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Editor

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NEW ROLE FOR THE STATE IN INDIA : ROLLING BACK OR REPOSITIONING ?

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Introduction

Since the late seventies and early eighties the economic and political changes in the United States and Western Europe have led to the growing popularity of the programme for minimising the role of the state and depending on the market for confronting the socio-economic problems in those societies. This neo-Conservative ideological trend started affecting the official thinking about the role of the State in India since the early nineties. This development in Indian politics and economy is a well-thought-out reversal of "socialistic" strategy for nation-building and economic development followed by the Congress leadership from Jawaharlal Nehru to Indira Gandhi, and also by the Janata Party leadership. By general reckoning this leadership was basically democratic socialist moderated by specific Indian characteristics. Subtle changes in political approach to economic development began raising their head during Rajiv Gandhi's regime in the eighties as a part of the global changes in respect of thinking about the functional role of the state. But the paradigmatic shift took a distinct shape with the Congress party coming back to power in the middle of 1991. Socialism, and even democratic welfare socialism, began receiving less and less attention in the formulation and actual implementation of public policies. Thanks to the impact of the ideology of the market, the public choice theory in political science and public administration asserts that "market" is more important than 'government', and that citizens as political actors must enjoy the right to maximise utilities. To many people, this view about the role of the state is generally as the 'New Right' ideology which, in the US in the seventies, represented America's "conservative renaissance". It emerged as an ideology opposed to the

'New Left' which developed on both sides of the Atlantic towards the end of the sixties. In terms of social science, this new ideology bears strong ideological affinity with 'post-behavioural' tendency.

'New Right' Ideology

In the developed West, the 'New Right' ideology originated in the seventies and was different from the 'Old Right' orthodox conservatism of the fifties and sixties.[1] The 'New Right' differs from the 'Old Right' in its political origins, its philosophical and political motivations, its strategic and tactical operations, and its self-conscious goals. Both share general conservative principles but the 'New Right' differs in articulation of those principles and in the emphasis given to them in the present-day politics. 'New Right' strongly belives in free enterprise and individual initiative and opposes the expansion of government interference with individual lives. It believes that the individual as an individual does have personal responsibility to society and that each individual has intrinsic moral worth. It is more than a political ideology and is the political expression of a profound radical social movement especially in the context of the United States. It rejects the Left view that government favours the rich as also the Right view that government gives too much to the poor in the name of welfare state. It is opposed to planned, non-market distribution and favours free market operations in respect of distribution of goods and services in the economy. Thus, in the economic thinking of this social movement, economic liberalization on a global scale occupies the pride of place. The 'market' has got an overwhelming ideological hegemony in its economic thinking which is market by such concepts as viability, competitiveness, freedom of choice, balancing the books and so on.

Inspired by the work of Milton Friedman, Friedrich Von Hayek and Lionel Robbins, this basically anti-socialist social movement sometimes rhetorically talks of its own 'corporate socialism' for growth, efficiency, technology, stability and economic management. Its organizational style represents the apotheosis of pragmatism and avoids doctrinaire socialism. It gains popularity among the middle-class people because it promises to unleash the over-regulated, over-taxed and unrewarded middle-class radical social and economic forces so that their innovative and productive potential can be developed. The middle-class radical forces can hope to achieve their potential only by

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dismantling the managerial power structure of what James Burnham described as the "managerial elite". Against this managerial power structure the 'New Right' wants to build up the market-media-industry nexus. The proponents of the theory of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG) want to fight simultaneously against two opposite ideological forces, viz., classical liberalism and orthodox socialism. They consider the liberal idea of a night-watchman state as an illusion and rejects the socialist idea of paternalistic, welfarist, controlled state. What the new LPG school resents most is the injustice bred through unfair welfare programmes, overdoses of taxation, and stifling government regulations. It demands lifting of most of the loyal and administrative restraints on individual enterprise. On this point there is remarkable similarity between the current LPG ideology and the economic ideology of India's now defunct Swatantra Party sponsored by Rajagopalachari and Masani. The political economy of LPG focuses on promoting economic growth and removing stagnation, but it is by no means synnymous with unbridled free market only. It aims at achieving reduction of inflation, de-regulation, lower taxation, and institutional and constitutional reform. It believes that development process needs to be market-friendly by promoting entrepreneurship and technological innovation.

