circumstances, they can be, at any point of time, prospectively a factor but given our theoretical understanding have to be understood in a historically retrospective sense; that is, methodologically, by a process of backward extrapolation.

If these questions have some theoretical relevance in understanding our history in this sub-continent, then we have to ask how the variations between the principal factors and minor ones get determined. In the Marxian perspective on the National Question this is to try to understand the changing nature of causal chains emanating from capitalist developments in the contemporary third world in the dialectical unfolding of events; in our case, the varied crystallisations -- separation or amalgamation -- of people in terms of nationality consciousness as a tendency or nationalities as historical actualities.

In view of the vast range of variations and the presence of the many deviant cases in the unfolding of reality within the third world countries, I think the questions raised above become important if we have to avoid the easy versions of the argument. Explanation in science is incomplete unless it can also equally account for abnormalities and deviations. Marxist theory has been more than adequate in accounting for economic crises and the stunted patterns of economic developments in this era of imperialism. But it seems to me that it has not paid sufficient attention to similar phenomenon in the non-economic spheres of social reality. If the material foundation of society -- the mode of production and the class formations therefrom -- are the main determinants of social forms, then it should be obvious that the character of the contemporary third world capitalism as one of stunted growths and of a retarded nature

will condition the development of social forms in its own peculiar ways. It should be equally obvious that these determinations cannot be of the same nature as in the epoch of rising capitalism. One of its essential features was to bring about all round, independent industrialisation which is no longer so with capitalism in the third world countries. How and in what ways they differ and will continue to differ from those of the period of ascendant capitalism with its revolutionary transformative capacities can only be a matter of concrete investigations. And as consequent implications will vary from one society to another and within societies, there cannot therefore be any a priori transfers of understanding achieved. The impossibility of transition through capitalism or the far from imminent possibility of revolutions create the conditions whereby the imperialist stranglehold over the life processes of these societies and its manipulation and distortions renders many a natural possibilities in our societies redundant; unless, of course, the left forces are powerful enough to provide bulwarks.

None of the spheres of social life can be free of these distorting determinations.

Within the context of the third world countries today, as has been so far last many decades, potentialities and their unpredictable ways of materialising are more important than the given historical actualities of the past. Contemporary Marxist theory on the problem of nationalities and the processes of national evolution or what has come to be known as the national question is largely based on the recurrent sequences of history or past actualities. The result has been that we have not been able to distinguish that what seems common, say market or bourgeoisie, are but non-specific factors - - in the sense that the Market for example has no longer the same consequences for society as it used to have at that time. It has not put itself to rigorous scientific scrutiny after the momentous upheavals of the 19-20 century in Europe from where it got its theoretical underpinning. The theory

is rich in resources, methodological leads and class cues and is therefore capable of both extension and corrigibility. But, often in the analysis of contemporary situations, the past conclusions reached in the context of earlier different concrete situations have tended to become premises today. Methodological orthodoxy requires clear distinctions between what is a precedent with all its contingencies and the essential and fundamental features. Or else the corrigibility of theory is reduced. In the face of a large number of deviant sequences or patterns and empirical peculiarities in the contemporary third world where hidden potentialities fructify in unforeseen ways, explanations based on deductions from old conclusions and formulations carry the risk of becoming apologetics.

In the present article, it is not possible to take up all these issues nor to answer them. In fact, in the course of analysis it would not even be possible to refer to all of them directly but it is hoped that the exposition and treatment will throw some light on these. This will be done, as is obvious by now, by a somewhat detailed examination of two specific cases; that of what happened in pre-partition Bengal and what has been happening in Jharkhand now.

III

The rise of communal exclusiveness among the Muslims of Bengal, especially the communalisation of the peasant consciousness, in the second half of the nineteenth century and the later separatism can be understood better by going back to the pre-colonial phase. The nature and composition of the upper stratum among the Muslim in Bengal at that time and what happens to them with the establishment of the colonial state gives a clue to the later developments centered around the nationalist movement. In the areas ruled by the Muslim kings, Bengal is one of the few exceptions in that there did not emerge a ruling class among the Bengali Muslims in the proper sense of the term. While the Muslims, no doubt, controlled the state and held effective political power, the ruling class in Bengal was overwhelmingly made up of Hindus. Whatever elements from among the (Bengali) Muslims constituted a part of the ruling class, they were so as junior

partners. In this respect the situation in Bengal was quite different from what it was in northern India. The upper stratum of Muslim population in Bengal was largely made up of state officials who were largely drawn from the non-Bengali settlers. Hence the need for a careful distinction of the various upper strata who made up the ruling classes in Bengal.

After the formation of large Zamindaries during the reign of Murshid Quli Khan (Dewan of Bengal 1700-27), by the consolidation of the lapsed estates to simply revenue collection, almost all the Rajahs and the "biggest" Zamindars were Hindus. In the list of 14 Dewany lands at the time of the grant of Dewani to East India Company, there is only one Muslim among them. If we consider the smaller Zamindaris, on the basis of James Grant's calculations, then the position of Muslims is somewhat better but even in this category the Hindus were numerically predominant. And this somewhat better position was also largely confined to eastern Bengal. In most parts of Bengal there were much fewer of Muslim Zamindaries.²⁴ N.K. Sinha is of the view that overall more than three-fourth of the Zamindars, big and small included, were Hindus and a Majority of Talukdars as well were Hindus.²⁵

In sharp contrast to Zamindaries, the Muslims enjoyed a position of preponderance as Jagirdars. Due to the intermittent struggles between the local landlords and the state in feudal India the Muslim rulers in Bengal, as rulers elsewhere, could maintain effective control over the vast areas only through an elaborate network of military establishment, and closely tied to it the administration. Jagirs used to be created for this purpose. These grantees of Jagirs, whether they held offices of state or were only responsible for keeping soldiers collected revenue on their lands but what distinguished them was the nature of their assignment which was liable to be terminated for dereliction of duty or when they retired or died; that is, unlike the zamindars, it was of a non-permanent nature. Through this system every part of the territory was covered with officers of different ranks to keep in check and in awe all the zamindars or rajahs or revenue collectors who were of a hereditary nature and kept grants in

perpetuity. One of the chief functions of the jagirdars was to see that zamindars do not erect fortifications or collected provisions of wars as the state had reasons to be suspicious of them.

This top stratum of the administration was largely made up of Muslims. In the court of Murshidabad, out of a total of 24 jagir holders, 21 were Muslims and only 3 were Hindus.²⁶ Below them were subedars and foudjars who were also largely Muslims. So too were the darogas. In the state services generally, with the exception of revenue department where Hindus were mostly preferred, the Muslims were preponderant.²⁷ In spite of the greatly increased recruitment of Hindus under Murshid Quli Khan, the overall preponderance of Muslims in State services remained largely undisturbed. In certain spheres like judicial administration they in fact enjoyed almost complete monopoly. This continued to be so for a long time even after the British takeover.

While discussing the historical position of such groups as jagirdars and state officials it is not really clear to me how significant a part they were of the ruling classes. While it is undoubtedly true that they had a sizeable share in the social distribution of landed property, yet it is doubtful if they could ever become an organic part of the society.

To raise this point is not to deny their importance. It is quite clear that they enjoyed immense power and higher status in relation to the zamindars; this generally has been the case in the militarised feudalism in India. The purpose of going into this is simply to note that the barriers of language and culture were such that the jagirdars in Bengal remained cut off from the people and could not become an integral part of the society as was the case in much of northern India. This was to prove crucial when they lost power to the British.

It is by now an established fact that these people were non-Bengali in origin, most of them being of Turko-Afghan, Persian, Mughal and Arab descent.²⁸ They spoke Persian, and later Urdu, and did not generally know Bengali. They also lived in urban areas or closed settlements and avoided contact with the local Bengali Muslim population. They were not only racially different but were also structurally alien to the local society. The nature of the relationship of this elite with the peasant masses remained the same right through to the end of the nineteenth century and becomes as we will see, of crucial importance in the rise of communal exclusiveness among the Muslims during the period of nationalist politics. As an aside, the barriers of culture and, more importantly, language got broken down later in the twentieth century. Till this happened, there was little in common between the peasant masses, rural artisans or other working strata and these Muslim elites.

With the establishment of East India Company's rule these Muslim elites did suffer a decline but in the beginning the decline was not every visible or drastic. With the loss of political power the British took over the defense establishment, and the upper stratum consisting of jagirdars, subedars, etc. got knocked out, but it was not in any case numerically very large to have caused widespread disaffection and disruption in the ranks of the community. The dominant position of Muslims in state services continued with some minor alterations in the respective strengths of the communities. There is also the evidence that from 1770s upto the resumption proceedings there was a slow but steady process of displacement of old zamindars by the new monied class of company bunyans, gomasthas, commercial groups, etc. This affected the Hindus too but with the difference that in their case it did not create a communal angle as the land passed from Hindus to Hindus whereas in most cases the transfer of land from Muslims was also to the Hindus. It no doubt created resentment but this process also did not affect too large a section of Muslims as the stable section of the ruling class made up of zamindars were mostly Hindus. State services continued to provide the cushion against any sense of insecurity and threat to the

economic well being of the articulate sections of the Muslim community. One therefore finds little in way of evidence to suggest any widespread discontent among the Muslim upper stratum. On the contrary, they showed open hostility towards the peasant revolts among the Muslims where massive dislocations were taking place leading to violent upsurges as was noted earlier. If anything, the Muslim elites continued to cooperate with the new administration and in limited ways with the Hindu upper strata.²⁹ There was little in way of communal Muslim solidarity of a sense of one single community but a discernible breach on class lines and much more of class collaboration and understanding across the religious lines.

The basis of the later communal exclusiveness and articulation of demands in the name of entire Muslim community as well as the politics centered around these can be found only with the widespread decline in the position of Muslim elites following the switchover from Persian to English and vernacular language in 1837. The decline in the position of non-Bengali Muslim elites in Bengal from 1837 onwards was very rapid and sharp. The links of a causal nature in the rise of Muslim communalism can be discerned more in this pattern of colonially induced transformation than in any thing also like a historically inherited sense of community among the Muslims. Not only that these people did not know English but also lacked proficiency in Bengali language being of non-Bengali origins. 1837 then is the real beginning of their decline. Till then, the Civil Lists show that in different departments Muslims were in good proportions and that their representation in the new judicial administration was as high as 75 per cent.³⁰ But by the mid-1850s the picture had drastically changed. Their number in services and in the employment in schools and colleges show a very sharp decline.³¹

This was a two way process. On the one hand, there was a very rapid decline in the position and status of Muslim in the evolving social set-up. On the other, there was also a slow and imperceptible growth of English education among sections of this declining elite -- the Ashrafs (Respectable people)- and simultaneously there was also a slow swelling

in the ranks of the educated, mostly at the lower levels of education, through the Madrassas, Maktabas, etc. and the new schools which were coming up for the ordinary people who were considered by the former elites as Atrafs (lowly placed). Aspirations for jobs at various levels, especially at the lower ones, among these people was a natural outcome. This was creating the ground of future complementarity between the ascendent sections of the declining erstwhile elite and the slowly swelling rising generations of educated ordinary Bengali Muslims, a large number of whom came of various peasant stocks with those from Jotedars and other rich peasant who were capable of becoming the equals of and providing leadership to the Ashrafs.

As an aside, the initial resistance among the Muslims towards the English education does not seem to be, as is assumed, based merely on religious grounds. It was, I think, largely social. It needs to be noted that the Muslim ashrafs were not the equivalent of Hindu bhadralok (gentlemen). The bhadralok were the aspiring representatives of a new class outlook, even if not an ascendant productive class and whatever their historical limitations as social force Persian and Arabic or Urdu was never their language; it was another alien language which they were forced to learn due to the compulsions of the historical situation. Taking to English was no serious problem for them; it is always easier to give up one alien language for another. In contrast, the ashrafs belonged to a declining and decaying social order-- they were a stratum of the medieval feudalism-- with the backward pull of memories of political power and grandeur and dominance which work as a brake on their acceptance of whatever was new which, after all, had replaced what they perceived to be their heritage or privilege. Moreover, for the ordinary Bengali Muslims who were mostly peasants and artisans the cost of modern English education must have been out of reach as it was imparted, in the beginning, at far away places from their villages and towns; this would be true even for the better off peasants then. For certain sections of Hindu landed and commercial interests, quite numerous at that, such a difficulty was not an insurmountable one, although other pressing reasons also added to the urge for English education among them.

Coming back to the main story, the implications of the slow growth of education among Muslims started surfacing clearly around the time of the widespread awakening of the national sentiments in the country, more particularly in Bengal. By the turn of the century with the opening of more and more schools, education became for the Muslims of Bengal the main source of striving for mobility. By 1903-4, the rate of increase among the school-going Muslim pupils was strikingly higher than in the pupils belonging to other religious communities. The 1911 Census reports also show that the expansion of education among Muslims was more rapid.³²

It was out of this process of growth of English education within the background provided by the general disintegration of erstwhile elites that the character of the new stirring and modern awakening got conditioned. The first clear manifestation of this awakening was the formation of the Mohamedan literary and scientific society founded by Abdul Latif in 1863.³³ It was followed some fifteen years later by the National Muhammeden Association of Calcutta by Sayed Amir Ali.³⁴ Both of these "gentlemen" claimed Arab-Persian descent, were from Urdu speaking background, were ignorant of or lacked proficiency in Bengali and were therefore not quite equipped for regular communication with peasant masses. The essential difference between the two of them and in the orientations of the organisations founded by them was, to put it in convenient terms,³⁵ like the difference between Raja Radha Kanta Deb and Raja Ram Mohan Roy; one was more traditional and the other was more modern. Abdul Latif while opting for modern scientific education and English language was very concerned with the preservation of Islamic values and tradition while Syed Amir Ali was little bothered about the consequences of modern education. Apart from their many other activities, both of them were deeply involved with problems of spreading education among the Muslims and securing jobs through reservations for Muslims in various institutions which were being created then. Their activities and the appeals to government had a ready response among the newly educated Muslim masses who found themselves badly disadvantaged vis-a-vis their Hindu brethren in the competitive arenas.

The emergence of these organisations and the politics emanating from these can be taken as heralding a break in the pattern of Muslim orientation towards power and politics as well as that of the colonial rulers. It signifies the acceptance of the British rule by the Muslims. But, more significantly, it represents the growth and ascendance of the politics of community oriented secular demands among the Muslims. From these "representative" bodies, whatever their religious orientations and concerns, there were less and less of religious demands but a growing clamour for educational facilities and concessions, jobs and reservations, institutional safeguards for effective and stable share in power. Their general political stance represents also a break at the conscious level of thought to cut themselves off from the Hindus; a negation of earlier trends and the beginning of exclusiveness.

The reaction of the enlightened Hindu representative was one of hostility to the entire range of these secular demands.³⁶ So long as the thinking among the Muslims was purely religious there was understandably a sort of indifference on the part of Hindus of all political hues but when it gave place to the tide of rising secular demands, the change was met with a lack of comprehension and often open hostility. These subjective reactions, important in themselves in partially structuring the pattern of responses among the Muslim "representatives,"³⁷ were not the most crucial dimension for future politics.

Much more crucial was the time factor in these developments. This was the period of the beginning of constitutional concessions and the creation of first representative institutions as well as the emergence of Indian National Congress as the Indian nationalist forum. With the coming into force of the Local Self Government Act (1885-87), all Local Boards were almost entirely captured by the Hindu Landlords and the District Boards were shared between the Hindu landlords and Hindu pleaders.³⁸ These institutions were perceived by all including the Muslim opinion not only as symbols of status and prestige but as the important sources of power to further or block the aspirations and for

the distribution of patronage to consolidate one's power. Muslim opinion was that these institutions were used by the Hindus in a highly partisan manner.³⁹

This interlocking in time of certain development, the organised anti-colonial movement, the growth of representative institutions and their capture by certain classes and groups belonging to one religious community and the perceived blocking of the aspirations and the rising tide of demands from the elitist section among the Muslims seem to be one of the more important factors in stabilising the incipient trends of the politics of communal exclusiveness for the next few decades. There was nothing intrinsic in the way of communal identity or pre-capitalist religious ideology. It was basically a modern, although historically a disruptive, development; modern in the sense that it was rooted entirely in the forces of modern economy and politics and made demands largely secular in content.

To seek an explanation of such a phenomenon in a historically inherited objective basis of a sense of community among the Muslim (peasantry) -- something that creates an identity or bond between the muslim elites and peasant masses⁴⁰ -- would be erroneous. It is not clear whether in the first place there was anything like a peasant community in Bengal either among the Muslims or Hindus. Opinion exists among some of the experts which shows that much before the establishment of British rule the peasant communities had largely disintegrated and that private landed property had existed for long in Bengal.⁴¹ It is also reflected in the Dayabhaga school of law which prevailed in Bengal wherein private landed property is explicitly recognised.⁴² It is not clear if the village was the basis of revenue assessment like in north India or what was the standing of village headman or chowkidar. Hollingbery is of the opinion that the Zamindars had usurped the rights of the village headmen and assessed the khodkhasht ryots directly for revenue.⁴³ Similar opinion can be found in Hunter.⁴⁴ Specially with respect to the Muslims among the peasants it seems extremely doubtful if there existed any conception among them of being a distinct community politically separated by religion.

Rapid conversions of very large numbers without clearly established contacts with the outside Muslim world made such a possibility difficult. Researches in this area show⁴⁵ that systematic first steps towards converting this religiously amorphous growing mass of Muslims among the peasants were being taken only towards the middle of the nineteenth century. It is also not clear whether if by the beginning of twentieth century the efforts to do so were entirely successful. It seems to me that finally it was the specific character of the secular politics which allowed the Muslims to act in the manner of a unified community. And this unification itself was due to the coming together of two strands of communal developments; one, which we have seen in some details, tied up with the fluctuating fortunes of the erstwhile elites and the other connected with the peasant discontent and its conversion into religious stirrings and communal politics. A careful disentangling of the causal chains that went into the making of and coming together of these strands is needed to see how the class and political forces, both indigeneous and colonial, generated fears and hesitations among the Muslims about joining with other Bengalis in a common movement of Bengali people for national emancipation.

To come back to the nature of the growing communal exclusiveness, one finds that it was initially largely elitist and urban, both in terms of being oriented to the aspirations of elites in urban areas as well as in being manipulated by these elite groups. An analysis of the composition of the two "representative" organisations mentioned earlier also shows that they were heavily dominated by non-Bengali Muslims living in urban areas. In the case of the Mohamedan Literary Society of Abdul Latif, there was additionally a heavy representation on their executive bodies of the decadent former Muslim ruling families from Oudh, Mysore, Murshidabad, etc.⁴⁶ The communal exclusiveness engendered by these organisations was not only elitist but had little in way of peasant content to it. Most of those who constituted these bodies were not very much aware of the conditions of Bengali Muslim peasants. In this they were no different from the Hindu bhadralok whom they derided for showing

abysmal ignorance of Muslim masses. In fact these people were not even conscious of a totally different kind of a religious-communal stir that was occurring in the countryside among the Muslim peasants in which there was a complex intermingling of the elements of revivalism, purification, social mobility and secular aspirations. It was a parallel communal stir, the contours of which have been delineated by Rafiddin Ahmed,⁴⁷ with no links or little communication with the elitist communal exclusiveness of Calcutta, Dacca, Murshidabad, Chittagong and other urban centres. This religious stir in the countryside was largely diffused and was led by the local Mullahs and Moulavis espousing views that have been categorised as either fundamentalist or reformist. The peasant responsiveness was conditioned by the fact that these religious movements arose after the suppression and defeat of repeated peasant uprisings such as the Indigo revolt and Pabna disturbances. The defeated peasantry was in a despondent and sullen mood and without a leadership or spokesmen for the emerging new politics.

These religiously oriented community reform movements were more akin to, if a comparison can be made for the sake of clarification, the movements among, what later came to be known as, the Namasudra community;⁴⁸ they have very little in common with what was happening among the elites and the newly educated. And interestingly, what was happening among the Namasudras met with surprisingly similar responses as did the Muslim movements from the enlightened Hindus.⁴⁹

In such an atmosphere when exclusiveness was on the rise and the different religious communities were drifting away from each other and engaged in mutual recriminations that the colonial rulers choose to intervene in the situation as the champions of the Muslim interests. Mere intentions or manipulations could not have succeeded to the extent that they did succeed. The space had already been created for the divisive manoeuvres by the colonial rulers. The success of the colonial state in its policy of divide and rule has to be seen in this complex interplay of several social forces. Imperialist manipulations can work only through

indigeneous classes and social forces by playing upon their predilections. The political configuration in Bengal at that time was ripe for such an intervention. Apart from this, it is also important to take note of the inherent historical tendencies that became handy for the colonial rulers. First, there is the tendency in all newly ascendent groups to lean upon, if available, state protection to consolidate their position; most emergent social groups in India initially sought protection of the colonial state. What happened in the case of Muslims was not dissimilar to what had happened earlier among the other communities including Hindus. But the consequences in these two cases were however drastically different. It was so largely because the Muslim collaboration coincided with the growing anti-colonial tide; that is, was not so much the pattern of collaboration but its timings that led to disastrous results. Secondly, it is of the essence of constitutional politics and parliamentary bourgeois reformism to seek and encourage concessions through bargaining. Rapidly spreading bourgeois politics and constitutionalism were strengthening this and generating an outlook among the educated that can only be characterised as one of wheeling-dealing. During this period, with the defeat of militant peasant upsurges and with no other radical alternative historically feasible in the Indian context, the strong tendency of many of the organised political forces was to function in this ethos for benefits only. Some aspects of the politics of the newly formed Indian National Congress in terms of tactics was no different even though it was the forum of national awakenings and anti-colonial tendencies.

The calculated response⁵⁰ of the British rulers vis-a-vis the Muslim aspirations and demands was to encourage bargaining and keep the flow of concessions at a level critical enough to impede the development of alternative modes of thought and struggle among the Muslims. Given the relative backwardness of the Muslims in Bengal and the partial gains for them out of this kind of politics, when Reverend Long⁵⁰ and W.W. Hunter⁵¹ or Viceroy Ripon and Dufferin⁵² took to supporting the Muslim cause, they were perceived more as friends by the elites and the emerging

spokesmen of the educated sections from among the Muslim peasantry. As these colonial champions of Muslims echoed what the emergent Muslim "representative" wanted there grew a kind of rapport between them. The politics of these Muslim "representative" elites became in practice a counter-elite movement⁵³ beneficial both to the narrow sectarian interests as well as to the calculations of the colonial state. This is how the social space was created for the policy of divide and rule to take roots and disrupt the unity of toiling masses which was so much in evidence in popular revolts in which intervention from above was absent or minimal.

Side by side, peasant discontent was growing with the commercialisation of agriculture with serious repercussions for the correlation of political forces in Bengal. This was so because of the defeat of militant peasant movements which forced the peasantry to withdraw from the scene as active and direct political participants. With the stabilisation of constitutional bourgeois reformism the only way of drawing the peasantry as an active partner in the national awakening at the time was through the propagation among the peasant masses of a radical agrarian programme. But the land relations in Bengal with their communal overlap became a major obstacle.

The ramifications of the commercialisation, particularly, of the jute crop, which was grown mostly in Muslim majority areas and largely on small holdings by the poorer sections of peasantry, for the national question in Bengal were far reaching. The importance of jute, on top of it being a major export crop, grew tremendously with the establishment and expansion of jute-textile industry;⁵⁴ this industry in Bengal along with the cotton-textile in Bombay accounted for the major share of total aggregate investments in modern industry in India at the turn of the century.⁵⁵ Jute thus also established a close and direct nexus between agriculture and industry and made the peasant an unaware victim of the fluctuations in world-market prices. The growth of jute textiles also led to an expansion in the role of trading and usurious capital, over and above the general tendency in agriculture, as indicated by the higher interest rates on loans in the jute growing

belts of eastern and northern Bengal;⁵⁶ This was in addition to the traditional forms of loans like dadon (mortgaging of crop for loan).

Given the poor sources of income, high debt relative to current income became a major fetter on this section of the peasantry. In this debt relationship, the credit market was actually broken up into a number of small credit markets with limited spatial spread. For the debtor the proximity, which in general provides security, became a danger here in eastern Bengal -- a real threat to life and property because the money-lenders being mostly Hindus became an easy target of Muslim peasantry in the atmosphere of rising communal tensions and rioting.⁵⁸ This fear of violence to life and property from the peasantry perhaps also explains why, inspite of high indebtedness, there was much less of land alienation as compared to southern and western portions of Bengal. Any inferences or generalisations about economic trends in the pre-partition agrarian economy of Bengal from data about land alienation need to be cautiously drawn.

These developments in the agrarian situation in Bengal in many ways overlapped, as is well-known, the community wide divide in the distribution of landed property where a great majority of big Zamindars and rentiers were Hindus.⁵⁹ When developing capitalist penetrations of agrarian economy capitalised the value of land, of improvements and clearing of wastes or jungles and fixed the demand on this value through competitive rents it was not without repercussions for the communalisation of peasant consciousness. Associated processes like the tendency towards increasing surplus extraction and alienation through debt and credit operated in terms of Hindu money-lenders and landlords and Muslim tenants; the communal implications are too obvious to need elaboration. In this mode of exploitation and surplus extraction, landed inequality and increasing differentiations within the peasantry became less and less important in the perception of the contradictions by the Muslims among the

peasant masses. Landlordism-- Hindu Zamindars -- stood as a screen between the people and imperialism and imperialism astutely used it to divide the people by acting as the champion of the downtrodden Muslims; here then was the economic basis which reinforced the effectiveness of the policy of divide and rule.