Market-oriented Development Paradigm

As the interaction between governments and markets on the global scale is the central issue of "development", it has been argued that development is meaningful only in the context of the so-called LPG processes. The World Development Report (1991) has explained this point by its observation :

This is not a question of intervention versus laissez faire - a popular dichotomy, but a false one. Competitive markets are the best way yet found for efficiently organizing the production and distribution of goods and services. Domestic and external competition provides the incentives that unleash entrepreneurship and technological progress. But markets cannot operate in a vacuum; they require a legal and regulatory framework that only governments can provide. And, at many other tasks, markets sometimes prove inadequate or fail altogether. That is why governments must, for example, invest in infrastructure and provide essential services to the poor. It is not a question of state or market :

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each has large and irreplaceable role[2].

It is found therefore that the World Bank theorists of capitalist development in the early nineties were no longer the champions of the 'New Right' goal of rolling back the state. The World Bank finds it necessary to re-think the role of the state in the developing countries for the sake of ensuring the smooth development of capitalism. 'Roll back the State' was the slogan of one variety of 'New Right' ideology in the United States in the late sixties, whose best exponent was Barry Goldwater. That was an extreme view which did not find favour with the more pragmatic practitioners of the ideology of minimum State functions like Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the United States. The ideology of the World Bank development theorists condemns what they consider as the 'predatory state' in the developing countries. It is opposed to interventionist approach of the state on the grounds that experience has shown in many countries the undesirable effects of State intervention, viz., skewed priorities, market distortions, inflated bureaucracy, widespread corruption, underpriced and over-staffed public utilities and consequent poor services. The state, in such a situation, goes for administered prices, higher taxation and more bureaucratic control, and thus turns itself into a predatory institution armed with sovereign power. India under Mrs. Indira Gandhi in the seventies certainly provided a very good example of this view of the state in the developing countries. The worst thing that happens in such cases is irrational and non-accountable public expenditure, increase in non-productive generation of employment, and distorted distribution of national income. Development project, sponsored by multi-national business corporations, are ill-advised and they put a strain on productivity planning and asset creation.

This diagnosis of the ills of political economy of the developing countries has substantive truth in it. But the prescription for overcoming the diseases does not commend itself. The LPG ideology is expected to release locked-up social initiative and participation in the global economy which is overwhelmingly capitalist in nature in the closing decade of the twentieth century. Restricting the State, if not rolling it back, will be in consonance with the rising tempo and expanding role of world capitalism. But there is hardly any concrete and solid evidence to suggest that the LPG ideology has been successful in tackling the

manifold problems confronting the developing countries. Any rethinking about the role of the state in these countries must concentrate on meeting the demands of 'social justice', and not on increasing productivity alone. People would hardly feel encouraged to increase the size of the cake without having an idea beforehand how equitably the addition to the size of the cake is going to be distributed. 'Rolling back the State' cannot be the answer and the 'market' does not have any magic of its own to redress the century-old injustice meted out to the vast, majority of the people. The social bases of power and the ethical dimensions of politics are important considerations for determining a new role for the State in developing countries. The ideological case for social democracy gains relevance in this context.

Social Democracy's View of the State

Social democracy is essentially an ideology of achieving social justice and social solidarity through democratic methods. After passing through fifty years' European experience from the thirties to the seventies, the social democrats have bitterly learnt the lesson that social democracy must not be equated with wholesale public ownership of the means of production and that social democratic ideology is nothing if it does not have any ethical dimension. Today the welfare state system as a part of a consensus politics is facing·some challenge from the neo-Conservative ideology of LPG. The emerging challenge is essentially intellectual and ethical. It is the historical task of social democracy to counter this challenge effectively, especially in the aftermath of the collapse of communism. The problem of mass-unemployment has been historically found to be the main factor of political destabilization by upsetting the social balance and undermining democratic values. In case of India today the real ideological and political contest is between neo-conservative LPG ideology, on the one hand, and the social-democratic commitment to laying a stable foundation of the social welfare state system with its ethical concern for the weak, down-trodden and underprivileged sections of the population. The communists, in the changed global context, must confront the growing challenge with the social democrats as comrades-in-arm. Neither the modified laissezfaire of Reagan-Thatcher model nor the old-style Stalinist state system is acceptable to the modern-day communists and social democrats. The state must play an appropriate

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role as a regulator and facilitator of services. Instead of being rolled back, the State and public administration in India need to be repositioned in response to the needs of the hour. Social democracy and emerging variant of communism must be innovative in order to be effective without sacrificing the fundamentals. Economic growth and increase in productivity need to be reconciled with the demands of social justice and solidarity. For achieving sustainable development, a constant reconciliation has to be sought between technological innovation, economic growth, eco-friendly investment and egalitarian distribution of national product. Social democracy in its rechristened ideological outfit in the nineties is committed to this concept of development.