Out of this process of churning and change, when the first alternative leadership was emerging from among the (Bengali) Muslim peasantry -- Fazalul Huq can rightly be taken as the first major leading spokesman of this trend⁶¹ -- it was partly a child of this new stir among the peasantry and was also partly conditioned by the prevailing bourgeois-communal ethos of the time. This twin impact largely determined the perspective of politics of this new leadership as well as their predilections and aspirations and expectations. Hence this leadership from, and by, its very formation was caught in a series of ambivalences born of the contradictions in the situation. It had, on the one hand, limited complementarities with elitist non-Bengali Muslim leadership (sections of which, by now, were getting merged, due to downward nobility, into the Bengali community) as it also needed a share in power, educational facilities, jobs, etc. being an emergent section of the socially oppressed and economically exploited classes. It had, on the other hand, radical agrarian orientations because by its origin, composition and material interests, it had to fight the Zamindari revenue system and the rack-renting associated with it as well as the related demands for its surplus by landlordism and merchant and usurious capital. Being in the thick of the peasant question it had natural inclinations and affinities towards the entire peasantry and yet to consolidate itself in the leadership it fell back upon communal appeals in its competition with both the established and recognised elitist leadership of the Muslims as well as the nationalist leadership, which in Bengal remained pronouncedly pro-Zamindar even when it needed to go in for mass mobilisations as during the 1920's and 1930's. The nationalist leadership in Bengal was consistently suspicious and fearful of awakened peasantry--Hindu or Muslim. In such a situation, ambivalence became the chief characteristic of the new Muslim peasant

leadership and not exclusiveness as was the case with the politics centered around the urban (non-Bengali) Muslim elites. The political vacillations as a result of these ambivalences were perfectly personified in the chequered political career of Fazlul Huq.⁶²

Within this politics of ambivalence, there were many occasions of potential radical break. Starting with peasant Conferences and Praja Samitis through the Nikhil Banga Praja Samity and its culmination in the Krishak Praja Party,⁶³ there were moments of dramatic tussle between the big landed interests represented by Akram Khan, Abdur Rahim and the younger and radical sections under Fazlul Huq. On more than one occasion during this period the radical elements routed the city bred "aristocratic" leadership and finally ousted them from the party,⁶⁴ who then formed themselves into a party representing the Muslim landlord interests called the United Muslim party.⁶⁵ The weak structural position of the Muslim peasantry and the sharp political splits within its rank were such that the radical leadership of the peasants needed a democratic ally to consolidate itself. Congress in Bengal by its class orientations and partly due to the compulsions created by the directives of the High Command could not act as a catalyst in furthering this process.⁶⁶ What was needed was a politics that could widen the growing gulf between the warring class interests among the Muslims. In the absence of a strong independent left movement, (the CPI - the Communist party of India was still in the process of striking roots), the only way to win over the peasantry, especially the alienated Muslims was by offering a radical democratic programme. Barring the limited and feeble efforts of C.R. Das or the Bose brothers, the Congress leadership in Bengal showed a consistent insensitivity to the emerging radical and secular possibilities inherent within the peasant politics in Bengal. The historically conditioned class outlook and myopic obsessions with their own cultural and social values and standards of the Bengali Bhadrakalok politicians led, on the one hand, to a complete rupture with the peasantry, as is also evidenced by their attitude to Namasudras, and its political stances, especially on the land

question on the other, created the ironical situation where the politics of one of the most secularised and socially emancipated sections of the nationalist leadership in India also became, inferentially, a very narrowly circumscribed politics in its communal and class content; that of the concerns and interests of the Bengali middle classes with rentier interests, and thus of the Hindu landlords. While most of them most of the time shouted hoarse at the British efforts to divide and rule they could not even once offer a democratic programme and alternative to the peasantry -- the Muslim peasant interest from the national point of view -- to thwart the game of imperialism and their local henchmen. This complete rupture with the peasants was in essence, the crux of the national question in Bengal but the rupture was not a straightforward one. It was also communal in content and future thrust. The Hindu section of the peasantry however hostile it felt towards the landlords, had no choice but to politically go along with them when the question of separatism became foremost. There was no such compulsion with the Muslim section of the peasantry.

The choice for building a future united Bengali nationality was an open one till the late 1930s. It was only after the dramatic showing of Fazlul Haq in 1937 and the inability of the Congress to accept his offer and isolate the Muslim League and following this Fazlul Haq's equally dramatic political antics⁶⁷ and subsequent collapse that the Muslim League leadership could get firmly into the saddle to see through to the division of Bengal and partition of India. The peasant masses among the Muslims swung hither and thither as masses do even now when left to the mercies of unbridled bourgeois politics, unable to make out who is for them or, at least, less hostile to them.

Whether such swings implied, or imply, an ideological change in the peasant consciousness about politics and world is not the right kind of question.⁶⁶ It misses out on a crucial element in the peasantry's struggle for survival under conditions of unbridled bourgeois- landlord politics. Peasant ideological consciousness is made up of contradictory elements; radical sensibilities seeking emancipation from oppression and

blatant form of exploitation and on the other hand traditionally inherited beliefs, values and institutions into which the peasantry, left to itself, can withdraw in self-defense. It very much depends on the situation and the point at which we seek evidence, whether, given the objective openings in the situation, it is on the offensive and militant activity or when defeated or facing defeat it withdraws into its inherited world to seek relative security. Under such conditions as existed at the time we are investigating, to ask such a question about ideological change in its consciousness is to land ourselves into a kind of empiricism out of which there can be no escape except futile debates.

It is this character of peasant consciousness and resultant propensities towards diverse and contradictory political positions, pronouncedly so under conditions of stunted capitalist growth wherein the peasantry faces disintegration but does not get dissolved, that complicates in a lasting way the National Question in countries like ours.

The only condition that can ensure a stable shift in the ideological moorings of the peasantry is the growth of enduring, independent peasant organisations under the working class parties. Otherwise, the stresses and strains of daily struggle for survival give to peasant politics the character of an unstable, shifting phenomenon. In the absence of working class leadership, the very nature of shifts of the peasant representatives and with them the peasantry from one political formation into another is dictated by the hopeless hopes of finding some escape from the daily grind to which peasantry, especially its poorer sections, are subjected.

It is therefore, important to take note of the fact that the only available alternatives for the peasantry, right through to the beginnings of 1940s, were so many bourgeois reformist political formations. The Communist Party was still too weak because of its very uneven development in the Bengal province as a whole and so were the mass organisations of the party to stem the tide of communalism. Even by 1946 when it had made rapid strides and could lead a member of militant democratic struggles in defense of the peasantry and working class, the communist party was forced

on the defensive in the face of the communal onslaught in the shape of the second wave of communal rioting after the Direct Action Call by Jinnah.

Now if we take a synoptic view of the overall situation, then we have clues for answers to some vital questions, although there are no answers as yet: For example: why was there no sustained secular movement among the Muslim middle classes including the rising intelligentsia? Or, why did the divergences at critical moments between the communal and class dimensions not fructify a persistent secular trend and ended, instead, in a new convergence between the communal and class interests within the Muslim community? What seemed to have happened in terms of mass support for the different political formations among Muslims were not the rapid shifts in peasant consciousness and ideology but the readiness of peasantry to try out the available alternatives presented by the competing leaderships of ruling classes; much the same as it happens now.

The national question in Bengal was not tied up not just with communalism pure and simple but much more so with a different kind of bifurcation of politics among Hindus and Muslims in terms of its content. Muslim peasant demands were, and became increasingly, essentially economic and the nationalist programme which in the eyes of Muslims was mainly Hindu politics was primarily political. Imperialism astutely manipulated this bifurcation by telling the Muslims that you should not join with the Congress-- Hindus -- whose demands are essentially political and therefore cannot be met. But the purely economic demands of the Muslims can be largely met and that Muslims by going alone stand to gain. This implicit message was received quite clearly by sections of Muslim peasant leadership coming out of Jotedar and rich peasant families. The incipient pattern of collaboration with colonial powers set during the phase of counter-elite movements got strengthened resulting in a rapid depletion in the ranks of democratic peasant movements.

It is obvious by now that in this game it is only imperialism which gained, neither Muslims nor Hindus.

IV

The weakening of ethnic-tribal boundaries and slow developments towards inclusive or inter-tribal movements and their specific content have created problems of categorisation; do we call them ethnic stirrings, nationality-oriented movements or a process of national crystallisation, tribal chauvinism and militancy or what else. But one tendency can be clearly noticed which is quite the reverse of what has been seen in the case of Bengali; that is, with the slow penetration of capitalist forces and their modes of exploitation, people belonging to different ethnic groups have come closer together rather than move away from each other. The given social divisions traditionally inherited could not become impediments or obstacles within this society. In this coming together of people of diverse ethnic stocks and their persistent demand for recognition as a distinct national group and for territorial demarcation on that ground, the question whether the politics centered around it is progressive or reactionary and chauvinistic is of different order. Without prejudging the issue at this point, we still have to distinguish between the historical tendencies and the political positions and activities that grow around them. The problem of supporting or opposing a given movement is more a question of the politics and its larger implications and not just of the recognition of the historical tendencies. In this section, I will concentrate mainly on identifying and locating the underlying historical tendencies and their consequences for the character of politics in this region.

Let us then begin by taking note of what has come to be seen as the essence of the economic developmental process in the region. Among the local people an attitude has taken root, which can be inferred more clearly from their practice, as we will soon see, that makes people look

at growth and justice as totally antithetical processes; this seems to be so with both the tribal groups and the indigeneous non-tribal populations. It is a curious fact that if they agitate and succeed against the construction of an irrigation project of a modern type or a big industry which is supposed to generate massive employment they take it as a gain. If they fail to block them they look at themselves as losers. There is an interesting incident, alleged to be true, which I think highlights better than anything else this dilemma. A team of government officials was carrying out a survey to link up an inaccessible, remote region with a motorable road. The local people gathered around and pleaded against the construction of the road even if its absence means great difficulty in commuting in and out of the region. This, on the face of it, sounds astonishing. When drawn into a dialogue, they said that the road would open up their region to the "Dikus" and with the dikus the police; that is, to exploitation and terror. This little incident, if true, captures the fears and apprehensions and the reverse side of aspirations of the local people.

In this sense, the predilections, preferences and demands of the people in Jharkhand cannot be categorised as regionalism, as it is generally understood. Regionalism essentially is a demand for more and more resources and special privileges for one's region. This characteristic cuts off this region from the other volatile tribal belts of north-east India; it is therefore also important not to look at all turbulence in the areas inhabited by tribes as one and the same as has been the tendency. In the north-eastern regions there is a clamour for bigger projects and heavier government investments; quite the opposite is the case in the Jharkhand region where such developmental activities are looked at as leading to land alienation and pauperisation. More on this later. But, this opposition to and agitation against big public sector enterprises and nationalisation and the militancy and fervour of the self-mobilised upsurges or movements led by various local political parties and formations have also put the politics of this region at variance with and often in direct opposition to the general thrust of the left movement in the country. If one stands for nationalisation, public sector, heavy basic

industry, heavier investments in irrigation and power, the other is, on the face of it, opposed to each of this. The argument just based on the needs of the democratic movement or national development does not seem to have any attraction for the people of this region. It is easy to explain away this as a case of traditional tribal isolationism and primitive outlook and misguided fanatic sectarianism. But matters are not quite so simple.

First of all, the major ethnic groups in this region, both tribal and non-tribal have not been "primitives" for a long time at least; they are sturdy peasants for the last few hundred years as anywhere else in the country without, of course, the debilitating inequalities and oppressions of the caste system and of the rigid stratifications based on that. Secondly, they are ready and eager to take to double cropping, fertilizers, high-yielding-varieties of seeds and so forth and they have been forthcoming whole-heartedly to cooperate with voluntary organisations, governmental agencies or political groups which want to help renovate old tanks or rebuild old irrigation canals, etc.; an orientation and an attitude that cannot obviously be a part of traditional or primitive outlook. To understand this dilemma of contradictory postures we have to take note of a distinctive feature of the impact and consequences of capitalist penetration and incorporation of such tribal regions which puts them apart from other nationally distinct regions.

In the creation of the industrial working class, since the last quarter of the 19th century, sizeable to overwhelming part of it was drawn from the indigeneous population. This has been so in almost all the regions of the country. Tribal regions clearly stand out as exception to this pattern. Jharkhand, much more than any other tribal region, is a glaring example of this because it is also one of the very heavily industrialised regions⁶⁹ of India. It also has a very large concentration of extractive and mining industry.⁷⁰ Heavy industrialisation after independence and extensive growth of mining and extractive industry prior to that has not created a stable working class from among the tribals or

other indigeneous people. No sizeable section of the tribal population gained entry into the working class except as lowly paid unskilled workers. Their status is not exactly analogous to that of the proletariat in the early phase of capitalism in Europe where periodic hiring and firing of workers from among the standing reserve of labourers was a rule. Now under conditions of technological sophistication capitalist industry has a relatively stable core of highly skilled workers. Under this category, an overwhelmingly large majority is made up of people who have come from different regions of the country with a very meagre representation of indigeneous population--tribals or non-tribals. Most of these local people including non-tribals like Kurmi-Mahatos, Muslim "Mominis" or Scheduled castes constitute a proletariat of a very special kind; scavengers, "Khalasis", peons, and such other categories. Such a differential access to jobs, wages and conditions of work has been much more pronounced in the mining sector where word of mouth contracts have been a rule, at least till the nationalisation of coal mines in 1971.⁷¹

As a feature it needs to be stressed that such a position in the industrial sector does not go to makeup a working class in the proper sense of the term. They can be easily dispensed with at a day's notice as a pair of hands is as good as another. It is reported that in the wake of nationalisation of coal mines in 1971 which ensured greater security of work, better working conditions and wages, as many as 50,000 tribals, it is claimed, lost their jobs in the Dhanbad region alone;⁷² all this in about a week's time. Thus, one of the necessary characteristic of a class -- relative permanance in a socially determined productive process--is lacking among a great majority of the local recruits among the industrial work force. They are workers in the industry but not an industrial working class proper. They have been found more useful as industrial vagabonds.

The position of the local inhabitants in regard to the public services in the tertiary sector is no better. This is so inspite of the constitutional provisions regarding reservations in jobs for these people. The reports of the government agencies clearly reveal this.

Table - 1
Share of Scheduled Tribes in Services (%)

<u>Classes of Service</u>	<u>Public Sector Undertakings</u>	<u>Central Government Service</u>
I	0.30	0.6
II	0.42	0.6
III	5.97	2.3
IV (Excluding Sweepers)	11.93	4.0

Source: Report of the Commission of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, 1974-5.

It is obvious from the figures in the table above that the tribals are largely concentrated in the low grade, low income jobs. All the positions of officers and such other jobs requiring specialised knowledge are with the immigrants who constitute about 10 to 15 per cent of the total population of the region.⁷³

The stabilisation of the status of the indigeneous working people into positions of unskilled and semi-skilled labour which oscillates between work and unemployment and remains in a state of constant migratory movement between urban and rural settings has led to the creation of an ethnic sub-proletariat. The position of these people in relation to those from the plains is analogous to what used to be the position of Irish workers to the English or today that of the immigrant blacks to white workers in the advanced capitalist countries, may be even worse. Such a division of labour in the local market-where they are also numerically very sizeable or dominant unlike the black immigrants -- which is so crucial for the national market, is prone to give rise to ideological convulsions among the people. In the absence of strong and stable left organisations these can be used by various political groups having different affinities with the state power, imperialist machinations, sectarian forces, etc.

The difference in the relative position of the local inhabitants and immigrants cannot just be accounted for by the sudden spurt in industrialisation in the region or the concomitant growth of the tertiary sector. This has been a characteristic feature of the region ever since the opening of mines in the regions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The state power in independent India is therefore responsible for what has happened to the indigeneous population of the region. It was aware of the conditions and tendencies and had all the time to take remedial action and prepare the local people to be equal partners in the massive developments in their region; this could be done even in terms of the class limitations of the state power so that the sharpening division between the local inhabitants and outsider could have been arrested and reverted.

The prospects of the tribals entering the work force as other than non-skilled manual labourers or other than non-technical low grade services in sizeable numbers and in a stable position do not also seem to be any better in the (near) future. It is by now a well known fact that in new industry, more so in the public sector, the proportion of blue and white collar workers has increased in relation to the unskilled categories. This would mean that employment prospects are not going to get any better among the less educated and educationally backward groups as all tribals are. There is no evidence of any perspective planning to train these people through crash programmes to make them fit for such jobs. On the contrary, all evidence points to the fact that the prospects are not going to get any better. On the contrary, for the period which we are broadly considering, there has been a net decline in the proportion of direct plan assistance meant for the "uplift" of the tribals. In the first five year plan the Special Scheduled Tribe Expenditure stood at 0.88 per cent of the total plan spendings and this progressively came down to stand at 0.46 per cent in the fourth plan;⁷⁴ a fall of almost 50 per cent. The rate of increase in the level of literacy among the tribals is lower than among the scheduled castes. Between 1961 and 1971 census it went up in the case of Scheduled Tribes from 8.53 per cent to 11.30

per cent (which is 30 per cent plus) whereas in the case of Scheduled Castes it went up from 10.27 per cent to 14.67 per cent (which is 43 per cent plus). According to the figures available in the 1971 census⁷⁵ the percentage of the economically active proportion among the tribals was 57 per cent as against 43 per cent among the general population. Also, the proportion of ~~males~~ males to females in the working population among tribals is 3:1 as against national figure of 5:1.⁷⁶ Most of the tribal work force is engaged in primary sector, that is, 91 per cent as compared to the general average of 73 per cent and only 3 per cent of them are in secondary sector whereas the figure for the same with the general population is 16 per cent.⁷⁷ Interestingly out of a total of 400 occupations listed in the "code of Occupation" by the Census organisation only 69 were found to be existing in the Santal Pargana⁷⁸ of the Jharkhand region.

Given the nature of economic activity; the high level of employment is not an indicator of well-being but low dependence and forced participation. The nature of their work is such that it seriously impedes skill formation nor does it allow them to support dependents for long periods which is required for acquiring education or learning of skill. The inability to support dependent clearly comes out in the low percentage of the tribal non-working population going to schools; only 3.46 per cent of them are full time students as against 16.55 among the general population⁷⁹ and this low percentage is itself an important indicator of the future prospects.

The socio-political implications of this situation and the intensity of its impact on popular consciousness has to be much pronounced in the Jharkhand and especially the Chota Nagpur region where large-scale growth of public sector heavy industry, massive public investment in power and irrigation projects and mining is much higher than in many other regions of the country. There is evidence of continuing pauperisation at each successive phase of industrial development or modernisation of existing facilities like in coal mining or even the nationalisation of traditional income generating sources. We have already noted the replacement of

local workers by immigrants in the wake of nationalisation of coal mines in 1971 which resulted in greater job security, better working conditions and higher wages. In a different way the nationalisation of the Tendu leaf, honey and other forest products led to clashes between the tribals and the state authorities;⁸⁰ the collection centres are few and far between and the tribals given the dire need for cash need to sell these things every few days and find it impossible to travel long distances of 30-40 kilometers for a few days collection where the fare is equal to earnings.

Far more serious is the pauperisation caused by large-scale land alienation in the wake of heavy industrialisation especially of big public sector projects. This process of alienation from land which was largely arrested after a series of ferocious and bloody revolts throughout the nineteenth century started again in a big way with the onset of these projects. In the studies undertaken to assess this,⁸¹ it has been found that during the first three 5 year plans more than 50,000 tribal families and over 10,000 schedule caste families have been uprooted for construction of public sector projects alone. This figure excludes the auxiliary industries that have grown up around these projects nor does it count the displacements due to the legal conversion of agricultural land as non-agricultural for the required growth of townships and urban centres. Chota Nagpur plateau has witnessed a very rapid rate of urbanisation; the number of towns has gone up from 13 in 1901 to 34 in 1951 to 96 in 1971.⁸² The process has gone on ever since the third plan period covered by these studies as more and more projects like the Bokaro (Steel Plant) or Tesnughat Super Thermal power plants have come up later and many such big projects like Koel Kero reservoir is proposed. While such alienation of land is unavoidable in many cases for national development the attendant pauperisation is certainly avoidable. But the state has totally failed to act for even such limited interests of these people.

Roy-Burman's detailed study⁸³ around one such project shows the utter failure of the compensation mechanisms created by the state. It shows that only 16 per cent⁸⁴ could make full use of the compensation and the others got cheated out of the cash in many dubious ways. The overwhelming majority of these people were reduced to the status of low grade manual work like scavengers and other unskilled categories;⁸⁵ the largest within the unskilled became "Khalasi".⁸⁶ What is now happening due to displacement from land has given rise to what Roy-Burman aptly described as the "displacement-compensation-displacement continuum" and this is happening most rapidly with the post-independent industrialisation or urbanisation and the way it is happening, provides some kind of a direct link with what had happened earlier to their land due to the depredations, loot and plunder at the hands of traders, usurious money-lenders and landlords from outside their region immediately following the takeover by the British. In a curious way, the state has now come to have, in the popular imagination, the status equivalent to that of the predatory colonial agents. As far as the popular consciousness is concerned there are elements of continuity with the past as part of the popular store of memories; a continuity both in terms of the state behaviour which is perceived as an outside alien authority and the land alienation which persists due to various reasons and is a matter of life and death for the people who manage just to eke out a subsistence out of it.

This mode of exploitation and the agents or agencies through which it is carried out has become the main source of unification of insiders against the outsider-exploiters, the Dikus. This is a prime factor in the collapse of ethnic boundaries in the domain of politics between various tribes on the one hand and the tribals and the non-tribal local groups like the Kurmi-Mahato peasantry or the Muslim weavers on the other. The persistence of the tribal shell is now important only for social occasions and for ritual or marriage reasons but is no longer of political significance in the way people mobilise themselves or respond to appeals by the political activists in the region; this pattern of mobilization is the same both in popular agrarian struggles⁸⁸ or in reactionary chauvinistic politics; for instance, when ruling class agents like Kartick Oraon operate

they do so no longer in terms of tribal groups.⁸⁹ In the process that we are witnessing there is, no doubt, the presence of tribes and non-tribals but there is however little evidence; any more, of tribalism as a pattern of politics.

The erosion of ethnicity as a factor in politics is reflected in the growth of unities or divisions and conflicts that cut across ethnic boundaries. In spite of the various ideological differences and divisions between the numerous political formations, all the major political formations and their alliances,⁹⁰ which are based on inter-ethnic support, are one and persistent in demanding a territorial demarcation for the region of Jharkhand; either statehood within the multi-national Indian federation or a high degree of autonomy. There is a tendency in the region which seems to be gaining strength whereby the people of this region now counterpose their identity as Jharkhandis as against the Dikhus. It is this feature of the politics in the region which gives the nationality dimension to the growing self-awareness among the people.

What moreover has been significant as a determining influence in this process is the pervasive character of oppression and a common sense of strangulation among all the people across the ethnic affiliations. There is hardly any evidence of the (emergent) ruling classes -- bourgeoisie or landlords being the carriers of the national aspirations ~~national aspirations~~ or of the refraction of nationality consciousness among the people. The political divisions and the contradictory ideological postures prevailing among the people are due more to the assimilation of social groups through contrary aspirations born of living under a pervasive bourgeois condition. The bourgeois condition is the source of numerous ideological currents ranging from left extremism to all varieties of right reaction. These currents float in the socio-political atmosphere partly in the shape of ideas and on occasions acquiring an organisational form. They are picked up by the people and combine in many ways with their existing discontents in terms of their life-experiences and influences -- both personal and impersonal -- working upon them and acquire

many forms of manifest content in terms of the issues that get thrown up from time to time. This character of the peasant politics is predominant in all those areas where there are no powerful left organisation to lead the peasant masses and where the peasantry is largely left to fend for itself. In any case, this is an aspect that cannot be gone into here as it would require a longer treatment than space would permit. Let us now come back to the class situation among the local ethnic groups and their implications for the politics of this region.

Let us first make it clear that among the local inhabitants of this region there is no bourgeoisie in any sense of the term. Not a single industrialist or a bourgeois entrepreneur has so far been identified from among the indigeneous population. This has been revealed in a detailed study conducted some time ago in this region.⁹¹ All they could identify were some 400 tribals in all kinds of petty business like repairs, food trade, tea stalls, etc. or vegetable growing, dairy product etc. and finding a certain level of independent enterprise the study mistakenly identified this stratum as one of entrepreneurs; but there is no evidence that any of these 400 could grow beyond petty retail business.

Examination of evidence about land holding (Table : 2) or the possession of assets reveal that there is no sizeable group of landowners who can be classified as landlords. Even the class of rich peasants is very insignificant. An overwhelming majority of the peasant are under the category of poor peasants; that is, upto 85.9 per cent.⁹² A little over 10 per cent are at best middle peasants. Only 0.5 per cent can be considered as rich peasants or landlord; the few owning good amount of land cannot easily be classified as "rich peasants" on the basis of land holding alone, as will be evident soon.

Table-2

% Distribution of Cultivator households according to size of land owned (In Acres)

Sl. No.	Land owned	Percent	Classification	
			I	II
1.	Nil	0.4	Landless	Landless
2.	Less than $\frac{1}{2}$	14.9	Marginal	Poor peasants
3.	$\frac{1}{2}$ to 1	10.6		
4.	1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$	7.7		
5.	$1\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$	23.8	Small	Middle peasant
6.	$2\frac{1}{2}$ to 5	28.5		
7.	5 to 10	10.2	Viabie	Rich ?
8.	10 to 25	3.4		Landlords ?
9.	Above 25 & above	0.5		
10	Total	100.0	XX	XX

Source : All India Debt and Investment Survey - 1971-72

In analysing this data one should be careful about applying the criteria used in the plains. Before that, let us briefly note a few facts concerning productivity and the pattern of differential increase in fertility-productivity over the last 100 years. For 1880's Hunter reports⁹³ that the first class low-lands gave 5 maunds 9 seers of unhusked rice and the lower grade up-lands gave 3 maunds 35 seers of the same. Productivity in 1960's for first class low land (Deurs) was between 20-25 maunds and the low grade up lands (Tanrs) produce only as little as 4-6 maunds.⁹⁴ It is important also to note that the low lands where maximum increases in productivity have taken place are also the lands from where local population in general has been driven out by the Dikus and where outsider landlords are concentrated.⁹⁵ Whereas in the uplands productivity even now ranges from 4-6 maunds and it is here where the tribal holdings are concentrated that little or no increase in productivity has taken place in about a 100 years.