Economic Liberalization in India

In India's case, the economic measures initiated in 1991 was in the short-run undertaken to overcome the economic crisis and in the long-run to re-structure the economy. Before this exercise was undertaken, steps were taken in the late eighties to increase the growth rate to 5.5 per cent. But this growth was not sustainable because of the continuing fiscal and current account deficits. So the Indian policy-makers decided in early nineties to achieve a growth rate of 6.5 to 7 per cent in order to alleviate poverty, especially when Thailand, Indonesia and China, apart from the four original East Asian "tigers" (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore), had achieved 8 per cent growth rate. Even Vietnam and Malaysia were fast catching up with the fellow Asian "tigers". Hence Indian strongly felt the need to reorient her economic policy and her economic liberalization policy was unanimolusly based on a vague consensus of politics. There are nine core areas on which economic reforms have focused[3] :

i. freeing industrial licensing from unnecessary regulations;

ii. liberalizing trade and exchange rates with a view to bringing Indian costs in line with international prices and making industries competitive; trade liberalization has been done in a phased manner to give Indian industry necessary breathing time;

iii. reforming tax structure by considerably reducing customs duty, introduction of MODVAT, and simplifying and reducing personal taxes;

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iv. changing the borrowing pattern and arranging the flow of foreign exchange by floating overseas bonds;

v. improving public sector performance by emphasising viability and entering into joint sector partnership;

vi. reforming financial sector, especially affecting banking operation;

vii. controlling fiscal deficits for preventing government borrowing from being dried up;

viii. adopting poverty alleviation programmes, particularly health and human resource development;

ix. developing necessary social and administrative infrastructure to cater to the projected economic growth of 6.5 per cent.

Apart from changes in these nine core areas, the new economic policy emphasises certain attitudinal changes, e.g. (i) new motivation and awareness among trade unions; (ii) industry-friendly approach; (iii) prompt governmental decisions and facilitation, and (iv) a fundamental shift from regulation and control to facilitation and escort services.

Repositioning the State

Even if the thrust of these policy changes in India are to be partially achieved, a number of pertinent points as to the new role fo the State and public administration are to be noted seriously. First, in the less developing countries (LDC) there has been a phenomenal growth of influence of the multinational corporations (MNC) sicne the seventies. Private foreign investment can be a stimulus to economic and social development as long as the interest of the MNC and that of the host country coincide. Strengthening of relative barganing powers of the host country government through its coordinated activities would probably reduce the overall magnitude and growth of private foreign investment and make the investment better fit the long-run development needs and priorities of the LDC while still providing profitable opportunities for foreign investors.

Secondly, there are social and economic effects of investments by MNCs. The government would have to impose some checks and

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balances to curb the ill-effects of foreign capital investment in a LDC. The worldwide experiences of LDCs with MNCs suggest that MNCs in many cases reinforce dualistic economic structures and exacerbate domestic inequalities with their wrong products and inappropriate technology. By asking for some gurantees of minimal rates of MNC return financed by the donor agency and host government contribution, it may be possible to reduce risk and thereby induce MNCs to adopt a longer-run perspective with emphasis on adapting technologies to the resource needs of the LDC.

Thirdly, the trade-off between quantity and relevance of MNC investments would be socially beneficial insofar as it would help allay the fears of the working-class to lose jobs. To pursue this socially-conditioned measure would be an important task of the most country's government.

Fourthly, unbridled industrialization in the West led to unrestrained and misguided consumerism. The market-economy supported by powerful media network is poised to influence consumer behaviour. In the calculation of the market-media-industry nexus the consumer is an earth worm gulping earth continuously. Artificial demands are created for non-essential consumers goods. Domestic industries, tied up with multinational giants, produce a variety of wires with international brand names to suit the taste of the consumer.

In India nearly one-third of population still lives below the poverty line. This huge number (about 310 million) of the economically, and also coincidentally socially, vulnerable pepole are to be protected against the rapacious activities of MNC-sponsored private enterprises. Even while accepting the LPG doctrine, the Indian State desperately needs a massive amount of social sector investment. In the midst of widespread, and sometimes, abominable poverty it would be suicidal to let the LPG doctrine have its full play. Even after the liberalization process under the new economic policy is carried out to a decent extent, the State's role would be that of determining the terms of liberalization and privatisation with a view to coinciding the interests of the host country and those of the MNCs. The State, in its changed role as a facilitator of the newly-release economic forces, would have to play the role of the conductor of an orchestra. Some sort of indicative planning will be

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absolutely necessary in order to escape from the potential disorganization and chaos in choosing priorities of investment-fields and criteria of capital investment. Free enterprise is to be coordinated by the State so that the benefits of fredom of action in production and distribution could be equitably shared. This should no longer be achieved in the corridors of politics and through administrative fiats but through the free play of market forces with minimum necessary regulation in national interest. This would require abandoning the practice of unjustified subsidies and tax concessions, ensuring level playing in all sorts of investment activities, refusing to bail out unviable public sector undertakings, improving the quality of the labour force through appropriate training of workers and managers, and keeping a close watch on the smoothness of industrial relations. The state has to be brought back in for streering clear of the pitfalls and shortcomings of the policies and programmes of rolling it back[4].