Hunter had also calculated that a peasant cultivating 5-acres of land could not live as comfortably as an ordinary retail shop-keeper or a man drawing Rs. 8/- or shillings 16 a month. To live a life as comfortably as a peon in government establishments, 13 acres were needed in the ratio of 2:1 of low and upland respectively.⁹⁶ Furthermore, according to Hunter high holdings were made up of 33 acres (22 acres of low lands and 11 of uplands)⁹⁷ given this fact, those having around 25 acres of land among the tribals (see Table : 2) can hardly be considered as landlords. $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres in the same proportion of upland and lowland would be considered as very "low holdings".⁹⁸ Moreover, even today 70 per cent of total cultivable area in tribal regions according to K.S. Singh is drought prone and more than half of these are extreme drought areas.⁹⁹ In essence people belonging to this region are functionally landless because they have to sell labour most of the time.

At this point when we are talking about the position of the tribals in the agrarian situation it is as well to take note, as an aside, of the important fact that the tribal communities, unlike other ethnic groups, have all over India been characterised by "historical association with or prerogative in respect of some productive resource."¹⁰⁰ In case of the tribal groups in this region, forests were one such productive resource of nature to which they had free access. A sizeable proportion of their livelihood traditionally used to come from forests and therefore their relative well-being as well as health had been integrally tied up with such an access. Along with the loss of rights over land, this resource too has progressively dried up for them; first, by the laws of the colonial government and now more severely by the state in free India.¹⁰¹

It is therefore difficult to infer the emergence of a section which can be considered as the ruling class. There is no doubt that differentiation exists but differentiation in landed property cannot per se be the criterion of locating the ruling class. Nor, in the present case, the fact of differentiation can be considered as a significant factor in politics when the sense of strangulation is a pervasive feature among the entire indigeneous population.

Such an inference as the one above is also validated by a detailed study, done by Sunil Sen Gupta,¹⁰² of Santal Parganas based on house to house survey data of a sample of villages. It shows that between households land distribution did not show any acute concentration. Size groups based on per capita availability of land show that within a "uni-modal distribution pattern", the mode and average came very close to each other; thus indicating a more or less same amount of land per capita for a large number of households.¹⁰³ Data reported in this study also shows that, inspite of differentiations it is hard to identify a group of Santal households which could justify us to "demarcate them from the rest of the folk in class terms."¹⁰⁴ There was not a single farm entirely dependent on hired labour.¹⁰⁵ A more or less similar picture emerges if per capita income distribution is taken into consideration;¹⁰⁶ most of the household are located near the pole of poverty.

Ruling classes, among the indigeneous people, in such a situation can only be identified by over stressing certain features of leading to untenable generalisations. In the case of Jharkhand, it is difficult even to assert that there exists a potential for development of ruling classes even without extensive private property as, perhaps, is the case in some of the African countries like Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, etc. In this type of the African situation the elites from the indigeneous educated strata succeeded in wresting control, at the time of Independence, of sufficiently well developed control mechanism of the colonial state for appropriating the surplus. They could thus gain and approximate to a sort of political power which would flow from the ownership of private productive property. To say that there is no ruling class among the people belonging to this region does not amount to saying that tribals are not exploiting tribals or that there is no other exploitation than by the Dikus. There is quite some evidence to show that better off tribals are alienating the poor tribals of their land. But this, as yet, does not amount to the emergence of a ruling class nor to the thesis that differentiation in land ownership constitutes a principal type of contradiction.

It is therefore tenable to assume that the articulation of this discontent is not a function of the manipulation by the ruling classes controlling state power in a straight forward manner. Given the nature of the class situation, it is often the case that spontaneous upsurges among the peasantry are more due to the self-mobilisation which is sought to be used by various political forces and formations within this region; some of these having political links with the all-India ruling classes. In this situation, because of the absence of indigeneous ruling classes or even of a sizeable middle class¹⁰⁷ the ruling classes at the national level have failed to successfully assimilate the popular discontent into their own politics. The situation in Jharkhand therefore is not a issue to be seen as tied up with this or that party nor just as unified movement but rather as a development of mass consciousness still in search of a mode of articulation appropriate to the regional contradictions. The social strangulation of the masses and its various expressions are therefore a political composite of various strengths, thoughts, positions, degrees of awareness and actions. In such a configuration of political conditions, the various postures and their confrontations may pose problems similar to inter class contradictions; but these, in the absence of indigeneous ruling classes, are essentially conflicts of ideology through the assimilation of petit bourgeois elements in the aspirations and ideas prevalent in the national political situation. also because the left-democratic movement itself is not strong in the region, there are all kind of vacillations on the part of the local popular forces as well as combinations of contradictory postures on the ideological plane. As a result of these two factors, both spontaneity and extremely local militant political protests along with a confusing variety of organisational forms have become the dominant patterns in this region. Nonetheless common undercurrents and overtones in their politics result due to the fact that the prime conditioning factors on the consciousness of the people have been the outsider, exploiter and an alien state structure which seems to the people in league with the outsider-exploiters; both of these in their consequences lead to land alienation. Although land alienation is a common enough phenomenon all over India, but quite unlike in most other regions where

the exploiter-oppressor and the exploited-oppressed belong to the same region, here they belong to people with different national compositions. It therefore happens that the agrarian question becomes simultaneously the national issue and thus is created the objective basis for the people to come together on demands for territorial demarcation. The dialectics of the national question in the region is in the overall social situation in which the many sided oppression has the character of mass strangulation of or almost the entire indigeneous population-- tribal as well as non-tribals. The tussles, in the totality of the situation, for one automatically involve the other. In the context these cannot get dissociated from one another and should be seen as dialectically inseparable under the present bourgeois conditions of rule in which large sections of the bourgeoisie and their henchman are acting as gangster capitalists. It is this situation which has provided something of a nationalistic accelerator giving a momentum and high receptivity to nationality aspirations in the region. Virulence around this in the modern world often is but need not in every situation be chauvinistic. It is, therefore, wrong to pose the question, as some have, whether the issue in Jharkhand is agrarian or national.¹⁰⁸ It is much more untenable to argue that the discontent is due to the agrarian issues but a separate nationality is getting created because of the will and subjective determination of the people.¹⁰⁹ On the contrary, it is the interlocking and fusion of the similar consequences of actions of Dikus, the state policies and their agents and the struggles of the people against these consequences that has generated the long-term secular tendency towards the growth of a separate nationality consciousness among the local people. It is the same forces that have also created the realisation among the local people to seek cooperation of all the working people in the region irrespective of territorial origins against the exploitation and oppression. Yet it remains unclear in the extreme how the trend is going to materialise. Given the class situation in the region, what seems more likely to determine the outcome is the nature of outside intervention; especially how decisively the left can intervene in favour of the people. It is by now obvious that the movements among the indigeneous people of this region are not quite of the same kind

as in Assam or Panjab nor even of the 1960 separatist Telangana type. It is therefore important to ask whether a clear cut territorial demarcation of this region away from Bihar or Orissa would be good for the people and lead to their progress. It seems to me that in the specificities examined, effective political power in their hands -- which the ruling classes of the dominant nationality within which they are bounded are doing this utmost to deny them -- can go towards providing much needed partial reliefs of the kind possible within the limits of bourgeois-- landlord state in India.

V

In the Marxist conception of analysis it is important to focus on the process by which, in the actual movement of history, reality resolves itself into new patterns and forms of existence. The analysis must be able to add to theory by grasping the essence of the new modes of becoming in social formations. We have therefore to trace in detail the chain of causation within the dialectical movement. There is a great deal of causation that goes in before a phenomenon manifests itself; for example the growing awareness of people about their identity that may express itself as a stir for nationality recognition. A multitude of causes and a vast chain of developments have gone into the making of situations we have examined. Both the Bengal and Jharkhand cases show that there is no simple linear unfolding of nationality development based on straightforward causation. The mere presence of prior identity marks of a nationality do not necessarily lead to national crystallisation under conditions of retarded capitalism. Causal chains emanating from economic transformation in the third world under the contemporary international stratification induced by imperialism criss-cross in unforeseen way. These generate historical movements different from those given in existing theoretical formulation on the national question; movements of a type which could have been averted by correct interventions. I have worked through the two cases with the assumption that no theory or theoretical formulation is in itself science once and for all times but only an aid to science or scientific

understanding. For example, one cannot say with any certainty if religious communities will not become a basis for nationality demands. We should rather ask : why many of the collective solidarities which got dissolved or subsumed under nation-states have now assumed a tendency to solidify as distinct identities. We should further ask : which of the many identities can head towards claiming nationality status and under what conditions and with what consequences for the political unity of the third world states ? The variety of cases in multi-national or multi-ethnic states of Asia and Africa provide us with a fertile ground to critically examine our inherited theories and advance our scientific understanding. This should not be simply dismissed as a mere academic exercise. The left and other secular radical forces are rightly concerned with the disruptive, pro-imperialist role of religious consciousness in politics, especially in its separatist forms. It does not help in the fight against separatist forces to deny the possibilities of nationality consciousness emerging out of these forces and taking roots in society. To simply deny these unwelcome historical possibilities merely on the basis of past historical experience puts our struggle against such forces on a wrong theoretical terrain.

I have therefore not used any definition of nation or nationality as a starting point nor have I taken a given formulation about past development as the delineation of patterns for the future. Instead I took the various awakenings and stirrings among people of nationally distinct compositions as the given datum for analysis and from there tried to trace through a ~~disaggregation~~ ^{disaggregation} of social forces the concrete historical processes of the emergence and development of the object under study.

In the third world situation, what many of our distinctions about nation or nationality expresses are more often present as no more than tentative tendencies.¹¹⁰ They can go on developing through various zig-zag courses without often reaching completion or maturation as was the case in the period of rising, ascendant capitalism. In the course of this zig-zag development of nationality consciousness various factors may grow at obstacles and impede or deflect the desired course of development.

The historical development of a concrete whole as reflected in the sphere of superstructure-- nationality consciousness and its organizational forms no longer necessarily follows the pattern- sequence of the epoch. Both the cases we have examined amplify this point. Stunted economic forces and retarded capitalist growth is the basis of determinations in which factors which are similar in nature in inherited community consciousness have pulled people in opposite directions -- separation in Bengal and growing amalgamation in Jharkhand. Such factors which were of minor significance in the epoch of revolutionary capitalist transformation have become of crucial importance in the shaping of reality.

A retarded capitalism which leans on feudal forces and therefore also on imperialism is thus incapable of developing productive forces and transforming society in an all round way. Such a capitalism has been giving rise to social and political deformations. These deformed social forms develop their own inner force, and growth patterns in unthought of directions. For understanding such forms analogies cannot be sought from the period of ascendant capitalism. If anything at all can shed light from the advanced capitalist world, it is now when capitalism is, as a world historical force, in overall retreat and in its retreat is giving birth to divisive nationality movements within those societies.

In the context of the third world, let us for example take the very important question of the relationship of capitalism with industrialisation.¹¹¹ It has by now become a common experience of the third world countries that the more capitalism grows and expands in their societies in this era of imperialism, the more the possibility of independent industrialisation recedes; "independent" in the sense that the impulses, resources and requirements are located within the society. This is equally true for countries like Brazil or South Korea or India -- the most highly industrialised in the third world-- as it is true for countries with little industry like Tanzania or Zambia or Ghana. Such a statement made a 100 years ago would have sounded patently ridiculous. Now all the Marxist take it as axiomatically true. Imperialism in general but more specifically in

the shape of its latest offsprings, the Multi-National Corporations, is both the source of very rapid capitalist penetrations as well as of growing retardation and underdevelopment in the third world.