The way this changed role of the State as a provider of basic social services for the vulnerable sections and a facilitator of free enterprise in production and distribution processes can best be achieved is to 'reposition' the State apparatus, both political and administrative. This is short of radical 'reform' or 'reconstruction' , because no amount of radical fundamental or revolutionary change in power relations among the contending social classes is on the current agenda of politics. There is, at present, no question of either rolling back the state or smashing the state machine. But repositioning of the administrative orgasnization and redefining its goals and methods of work would be needed in order to enjoy the full benefits of the LPG doctrine minus its ill effect for the society. If and when social democracy, including reformed communism, is able to rise up to the occasion, the role of the State in the LDCs would acquire a new, fruitful meaning for the prosperity of the nation and the dignity of the individual.

Notes and References :

[1]   For a general introduction to the 'New Right' view, see Robert W. Whitaker (ed.), *The New Right Papers* (New York : St. Martin's, 1982).

[2]   *World Development Report 1991 : The Challenge of Development*, Oxford University Press for the World Bank.

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3   For further elaboration, see M.G. Kutty Memorial Lecture by Mr. M.S. Ahluwalia, Finance Secretary, Government of India, at Calcutta on 11 September 1995.

4   P.B. Evans, D. Rueschemayer, T. Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back in*, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

JOHN RAWLS AND HIS NOTION OF STATE

Girin Phukon

John Rawls (b.1921) made a fundamental contribution to the political philosophy with the publication of his book : *A Theory of Justice*, (1971)[1]. In the post-Second World war period, he attempted to revive the normative trend in the study of politics which was virtually over shadowed by the champions of empirical political theories. His main objective was to provide a coherent theoretical foundation for the conception of justice in opposition to the feature of liberal political theory which had become prominent since the days of Bentham (1748-1832). Indeed, his basic purpose was to establish a philosophy of justice which could be an alternative to the utilitarian principle of justice. i.e. 'greatest good of the greatest number'. Therefore, he rejected the utilitarian philosophy and substituted it by an alternative moral perspective. More importantly, Rawls's political thought has been concerned with the problem of providing a justification for political liberalism. Thus in his 'Theory of Justice' he attempts to reconcile a liberal ideal of political obligation with a redistributionist conception of social justice. As such his conception of justice had a deep root in the liberal democratic tradition. In reviving the idea of social contract, Rawls was placing himself within the tradition of Locke, Rousseau and Kant[2]. Indeed, Rawls wanted to co-relate the Locke's individual liberty and Rousseau's general good to establish a 'well ordered society' which implied a particular ideal of good society[3]. Thus it appears that in the face of behavioural revolution, Rawls tried to prove the existence of value laden theory and provided the basis for re-emergence of importance of normative tradition in the study of political science. He began to develop his ideas in a period of crisis of value, particularly, when the USA experienced considerable political controversy in regards to both domestic and foreign policy. The political events such as struggle for Civil Rights, conflict in Vietnam, ideological conflict with erstwhile USSR eventually raised acute problem for the justification of liberal democracy. It was in this context that Rawls made an attempt to protect the values of liberal democracy through projecting his idea of justice.

It seems that he was much concerned with the problem of power and therefore he did not conceptualise any theory of state. However, from his theory of justice and other writings it appears that Rawls is subscribing to a particular kind of liberal democratic state with certain egalitarian principles where his theory of justice could be materialised. This paper is an attempt to understand the various dimensions of Rawls's notion of state as indicated by his theory of justice. In order to have a better understanding of his vision of state, this paper is divided into two parts. While the first part will deal with the basic contention of the theory of justice, the second part will examine the type of state that Rawls visualised in which his theory of justice could be implemented.

II

Rawls extensively made use of traditional device of the social contract as a means of establishing his theory of justice. He challenged the validity of utilitarian reasoning on the ground that one may believe some things are right, good or just even though they might not produce the greatest happiness for the greatest number. He argued that if people have an inviolable natural right to fair deal, they ought not to be deprived of that right simply because of the net utility, i.e. pleasure or happiness of greatest number. It would seem to make possible, he asserted, the sacrifice of individual liberty in the interest of the common good[4]. Thus it appeared to him that the idea of social contract was a coherent alternative to the two dominant style of moral theory : utilitarianism and institutionalism.

Like the traditional theory of social contract, Rawls referred to a hypothetical situation to construct his theory of justice. In fact, Rawls emphasised the 'circumstances of justice' referring to man's natural situation, what he called, "initial position" in which they are bounded by incomplete knowledge and limited judgement[5]. He advocated that this initial situation must be characterised in such a way that it would lead to a certain conception of justice. The initial situation was understood in terms of 'original position' in which there prevailed what Rawls called a "veil of ignorance". While describing the character of 'original position' Rawls maintained :

> Among the essential features of this situation is that no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does any one know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength and the like. I shall even assume that the parties do

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not know their conception of the good or their special psychological propensities. The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance[6].

Thus the idea of 'original position' implies that men is like a 'negotiator' or a 'rational agent' concerned with the advancement of his own interest. For this purpose, he wants to achieve certain benefits like - wealth, position, opportunity, libarty and self-respect. But everything depend upon the system of law and justice of a country. However, as there is 'veil of ignorance' the rational principle cannot be applied to all in an equal manner. Most of the negotiators may not possess adequate knowledge of particular facts about themselves or about others. One may not be aware of his own situation in the new society - whether he will be advantaged or disadvantaged, rich or poor, weak or powerful and so on. Therefore Rawls argues that in this 'original position' the rules to be put into 'social contract' and it will have its subsequent reflections in the constitution. Because of uncertainty, he views, one will make sure that rule will prevent him from being treated severely if he bacomes less - advantaged person in the society. Thus the idea of "original position" and ' veil of ignorance' may be understood in the light of the fact that the people as negotiators have general wisdom but particular ignorance. They make an effort to protect their interest; but in doing so they fail to distinguish their interests with the interest of others. For the purpose of advancing his own interest, Rawls asserts, he has to favour principles which allow the maximum opportunity for the pursuit of one's plan of life. Thus it appears that according to Rawls, principles of justice are neither derivable from nature nor from any 'laws' of history or of society. The genuine principle of justice are the outcome of rational human decision. In fact, the choice of the principles of justice are the result of moral deliberation in the sense that in a moral debates the participants rise above the consideration of their personal interest, biases and prejudices. This is the contribution of original position, Rawls argues[8]. He considers 'justice' as 'Fairness', because the principles of justice are the outcome of a fair agreement in an initial situation. At any rate, in these circumstances general principles of justice may be adopted as Rawls put it :

> All social value - liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the basis of self-respect are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, of these values is to every one's advantage[9].

This statement of Rawls reveals that inequalities are injustice when

they are not for the benefit of all. But at the same time, it implies that if the inequalities are for the benefit of all, instead of being injustice it becomes justice. Thus it appears that from the above general principle, two principles of justice clearly emerge which guarantee -

    (i)   Equality of political rights as citizens in a democratic country.

    (ii)   Fair treatment in the distribution of social and economic values.

The firtst principle implies that each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with similar liberty for others. In fact it is for the protection of the basic liberties which Rawls considers as essential for the development of individual liberty. While explaining this point Rawls states that :

> The basic liberties of citizens are, roughly speaking, political liberty (the right to vote and to be eligible for public office) together with freedom of speach and Assembly, liberty of conscience and freedom of thought, freedom of the person along with right to hold (personal) property; and freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined by the concept of the rule of law. These liberties are all required to be equal by the first principle, since citizen of a just society are to have the same basic right[10].

The obvious implications of this assertion of Rawls is that justice should be understood in the light of an individual's liberty. The principle of liberty, however does not imply the unqualified granting of total liberty to everyone. In fact, liberty of each must be limited in order to protect the liberty of everyone, The individual liberty, Rawls views, should be understood in the light of 'general good'. As the primary goods are not unlimited, everyone cannot become equal in respect of the achievement of the goods. But the principle of distribution supposed to be based on the standard of equality so that undeserving get less than the deserving. Therefore, the second principle of justice suggests that social and economic inequalities are to be so arranged that they are both :

(i) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged; and reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage.

(ii) attached to offices and position open to all under the condition of fair equality of opportunity maintaining self-respect of the individual.