This would obviously have far reaching consequences for our societies and thereby also equally far reaching implications for the theory on national formations. It is therefore, of no use to keep on quoting Marx or Lenin in an unqualified way; for example, "the fullest freedom of capitalist intercourse" may no longer necessarily be a source of "assimilation of nations" or be one that can "remove national barriers". It can not only be a source of under-development and retardation but by allowing for the deeper penetration of imperialist forces through MNCs can also cause great bickerings and play up chauvinism and subvert national independence.¹¹² It is therefore more important to identify and understand the new kind of relations that capitalism through retardation, even while it helps the growth of productive forces in limited spheres, engenders in the third world and the way they mediate the evolution and development of social forms based on forces which ^{should have been} swept away by advanced capitalism. In one way by not allowing for independent industrialisation and the transformation of capital in the sphere of accumulation into industrial capital,¹¹³ it can result in the perpetuation or incompleteness of national crystallisation because, due to the survival of pre-capitalist ideologies and backward outlook as forces dragging people, conceptual unification of life-experiences into a modern world outlook is thwarted. Nationally distinct regions remaining in a state of prolonged immaturity has resulted in making minor factors crucial determinants leading to the articulation of national sentiments around such factors. In such conditions, deformities in the organizational forms which emerge to fight for national sentiments also develop.

It is precisely in the context of such forces and the relationships engendered by them that religion can become, however disruptive for the emancipation of people, prospectively an element in the splitting up of one potential nationality and its organization into two national states as in Bengal. Once a potential nationality is split up to form parts of

two different sovereign state systems, it is obvious that the two parts tend to grow into distinct national groups. But what are the conditions under which religion can play such a prospective role? From the cases we have investigated we can identify certain conditions. First, only when the development of capitalism leads to a clearly distinct development of a community vis-a-vis another community. Secondly, when within this distinct developments of communities there also takes place the growth of an emergent ruling class or classes who then can achieve some sway over productive economy and effective political power only by unifying the community under their leadership and working for the political separation of that community from other communities. Thirdly and finally, where separatism as a political tendency has taken root, that community constitutes or can become a clear majority in a contiguous region. In the absence of any one of these conditions religion can be the cause of communalism which can hinder the political and cultural unification of nationality groups; it cannot however, result in political separatism even if it feeds separatist forces elsewhere. But even if all the three conditions are present but radical forces are powerful to decisively intervene than alternative outcomes are more likely as could have been the case if the left forces were as powerful in Bengal at that time as they are now.

Under this kind of retarded capitalism controlled by imperialism in varying degrees, "the fullest freedom of capitalist intercourse" is not of a type even to assimilate the various ethnic groups into the adjacent more developed nationalities with which they had natural affinities. The freedom of intercourse under such a capitalism resulted on the contrary in bypassing them completely of all the gains of the development of productive forces except for strangulating them in its most adverse consequences. The widespread common feeling of suffocation across the ethnic lines have been having the two-fold effect of breaking down the traditional boundaries between these ethnic groups and on the other of pushing them further away from the dominant nationality group within which they are located.

It is the absence, common to all these ethnic groups, of ruling classes (bourgeoisie included) or even a substantial middle class that has allowed the collapse of the boundaries that divided them as ethnic groups rather than force them to develop as distinct ethnic-national groups. Even in the absence of bourgeoisie, considered a necessary force for taking up the banner of nationality consciousness, the very disintegration and dislocations in their social life and the common feelings of oppression at the hands of outside forces under bourgeois conditions can act as the accelerator of nationality consciousness for groups enclosed within larger nationalities. The historical roles of the bourgeoisie or the causal chains emanating from the market are no longer of the same historical consequences in the national question under contemporary capitalism in the Third world but then to work these out would require a full length paper.

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G.S. Ghurye, The Scheduled Tribes (Bombay, 1963).

2. W.W. Hunter, Statistical Account ..., Op. Cit., p. 266 ff, and H.H. Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Vol. I. II, No. 1, (Calcutta, 1891); see also Nirmal Sengupta, ed. Fourth World Dynamics: Jharkhand (New Delhi, 1982).

3. Most of the indigeneous people who have not been listed as Scheduled Tribes as for example the Kurmi-Mahato peasantry have an economic life which is more or less similar to the main listed tribes in this region. Although said to be slightly better cultivators they are educationally and socially as "backward" as the others and no less poor. None of them are in IAS or IPS or IFS, etc. or even in the higher levels of civil or judicial service. See Nirmal Sengupta, Fourth World Dynamics, Op. Cit.

Ritually also they form a "drinking cluster" with the tribals and as is the case with the tribals they do not accept food from the Brahmans. See Risley, Census of India, 1891, XVI (I).

In the 1920's they were also listed as the Scheduled Tribes and were excluded only from 1931 when Hinduisation became among them very strong and all/ them declared themselves to be Hindus.

Now once again there is a strong move among them to get listed in the Scheduled Tribes and also a counter-culture movement away from Hinduism as reflected in the Gossaiyen movement.

In 1978 the Kurmi Sabha submitted a memorandum to the Secretary, Lok Sabha for inclusion of Kurmis of Jharkhand in the Scheduled Tribe list when the Scheduled Caste and Schedule Tribe (Amendment) Bill 1978 was to be discussed. According to this memorandum they new member 45 lakhs in this region.

About the Momins (Muslims-Julahas) of the region W.W. Hunter, Statistical Account of Bengal, Op. Cit. had noted that they are "held by the Zamindars as fief-holders for quasi-feudal services" (p. 319). Their position according to Nirmal Sengupta, Fourth World Dynamics, Op. Cit. has not changed much although legally they are no longer enserfed.

4. Nirmal Sengupta, ed. Fourth World Dynamics, Op. Cit. see especially Ch. 6, "Historical and Cultural Basis of Jharkhand Nationality".
5. This seems to be the underlying thrust in his writings on this problem. See for instance N.K. Bose, Some Indian Problems (Calcutta, 1972) See especially Ch. 12 "National Integration and the Scheduled Castes and Tribes", see also his Culture and Society in India and Tribal Life in India (New Delhi, 1971).
6. G.S. Ghurye, The Schedule Tribes, Op. Cit.
7. This is something which has been noted by a number of writers. See, for instance, B.K. Roy Burman has pointed out to this process in a number of his studies over a long period of time. See his: "Basic Concepts of Tribal Welfare and Integration", in L.P. Vidyarthi, Anthropology in Action (1960); "Some Dimensions of Transformation of Tribal Societies", Journal of Social Research, XI, I, 1968; "Social Political processes in India and Integration of Tribal Societies" (paper read at a Seminar on Urgent Problems of Social Anthropology, at Institute of Advanced Studies in Simla held in 1969; "Ethnicity and National Questions in India with Special Reference to Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes" in S.A.H. Haggi, Democracy. Pluralism and Nation-Building (Delhi, 1984) See also F.G. Bailey, "Political change in Kondmals" in K.S. Mathur and B.C. Aggarwal eds. Tribe Caste and Peasantry (Lucknow, 1974) or the detailed study of Santals by Martin Orans, The Santal : A Tribe in Search of a Great Tradition, (Detroit, 1968).

Students of tribal regions seem to agree that the earlier trend of assimilation (or emulation of) with Hindu caste society has given way to a trans-ethnic consolidation of people living under oppression in these regions.

9. W.W. Hunter, Annals of Rural Bengal (1868), Reprint: Calcutta, 1965, observes about the Titu Mir's peasant uprising: "In the peasant uprising around Calcutta in 1831, they broke into the houses of Musalman and Hindu landlords with perfect impartiality". A.F. Salauddin Ahmad, "Muslim Thought and Leadership in Bengal in the Nineteenth Century" in Barun De ed. Essays in Honour of Prof. S.C. Sarkar (New Delhi, 1976) observes that there is no evidence of any well off Muslims supporting these peasant revolts, see also the Notes 35 and 37 in this work.

10. A.F. Salahuddin Ahmad, Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal, 1818-1835 (Laiden, 1965) has identified a number of areas or spheres of activity where the leading elites of the two communities acted together; viz. (i) the Calcutta Book Society, established in 1817, where both Hindus and Muslims alongwith Englishmen were members for the production of elementary books; (ii) Calcutta School Society, established in 1818, in which Maulvi Mirza Karim Ali Khan and Radha Kanta Dev were joint secretaries alongwith two Europeans, (iii) in 1828 there was a joint petition signed by 128 Hindus, and 116 Muslims of Calcutta against certain discriminatory clauses in the Indian Jury Act of 1926; (iv) in 1829 Muslim Zamindars joined the Hindu Zamindars in a petition to Lord Bentinck against resumption proceedings; (v) The Bengal Land holders Association which was established in 1837 included Muslims landlords also; (vi) During the 1857 revolts against British rule both Muslim and Hindu upper classes remained loyal to the British, etc. In pursuing this work one may be able to find many more instances of Hindu and Muslim elite collaboration as well as their mutual silence or hostility towards peasant uprisings. See also his "Muslim Thought and Leadership in Bengal in the Nineteenth Century" Op. Cit.
11. The most comprehensive single account of the tribal revolts in this region is E.T. Dalton, Tribal History Op. Cit. See also L.P. Vidyarthi, Dynamics of Tribal... Op. Cit., for a useful summary of these revolts; pp. 49-72.
12. J.C. Jha, The Kol Insurrection in Chotanagpur, (Calcutta, 1964) and, The Bhumij Revolt (1832-33) (Delhi, 1968).
13. K.K. Dutta, Santal Insurrection of 1855-57, (Calcutta, 1940)
14. K. Suresh Singh, The Dust Storm and the Hanging Mist: a study of Birsa Munda and His Movement in Chota Nagpur 1874-1901 (Calcutta, 1970), see also S.P. Sinha, Life and Times of Birsa Bhagwan (Patna, 1964).
15. For such characterising of tribal revolts, see for instance, Stephen Fuchs' oft. quoted book, Rebellious Prophets (Bombay, 1965); for another view see Kathleen Gough, "Indian peasant uprising." Economic and Political Weekly (hence forth (EPW) Special No., August 1974; for a third type of characterisation, R.R. Diwakar, Bihar Through the Ages, (New Delhi, 1959). Some have been found the Tribal peasants revolts in face of deprivations of the colonial state as "regressive Utopia", see Hans Georg Hrach, "Regulated Anarchy to Proto-Nationalism: The Case of Santals" in Aspects of Tribal Life in South Asia: Strategy and Survival (Berne, 1978).
16. See K.L. Sharma, "Jharkhand Movement in Bihar, ", EPW, (10 June 1976). My position, in certain respects, has a lot in common with Sharma's.

17. For good account of the evolution of politics in this region see K.L. Sharma, "Jharkhand Movement ..." Op.Cit., and S. Jha, "Tribal Leadership in Bihar," EPW (III, 15, April 13, 1968). See also L.P. Vidyarthi, The Dynamics of Tribal Leadership in Bihar, Allahabad, 1976).
18. Ibid., esp. K.L. Sharma Op. Cit.
19. Nirmal Sen Gupta ed. Dynamics of the FourthWorld. Op. Cit., and K.L. Sharma, Op. Cit.
20. Partha Chatterjee, "Agrarian Relations and Communalism in Bengal, 1926-1935" in Ranajit Guha ed. Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society (Calcutta, 1982); see also his Agrarian Relations and Politics in Bengal : Some Considerations on the Making of the Tenancy Act Amendment (Occasional paper 30, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta), 1980. Sugata Bose, "The Roots of 'Communal' Violence in Rural Bengal : A Study of the Kishoreganj Riots, 1930", Modern Asian Studies, July 1982.
21. In 1920 a memorandum was submitted by a delegation of Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj. In 1955 too the Jharkhand Party submitted a memorandum before the States Reorganisation Commission asking for a state with the slogan "Jharkhand Alg Prant" when big demonstrations were also held both in Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas.
22. These figures are taken from Najmul Karim, Dynamics of Bangladesh Society, (New Delhi, 1980); see also W.K. Firminger, Historical Introduction to the Bengal Portion of the Fifth Report (1917, Calcutta, 1962) for a discussion of Dewany lands and N.K. Sinha, The Economic History of Bengal, vol. II, (Calcutta, 1962) and also for Murshid Quli Khan's Policy of encouraging the formation of large Zamindaris, p.17.
23. James Grant calculated from Ausil Jumma of 1728 and Jumma of 1728 and Jumma Kool of 1763 that of a total of 139 such Zamindaris (by smaller Zamindaries it meant those paying a revenue of less than one lakh or holding land equivalent to that), 25 could not be located in terms of holder's religious community. Of the remaining 114, Muslims were 46 (40%) and Hindus 68 (60%); see James Grant's Analysis in the Fifth Report, 1812 Edited by W.K. Firminger, 1917, Quoted in Najmul Karim O.p. Cit.
24. In Chittagonj in 1774 for example out of 25 principal Zamindaris only 7 were with the Muslims; given in Najmul Karim, Dynamics of Bangladesh Society, Op. Cit. Some of the reason for the preponderance of Hindu are discussed in Khundakar Fuzli Rubbe, The Origin of the Muslim of Bengal (Calcutta, 1895). The author was the diwan of the Murshidabad family.
25. N.K. Sinha, The Economic History of Bengal, vol. 1, (Calcutta, 1961), p. 4, see also vol. 2, Ch. 4 (Calcutta, 1962).