Thus under the second principle inequalities in wealth and income cannot be justified as consequences of the right to property or difference in ability. Income and wealth would heve to be distributed equally among citizen unless it could be shown that inequality would benefit

everyone[11]. In this principle two phrases are used : "everyone's advantage" and "open to all". The phrase 'open to all' is taken by Rawls as *equally* open to all, by virtue of the primary of first principle. By and large, the second principle is to secure the liberties of the less advantaged class by allowing inequalities in social and economic fields. Putting the two principles of justice in luxical order, Rawls removes doubts about the contradiction between them. Thus it is evident that the inequalities in social and economic fields are allowed by Rawls to benefit the worse off people. He is of the firm opinion that a just system of distribution will be only one of all those which tend to provide maximum equality together with efficiency. Thus the principle of efficiency alone cannot serve as a conception of justice. Efficiency, therefore, is to be balanced against equality. In view of all these, it may be argued that intention of Rawls to relate the principle of justice to economic inequality is the result of his feeling towards the need of the least advantaged class.

It may be noted that for the application of principles of justice Rawls introduces the conception of 'primary goods' like rights, liberties, power, wealth, opportunities and self-respect. A just society is one, he argues, that distributes these primary goods equally among its citizens[12]. Man can forego certain political rights for better economic returns,. But in Rawlsian principle, these types of exchange are not permitted. Perhaps for this reason, the two principles of justice have been arranged in a luxical order. In fact, Rawls does not allow economic or social gain at the cost of the basic liberties. Rawls believes that basic liberties are essential for individuals if a society has to move towards perfection. Thus application of Rawls's two principles of justice necessitates a particular kind of institutional structure capable of formulating public policy in consonant with his theory of justice.

III

Rawls observes that justice is to be regarded as a virtue of institution or practice rather than of particular action. Therefore, the two principles of justice, he opines, are to be applied to the basic structure of social institution. Thus Rawls maintains that the principle of justice should give an economic system which regulates the public good. In order to achieve this goal, he argues, it is necessary to organize the social and economic process within a suitable political and legal institutions what

he calls, 'basic structure of the society'[12]. It is this structure which determines the nature of the state. It is assumed that state is an organization of political power. But political power is not an isolated phenomenon. Obviously, its structure is highly blended with economic and social structure, what Rawls understood in terms of "basic structure of society". In view of this, for a better understanding of Rawls's notion of state, it is desirable to analysis his idea of 'basic structure of society'.

Rawls's theory of justice is basically a theory of social justice and its main subject is the 'basic structure of society' which has a profound impact on the prospects of individual's life[13]. According to him the basic structure of society implies the entire sphere of social, political, legal and economic institutions. It is defined as the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and determine the division of advantages from social co-operation[14]. In other words, it is a kind of arrangement of major social institutions into a scheme of co-operation. Rawls, however, defines institutions as a public system of rules which recognises offices and positions with their rights, duties and power[15]. Thus a system of rules also implies an institution. Rawls cites the example of parliamentary institutions, which are determined by a certain system of rules. These rules enumerate the form of action ranging from holding a session of parliament to raising a 'point of order'.

However, in his writings towards the later part (1985), Rawls has given up such a comprehensive notion of basic structure of society in favour of the basic structure of "modern constitutional liberal democracy". Similarly his notion of justice now appears to be a political conception of justice relevant for a democratic society[16]. Rawls asserts that his idea of justice is not for application as a moral conception to the basic structure of society like the utililarians. He argues that no moral conception can provide a publicly recognised basis for conception of justice in a modern democratic state. The workable conception of political justice, Rawls believes, must allow for a diversity of doctrine[17]. Thus it appears that Rawls does not contribute to an abstract notion of state. He is in favour of constitutional and democratic state. At any rate, Rawls's detailed model of 'basic structure' indicates that he has in mind the model of contemporary Anglo-American state.

By and large, it seems that Rawls projects a model of 'constitutional democracy' as an ideal political system which provides a procedure

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fulfiling the requirements of equal liberty and an effective system of legislation. Equal liberty is nothing but equal participation, he argues. His logic is that as the citizens are expected to obey the laws, they should enjoy equal rights to have better benefit of the constitutional process. This rights, he asserts, is derived from the nature of equality prevailed in the 'original position' Thus he observes :

> If the state is to exercise a final and coercive authority over a certain territory, and if it is this way to affect permanently man's prospect in life, than constitutional process should preserve the equal representation of the original position to the degree that this is practicable[18].

Thus it seems obvious that original position with its nature of 'veil of ignorance' has been adopted as a device of equality of representation for free individuals, though it appears to be hypothetical, it reflects his model of constitutional democracy. According to Rawls, constitutional regime reguires a representative body with a limited period to be selected by the electorate. It will determine, he opines, the basic social policies in the form of laws. Perhaps, behind this idea he keeps the legislalture like US Congress and British model of party system at the back of his mind. More importantly, Rawls is an advocator of universal adult franchise. In conformity with his principle of justice he wants all citizens to have equal access to public office and equal weightage to be given to the individuals in the decision making process. Everyone is eligible, he believes, to join political parties and to hold places of authority.

Rawls, further, advocates that the state should ensure equal political liberties by introducing various devices. Political parties, he argues, should be made independent from private economic interest. They should consider those demands which are found in conformity with the public good[19]. Rawls is aware of the shortcoming of political competition. He however, believes that democratic political process is a regulatory rivalry. It does not possess the desirable properties of a competitive economic market. The principle of justice, Rawls emphasises, should also determine an economic system capable of regulating public good. It is necessary to shape the social and economic process within suitable political and legal institution. Indeed, Rawls provides a model of economic structure in pursuance with his 'difference principle' according to which basic structure should be arranged in such a way that inequalities in respect of wealth, income and authority should be removed and greatest benefit should go to those persons

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who are least advantaged. He is of the opinion that the difference principle may be responded by redistributing income and wealth through taxing the advantaged and transforing the process to the disadvantaged. In fact, Rawls assumes that his principle of justice could be materialised even without the abolition of competitive market and adoption of western model of democratic socialism[20].

IV

This study shows that Rawls is an egalitarian and an advocator of justified inequality. A system of privileges is bad, he believes, because it is necessary to maximise primary goods at the cost of the individual goods. But at the some time, it is essential to improve the conditions of the least advantaged. Therefore, it seems that Rawls is not an egalitarian in terms of unequal distribution of social and economic advantages, yet he is egalitarian in the sense that he advocates the autonomy of every individuals. He asserts that the function of the state is not only to maintain law and order but also to achieve the distributive justice by putting the highest social value on the requirements of the disadvantaged. Therefore, like Lock, Rawls's notion of state seems to be a voluntary organization established for mutual protection[21]. The state regulates the general conditions to facilitate the individuals to pursue their interest and maximises the conditions for their liberties. Therefore, rights and freedom of individuals, Rawls argues, cannot be separated from the state. Thus it appears that Rawls's notion of state is balanced towards the libertarian view of liberal democratic state more than its eqalitarian outlook. His attempt is to maintain a balance between the individual's choice and positive role of the state.

As noted earlier, Rawls's notion of justice implies a kind of virtue of fair social deals such as the sense of fairness, reasonableness and tolerance. Such virtues obviously determine the character of good citizens of a democratic state. Rawls's state, however, does provide a particular religious or philosophical doctrine in its own name. But his notion of state adopts certain measures to strengthen the form of thought and feeling that sustain fair social co-operation among its citizens which is free and equal. More importantly, Rawls attempts to justify the soverign power of the state while at the same time wants to limit its authority. As the state is supposed to possess monopoly of coercive power, it may deprive citizens of political and social freedoms. Therefore, he makes an effort to provide institutional devices in order

to overcome this contradiction. Indeed, he is mainly concerned with reason, freedom of choice and law which are essential to recognise the individual's right to liberty and equality. This would ensure, he believes, the best public interest including the benefit to the least advantatged man.

It is however, evident that Rawls is not presenting a model of an utopian ideal state. His main purpose is to make the principle of liberal democratic state workable. Indeed, as already noted, Ralws is making an endeavour to provide a theoretical foundation for the dominant political ideas and institutions of his time particularly, when the theory of liberal democracy came to an impasse[22], and there seemed to be an ideological bankruptcy of liberalism. The paradigm of moral philosophy, utilitarianism was being challenged. Because of the principle of 'greatest good of the greatest number', the minority was to submit to the interest of the majority. Thus Rawls's theory of justice and its resultant, his notion of state is the manifestation of a period of intense political struggle and questioning. The Black liberation movement in USA and growing popularity of communism in the east had challenged the existing political institution and use of political power. Thus like all other great political philosophers, Rawls responded to the realities of contemporary political crisis. His ideas became relevant to the post-industrial society. As is evident, he tries to establish the importance of individuals in the society. For this purpose, he wants to make the state and its institutions subject to the principle of justice. By and large, by making the state responsible for the least advantaged men, Ralws endeavours to make his theory applicable in a socio-economic system such as the capitalism i.e. liberal democratic socialism.