26. These figures are taken from Najmul Karim, Dynamics of Bangladesh Society, Op. Cit. For the difference between the Zamindars and Jagirdars in Bengal see Firminger, Historical Introduction to the Bengal Portion of the Fifth Report (Reprint, Calcutta, 1962), see also Anil Chandra Banerjee, The Agrarian System of Bengal, vol. I, 1582-1793 (Calcutta - 1982) Firminger Op. Cit. also discusses (p. 46-49) the reasons for the predominance of Hindus as Zamindars. See also J.N. Sarkar, History of Bengal: The Muslim Period 1200-1757 (Dacca University, 1948, Reprint Patna 1973) and N.K. Sinha, Economic History of Bengal, vol. II, Op.Cit., p. 3-4.
27. From an analysis of the monthly pay of servants at the Nizamat Circas for the year 1774, Najmul Karim has worked out that barring 261 (19%) Hindus out of a total 1605 servants all the rest were Muslims. See his Dynamics of Bangladesh Society, Op. Cit., p. 68; See also W.W. Hunter, The Indian Musalman (1871, Calcutta, 1945).
28. Jadunath Sarkar, ed. History of Bengal, Op. Cit. Salauddin Ahmad, "Muslim Thought and Leadership..." Op. Cit., Najmul Karim, Op. Cit.
29. See Note - 10. It is also a well known fact that the elite from among both Hindus and Muslims collaborated with the colonial rulers during the 1857 rebellion against the British domination of India.
30. Najmul Karim has calculated this figure from the Civil List before 1838. See his Dynamics of Bangladesh Society, Op.Cit., p. 110. Hunter Indian Musalmans (Reprint: Calcutta, 1945 also reports that upto 1838 the Muslims were as numerous as Hindus and English put together; even between 1845-1850 survived fairly considerably.
31. The decline was very rapid after that. For example, between 1852-1868, out of 241 natives admitted as pleaders there was only one Muslim. Indian Musalman, Op.Cit., p. 160. In the Executive Services in Bengal, i.e., Deputy Magistrate and Sub-Deputy Magistrate out of a total 399 in the year 1886 there were only 44 muslim. For the same year in the Judicial Services -- Subordinate Judge and Munsif -- out of a total of 623 there were only 52 muslims. If all other departments such as Home or Controller General or Office of Secretary to Government of Bengal etc. are considered the position was no better. See Report of the Public Service Commission, 1887; quoted in Najmul Karim, Op.Cit. p. 193-196. In the Educational Institutions the proportion of Muslims to Hindus was as follows:
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Lower primary | - 1: 3 |
| Upper primary | - 1: 5 |
| Middle school | - 1: 7 |
| High School | - 1-10 |
| Colleges for General | - 1:24 |
| Colleges for Professional Education | - 1:43 |

Figures collected (1882) by Alfred Croft, DPI to Government of Bengal; quoted in Sufia Ahmad, The Muslim Community of Bengal, 1884-1912 (Delhi, 1974), p. 50. See also Pradeep Sinha, Nineteenth Century Bengal : Aspects of Social History (Calcutta, 1965), Appendix D for a list of Graduates of Calcutta University with degrees and occupation for the period 1858-1881.

32. The Report of Mr. Pedler, DPI, Government of Bengal, The increase in the number of pupils belonging to the Muslim Community was 11.6 per cent as against 6.3 per cent for Hindus pupils. See also the Census of India, 1911, vol. 5, part 1.

From around this time onwards one also notices an important change in the outlook of the Bengali Muslims. There is no longer an insistence on the teaching of Arabic/Persian in schools. On the contrary, one finds that the knowledge of these languages is no longer regarded as necessary for social respectability and acceptance. This was an important shift. Furthermore, there is a ready acceptance of secular education and no hankering for at least some degree of religious content in education. We rather find an insistence on the learning of Bengali as mother tongue and a sense of disgust at some leaders not knowing Bengali.

33. M.M. Ali ed. Autobiography and Other Writings of Nawab Abdul Latif Khan Bahadur (Chittagong, 1968).
34. K.K. Aziz ed. Amir Ali : His Life and Work (Lahore, 1968).
35. In understanding the character and outlook of both the organisation I have relied heavily on the analysis of Salauddin Ahmad, "Muslim Thought and Leadership in Bengal..." Op. Cit.
36. Take for instance the question of education and the Muslim demands for facilities. Amalendu De, "Roots of Separatism in 19th Century Bengal" in Barun De Op. Cit. catalogues the reactions of the enlightened Hindu Elites. Or see the reactions of the Hindu elite to the demands for the establishment of a University at Dacca in M.S. Khan, "A Chapter in the Muslim Struggle for Freedom : Establishment of Dacca University", Dacca University Studies, Vol. XVI, June 1968.
37. "Representatives" is being used here more as a convenient term, referring more to the claims of the various bodies such as the Mohammedan Literary and Scientific Society or the National Mohammedan Associations or the articulate opinions expressed in organs like the Muslim Chronicle.

Moreover, it is important to note that the 12 Muslims nominated to the legislative Council between 1862-1892 all claimed foreign ancestry. A. K. Najmul Karim, Dynamics of Bangladesh Society, Op. Cit. p. 220. All of them also got titles. Ibid. p. 222. By the turn of the century resentment started growing against these people who claimed to be the representatives of Muslim in Bengal; e.g. Yaquinnuddin Ahmad writing in the Muslim Chronicle (11 April 1896) complained that Muslims of Bengal have leaders who try their utmost to belong to the North West.

There were also at this time strong pleas for the adoption of Bengalee as the mother tongue. See also Pradeep Sinha, Nineteenth Century Bengal, Op. Cit., esp. Chapter II.

38. Amalendu De, "Roots of Separation in 19th Century Bengal", in Barun De, Op. Cit.
39. For Example, the editorial Comments in Muslim Chronicle (25 April 1895) "...by practically handing over the administration to the Bengalee Baboos the British governments have ... created an exclusive administrative guild out of the Brahmins and Kayastas ... The Bengalee Baboos lord it over everything in the name of British Raj ... Thus the one great evil that the British rule in India has brought in its train has been the strained relations between the Hindus and Mohammadans -- the bitter feelings of race hatred and race antipathy between the two communities."
- A little later (2 May 1895) it wrote: "A Mohammadan candidate comes in and asks of some inevitable Babu as to whether a ministerial hand is required. The babu, if he has not felt annoyed and bothered, replies, 'arrangements have already been made to fill it', even though the facts be otherwise."
40. Such a viewpoint has been most cogently and forcefully argued by Partho Chatterjee in "Agrarian Relations and Communalism in Bengal..." Op. Cit. Partho Chatterjee's view is, unlike most others, predicated upon the Althusserian notion of the relative autonomy of the different structural levels in society. Within the ideological sphere, he seems to hold the view that for the Muslim peasants at that time religion was the main determinant of their consciousness; it provided for them the ontology, the epistemology and the code of conduct for practical activity. He thus derives the notion of a "community" among the Muslim peasants of eastern Bengal.
41. The notion that communal type of villages existed in Bengal like in North India where land is held in common or assessed on the basis of the village is held by writers like Baden-Powell, The Indian Village Communities, K.M. Ashraf, Life and Condition of People of Hindustan, M. N. Roy, India in Transition, and others has been questioned in the case of Bengal by many. See for instance Radhakamal Mukherjee, Democracies of the East, who believes that notions of private property individualistic and capitalistic-- were superimposed by the Muhammedan administration. See also Firminger, Historical Introduction ... Op. Cit., p. 35.
42. The school of law prevalent in Bengal known as Dayabhaga has a notion of landed property quite different from those common in northern India. In Dayabhaga school of law property rights are explicitly recognised. Mentioned in Radha Kamal Mukherjee, Op. Cit.

43. R.H. Hollinberry, Zamindari Settlement of Bengal, 1879, Vol. 1.
44. W.W. Hunter, Annals of Rural Bengal, Op. Cit.
45. Rafiuddin Ahmad, The Bengal Muslims, 1871-1906 A Quest for Identity (New Delhi, 1981) is the most recent and comprehensive work on this.
46. Sufia Ahmad, The Muslim Community of Bengal, 1884-1912 (Delhi, 1974);
Salauddin Ahmad, Muslim Thought and Leaders Life in Bengal ... Op.Cit.
and Nazmul Karim, Dynamics of Bangladesh Society, Op.Cit.
47. Rafiuddin Ahmed, Op. Cit.
48. Sekhar Bandopadhyay, Caste and Politics in Eastern Bengal: The Namasudras and Anti-Partition Politics, 1905-1911. Occasional Paper, Mimeo, Centre for South East Asia Studies, Calcutta University,, Calcutta, 1981.
49. Ibid.
50. Reverend J. Long, "The Social Conditions of the Muhammadans of Bengal, and the Remedies" in Transactions, III, I. 1869. This work came out before Hunter's famous study.
51. W.W. Hunter wrote his Indian Musalmans in 1871, (Reprint Calcutta, 1945).
52. S.C. Blunt in India Under Ripon (Calcutta, 1909) quoted Ripon: "I think I may lay claim to have contributed something towards the cause I had made especially my own, that of the Indian Muhammedans. On my return to England in the Spring of 1884, I found Lord Randolph Churchill more than half disposed to go with me on my plans for them, and to make himself in parliament a champion of Islam. It was partly through my persuasion and example that he started on his tour of India. ... His visit, nevertheless, taken in connection with his appointment in 1885 to India Office under Lord Salisbury, marks a turning point in official policy towards the Indian Mohammedans which has ever since been followed. As a community they are encouraged, not, indeed, as I had intended, but as a counterpoise to the Congress movement of the Hindus..." pp.230-31. Thus slowly after the 1857 trauma the divide and rule policy slowly took shape but to be an effective political strategy it was dependent on the emergence of a modern Muslim elite which could be encouraged and helped to grow into a counter-elite movement with the rise of nationalist politics.
53. While I do not agree with the general thrust of analysis, I find the treatment of this dimension of Bengal politics in J.H. Bromfield, Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal (Beskeley, 1968), full of very useful insights. See also his Mostly About Bengal (New Delhi, 1982) Ch. 9 "The Social and Institutional Bases of Politics in Bengal, 1906-1947".
54. W. E. Cotton, Handbook of Commercial Information, (Calcutta, 1924).
55. Amiya K. Bagchi, Private Investment in India, 1900-1939. (Cambridge, 1972).

56. Report of Bengal Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee (1922-30) Calcutta, 1930, Vol. 1, p. 198, also pp. 69-70 for its extent, and pp. 73-74 for per family average. See also M. Azizul Haque, The Man Behind the Plough, (1939, New Print 1980, Dacca).
57. For details of this, see Sunil Sen, Agrarian Relations in India 1793-1947, (New Delhi, 1979), pp. 55 ff. Ashok Sen, Partha Chatterjee and Saugata Mukherjee, Perspectives in Social Sciences 2. Three Studies on the Agrarian Structure in Bengal (Calcutta, 1982).
58. See Note 20.
59. Partha Chatterjee in "Agrarian Relations and Communalism in Bengal" Op. Cit. and "Bengal politics and Muslim Masses," Op. Cit. is quite right when he points out that the number of Muslim rentiers was quite substantial. Their number according to the 1911 census works out to 54,000 in East Bengal; Census 1911, Vol. V Part I (Bengal), p. 55. The point however to note is not that they were fewer in number to Hindus but the fact that the Muslim Zamindaries which survived the British takeover of the Diwani of Bengal and resumption proceedings were much smaller in size. These grew in number with time due to the "inheritance laws". So if we include the bigger Zamindaries then the position of Muslim Zamindars and "rentiers" was not only weak compared to the Hindus but also of lesser significance in terms of extraction of surplus from the peasantry. The 1911 census figures, in terms of absolute number, ought to be carefully interpreted. See also M.N. Gupta, Land System of Bengal (Calcutta, 1940) for 1901, 1911, 1921 and 1931 Census figures.
60. See Ashok Mitra, "Fifteen Decades of Agrarian Change in Bengal" in Barun De, Op. Cit.; Benoy Chaudhuri, "Land Market in Eastern India : 1793-1940", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, April-June, 1975; also his "The Process of De-Peasantisation in Bengal and Bihar," Indian Historical Review, July 1975; Bhowani Sen, Evolution of Agrarian Relations in India. (New Delhi, 1962); Sunil Sen, Agrarian Relations in India, Op. Cit., Ashok Sen et. al., Perspectives in Social Sciences, Op. Cit.
61. A good, brief account of how this trend developed and dissipated itself and the extent to which Fazlul Haq personified it is available in Humaira Momen, Muslim Politics in Bengal : A Study of Krishak Praja Party and the Election of 1937 (Dacca, 19); See also Sheila Sen, Muslim Politics in Bengal, 1937-1947, New Delhi, 1976.
62. Ibid. and Partha Chatterjee "Bengal Politics and Muslim Masses" Op. Cit. for an account of the unprincipled alliances he made ranging from Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha to keep his ministry. See also Humayun Kabir, Muslim Politics 1906-1942 (Calcutta - 1944).
63. Humaira Momen, Op. Cit.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., and Sheila Sen, Op. Cit. See also Partha Chatterjee, "Bengal Politics and the Muslim Masses," Op. Cit.

66. In 1936 he insisted on fighting the Muslim League to the last which he considered to be a party of landlords. His position was that a political front with Zamindars for the sake of Muslim unity would not render provincial autonomy meaningful for Muslim peasantry. See Sheila Sen, Op. Cit. p. 80. The Krishak Praja party fought the 1937 elections on a very radical anti-feudal programme; its main points were: 1. Abolition of Zamindari without compensation; 2. Reduction of land rent by fixing a minimum for each class of land; 3. Abolition of Nazar-Salami and provision for criminal punishment for illegal exactions like abwabs; 4. Cultivators be freed from the crushing burden of indebtedness by constituting Debt Settlement Boards; and so on. See Sheila Sen Op. Cit. p. 79-80. His electoral slogan was "Dal-Bhat" and the newspaper started by him was named "Chashi." See Humaira Momen, Op. Cit., p. 51-52.

67. In 1940 Fazlul Haq had gone all the way round and proposed the Pakistan Resolution in the Lucknow Session of Muslim League. For details see, apart from Sheila Sen and Humaira Momen, Binayendra Mohan Chaudhury, Muslim Politics in India (Calcutta, 1965) and Amalendu De, "Roots of Separatism in 19th Century Bengal," Op. Cit., see also Partha Chatterjee "Bengal Politics and Muslim Masses", Op. Cit. for a different interpretation of the events and causes.

The drastic shifts in the positions of radical elites from rich peasant backgrounds are also interestingly reflected on the literary scene. The life of Meer Mosharrif Hossain-- a Bengali Muslim writer of repute and a son of small zamindar --is an interesting instance. In his earlier career as a writer he was most anxious to promote Hindu-Muslim unity and was prepared to go to any length for that. In 1889 he wrote Go-Jeeban in which he said that Muslims should be prepared even to give up beef-eating for the sake of communal harmony. Earlier in 1873 he had written a novel Jamindar Darpan portraying the oppression of Zamindars on tenants and supported the Pabna ryots in their struggle against the Zamindars. As an aside: Sufia Ahman quotes Op. Cit. p.105 that Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was incensed with this work and wrote in his journal Banga Darshan, "it was most irritating and depressing to hear about the behaviour of Pabna ryots. It is not wise to add fuel to the fire. It is our advice that the writer should stop selling and circulating this book".

With the growing confrontation and between 1900-1911, writes Safiuddin Ahmad, "Muslim Thought and Leadership in Bengal" Op. Cit. he joined with other communally oriented writers and wrote polemics against Hinduism and Christianity.

68. This question has been raised by Partha Chatterjee, "Bengal Politics and Muslim Masses", Op. Cit.

69. One important indicator of industrialisation is the consumption of electricity. In this region the per capita consumption of electricity is 204.4 KWH as against 96.3 KWH for India as a whole and 19.3 KWH for Bihar state of which this region is a part. Some of the most prestigious industries are located within this region viz., Heavy Engineering Corporation, Bokaro Steel Plant, Tata Iron and Steel Company, Associated Cement Col, and a host of other industries -- big and small.

But it is also interesting to note that only 5 per cent of villages are electrified in this region of highest per-capita electric consumption as against 19.5 per cent in Bihar and 27.3 per cent for India as whole.

70. Jharkhand region -- Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas together -- make up only 2.5 per cent of the geographical area of the Indian State but 25 per cent of the total mineral production is concentrated in this region. See Nirmal Sen Gupta, Fourth World Dynamics, Op.Cit., p. 12, The main minerals are coal, limestone, bauxite, iron, etc. Also there are a large number of quarries for lime stone, China-clay, fire-clay, etc. The revenue from forest in the region was 37.9 million rupees in 1970. See Steve Jones, "Tribal Under Development in India," Development and Change, vol. 19, 1978, p. 58.
71. See Nirmal Sen-Gupta ed., Dynamics of the Fourth World, Op. Cit., Ch. I.
72. Figures vary. This number has been given by A.K. Roy in his telegram to the concerned ministry, Quoted in Nirmal Sen Gupta, "Class and Tribe in Jharkhand" EPW, April 5, 1980. See also his Destitutes and Development : A Study of Bauri Community in Bokaro Region, (New Delhi, 1978).
73. This figure is a rough approximation. It has been arrived at by adding up the population of Scheduled Tribes and Castes, Kurmis, Momins, etc. and the blue collar workers. The remaining are treated as the immigrants who monopolise positions of importance.
74. Annual Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 1975; See also the report of Planning Commission entitled, Report of The Task Force on Development of Tribal Areas, 1973, 1973, (Mimeo, Planning Commission, New Delhi).
75. All these figures are from Census of India, 1971; Special Tables for Scheduled Tribes, L 98, vol. 1, pt. 5a.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. Roy-Burman, "Tribal Demography" in K.S. Singh ed., Op. Cit.
79. Census, 1971, Op. Cit.
80. See Arun Sinha, Resurgent Adivasis, EPW, 9 September, 1978.

81. N.Y. Naidu, "Pains of Industrialisation," EPW, June 5, 1976;
M.L. Patel, Changing Land Problem of Tribal India (Bhopal, 1974)
L.P. Vidyarthi, Socio-Cultural Implications of Industrialisation in India-- A Case Study of Tribal Bihar (Research Programme Committee, Planning Commission, Delhi, 1970), S.P. Sinha, The Problem of Land Alienation of Tribals in and Around Ranchi (1955-1965), (Bihar Tribal Research Institute, Ranchi, 1968).
82. Census of India, 1971, Op. Cit.
83. B.K. Roy Burman, Social Processes in the Wake of Industrialisation: Rourkela, (Census of India Publication, 1961).
84. Ibid., p. 33-34 and 36.
85. Ibid., p. 83-86.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid.
88. The appeals of different political parties and formations and their modes of mobilisation clearly reflect this pattern. See L. P. Vidyarthi, Dynamics of Tribal Leadership, Op. Cit., Ch. vi. & vii; Sachchidananda, The Changing Munda Op. Cit. This is also the declared policy of the "United Front" of 9 parties called the All Party Sangharsh Samiti formed on 14.10.1977.
89. L.P. Vidyarthi, Op.Cit. for the details.
90. After the split in the Jharkhand party in the wake of merger with the Congress Party in 1963, the Jharkhand party first got split into anti merger and pro-merger groups. Since then a number of groups have emerged; viz. Jharkhand Prant Dal, Hul Jharkhand, Progressive Hul Jharkhand, Prantiya Jharkhand, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, etc. In addition there are a number of others groups like Birsa Seva Dal, Adivasi Seva Dal, Chotanagpur plateau Praja Parishad, Adivasi Maha Sabha, Adivasi Vikas Parishad, which do not contest elections but are aligned with the various political parties or act like the front organisations for some of these. These cover a wide ideological spectrum.
91. Xavier Institute of Social Service, Ranchi, had carried out a project on tribal entrepreneurship. Quoted in Sachchidananda The Changing Munda, (New Delhi, 1981) and the author seems to agree with these findings.
92. According to the "Official" classification, as defined under Marginal farmers Agricultural land Agency, out of these 85.9 per cent "small" farmers make up 57.4 per cent and the remaining 28.5 per cent are marginal." The rest, except those owning above 25 acres, are considered as viable. See the All India Debt and Investment Survey-1971-72 (New Delhi).
93. W.W. Hunter, Statistical Account of Bengal; p. 154-55.

94. The figure for 1960 has been taken from L.P. Vidyarthi, Cultural Counters of Tribal Bihar (Calcutta, 1964).
95. See Philip Eka, "Revivalist Movements Among Tribals of Chotanagpur" in Suresh Singh, Tribal Situation in India, Op.Cit.
96. W.W. Hunter, Op.Cit. p. 354-55.
97. Ibid.
98. Ibid.
99. K. Suresh Singh, "Famine, Scarcity and Economic Development in Tribal Areas" in K. Suresh Singh ed. Tribal Situation in India, Op.Cit. p. 308-395, has calculated that of 199 districts with sizeable tribal population only 19 districts lie in drought free zone of assured irrigation. Of these 180 drought prone districts only 46 lie in drought prone areas and the remaining 134 district are in the extreme drought areas. He also says that if famine is episodic, severe scarcity is a recurring condition. See also R. Saxena, Tribal Economy in Central India, (Calcutta, 1964).
100. See R.K. Roy Burman, "Ethnicity and National Question in India", Op.Cit.
101. A reasonably good, summarised account of the state laws relating to forest and their implications for the Tribals is available in Steve Jones, Op.Cit.

In the text I have merely touched upon the importance of forests for the tribals in the most general way. The importance of the forests significantly vary from tribe to tribe. It has been estimated that with Birhor and Maler--forest dwelling tribes -- the dependence on forests is as high as 90 per cent of their needs whereas for Munda and Oraon tribes it is around 45 per cent of their needs. See, L.P. Vidyarthi, "Problems and Prospects of Tribal Development" in Buddbadab Chaudhuri ed. Tribal Development in India, (Calcutta, 1982).

The impact of forest laws also varies significantly. Some are being starved into extinction; see L.P. Vidyarthi, "The Vanishing and Primitive Tribes of Bihar", Journal of Social Research, XX, 2, 1977.

102. Sunil Sen Gupta (With R.N. Prasad) Santal Rural Economy- a Study based on village survey in Santal Parganas. (Agro-Economic Research Centre, Viswa-Bharati, Santiniketan, 1973).
103. Ibid., p. 29.
104. Ibid., p. 36.
105. Ibid., p. 39.
106. Ibid., p. 58-59.
107. See Sunil Sen Gupta, Ibid., Nirmal Sen Gupta, Fourth World Dynamics Op.Cit., Vidyarthi, Dynamics of Tribal Leadership, Op.Cit., Sachchidananda, The Changing Munda, Op.Cit., among other. See also Myron Weiner, Sons of the Soil : Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India (Delhi, 1978).

108. This is how Nirmal Sen Gupta has posed the problem in his oft quoted article, "Class and Tribe in Jharkhand" EPW, April 5, 1980.
109. Being a strong supporter of the demand for a tribal state in the Jharkhand region, Nirmal Sen Gupta has argued that even if a number of objective factors that have been important in the creation of nationalities are missing, it is enough if people are determined and have a will to become a nationality. It is not at all clear how such a determination or "will" comes to acquire social roots. See the last chapter by him, in Nirmal Sen Gupta, ed. Dynamics of the Fourth World, Op.Cit.
110. In my earlier article "Dialectics of Capitalist Transformations and National Crystallisation: The past and present of National Question in India," EPW, XVIII, 5, Review of Political Economy, 29 January, 1983, I made a mistake in not distinguishing them as stages of development on the continuum of national crystallisation. From the position, which I still hold, that these distinctions are no longer of much use in correctly understanding the nature of national movements or the people in the grip of a ferment that has national features to it, I went into the logically untenable position of denying the historical distinction altogether.
111. As an aside, Ernest Gellner, one of the most profound and comprehensive non-Marxist thinker on the problem of nationalism, in his most recent work Nations and Nationalism (London, 1984) has worked out in details why he considers modern nations and the phenomenon of nationalism to be the creations of industrialisation and not capitalism in general. He uses this as the main criterion to develop an alternative theory to that of Marxists on this problem. His work should be taken more seriously by us -- the Marxists. It seems to me that in working out a detailed critique of this work, especially in relation to the Third World countries the Marxist theory itself, on the National Question, can come to terms more fully with the complex realities of the present times.
112. It is important to note here that the Marxist in general and the left movement in the country in particular have clearly and consistently pointed to the danger of unhindered collaboration with imperialism and have given correct slogans to fight it. But it seems to me that this realisation is largely confined to the plane of ideological struggle. The full implications of unrestricted capitalist growth have not been, it again seems to me, properly integrated in the theory on the national question.
113. EMS Namboodiripad in his rejoinder, "The Indian National Question: Need for Deeper Study," Social Scientist No. 115, December 1982, to Amalendu Guha's "The Indian National Question: a Conceptual frame," EPW, Vol. 17 Review of Political Economy, 31 July 1982, has raised the very important point that for the full development of nationalities the transformation of the emerging forms of commercial capital into industrial capital is a necessary condition. But, what if the industrial capital emerges under the colonial tutelage and modern

industry grows only as enclaves as it happened in India and is later hampered in its full development by imperialism as it is now, then what would be the consequences, on the evolution of nationalities. Further, if, as Nambodripad correctly points out, none of the major classes, the bourgeoisie and proletarian, could shake off the pre-capitalised mode of thinking which dragged everybody into it, then whether and how far can the pro-capitalist forces negate the characteristics that define nation-nationalities and the concrete popular expression of that consciousness. These questions are logically present in the very insightful posers in Nambodripad's article. These need to be gone into and integrated into theory for a clear understanding of situations in the third world. We are caught up in ugly and deformed social forms of development which benefits none but the imperialist interests and therefore cannot be avoided. I have tried to take the first tentative steps in full awareness that there is enormous scope to go wrong in the analysis of social situations.

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