Notes and References

1. The book *A Theory of Justice* is a developmed form of his article "Justice as Fairness", published in 1958.
2. Peter Lassman; "John Rawls, Justice and a Well Ordered Society" in Leonard Tivey (ed.) *Political Thought Since 1945*,(England,1992), p. 197.
3. Rawls had defined such a society as 'one designed to advance the good of its members and effectively regulated by a public conception of justice. It is a society in which everyone accepts and knows that the others accepts the same principle of justice and the basic social institutions satisfy and are known to statisfy these principles'. (John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 453 cited in Peter Lassman; *op.cit*)

2. *Girin Phukon*

4.   John Rawls; *A Theory of Justice. Ibid.* pp. 11-12.
5.   Peter Lassman; *op.cit.* p. 202.
6.   *Ibid.*
7.   Robert A. Dahl; *Modern Political Analysis,* (New Delhi, 1994) p. 127.
8.   Pater Lassman; *op.cit.* p. 205.
9.   John Rawls; *A Theory of Justice. op.cit.* cited in Robert A. Dahl. *op.cit.* p. 127.
10. *Ibid.,* p. 128.
11. *Ibid.*
12. John Rawls, *op.cit.* p. 62.
13. *Ibid.* p. 7.
14. *Ibid.* Rawls divides the basic structure of society into two categories : (i) basic liberties of citizens and, (ii) distribution of income. The basic liberties includes political liberty, freedom of speech and assembly, liberty of conscience, freedom of thought, right to hold property. Secondly the pattern of economic distribution is to the benefit of the least advantaged. Rawls however, insists that the first principle must be regarded as having priority over the second.(*Ibid.,* p. 61)
15. *Ibid.* p. 55.
16. John Rawls ; "Justice as Fairness : Political not Metaphysical" *Philosophy and Public Affairs,* vol 14, No. 3, 1985, pp. 223-51.
17. *Ibid.*
18. John Rawls, (1971), *op.cit.* p. 222.
19. *Ibid.* p. 226.
20. Allen Buchanan ; "A critical Introduction to Rawls' Theory of Justice", in H. Gene Blocker & Elizabeth H. Smith (ed.) *John Rawls' Theory of Social Justice,* (Ohio University Press, Athens, 1980, p. 25).
21. Rawls views the individuals as rational agent with interest and right claims. Thus he observes "the state must be understood as the association consisting of equal citizens" (John Rawls, 71) p. 212.
22. This impasse was characterised in terms of the conflict between the Lockean and the Rousseauian traditions of democratic thought. The tradition associated with Locke stresses the liberties of civic life, freedom of thought and conscience, right of person, property and association. On the other hand, tradition associated with Rousseau gives priority to equal political liberties and values of public life and see the civic liberties as subordinate to them. Rawls wants to co-relate between these two traditions.

ETHNO-ECOLOGISM :
A RECONSIDERATION OF THE ASSAM
MOVEMENT (1979-1985)

Samir Kumar Das

The present paper proposes to examine the relationship between ethnicity and ecology as it obtains in contemporary Assam. It is true that the question of ecology has received some - though very sketchy attention in intellectual circles in very recent years. Yet studies in ecology hardly bring in ethnic issues as much as studies in ethnicity hardly bring in ecological issues. There is reason to think that researches on ethnicity and ecology have proceeded along two mutually exclusive trajectories. Thus to cite an instance, Tilottama and Udayon Misras' recent resume of the ethnic autonomy movements in north-eastern India - otherwise exhaustive and brilliant, does not touch upon the ecological question at all[1]. Similarly, studies in ecology remain by and large indifferent to ethnic issues excepting making some very vague and generalized references to them.

The assumption that runs through the present paper is that there is a connexion between ethnicity an ecology and that the connexion is organic rather than anything else with the effect that ethnicity cannot survive without the preservation of environment and vice versa, that is to say, environment cannot be preserved without the survival of ethnicity. The assumption is firmly anchored in the rapidly growing literature on both ethnicity and ecology. J.B. Ganguly in one of his pioneering essays written in Bengali, aims at establishing this connexion and points out that 'ecological balance and biodiversity' are critically dependent on the survival of self-sustaining, autochthonous ethnic communities. The tremendous population growth - mostly due to huge influx from within India as well as without, has disrupted the balance and posed a threat to biodiversity. Thus, *jhum* cultivation has hitherto played a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance. As he observes

: "Since production in this economy is meant for acquiring means for one's survival and not for earning profits and since its continuation depends on the preservation of forest resources, the rural authorities would control the use of forests by the families in order to ensure their prolonged and continuous survival"[2]. The introduction of profit-oriented systems of production has not only led to an over-exploitation of nature but resulted in disintegration of the self-sustaining ethnic communities. The *Chilika Banchao* (Save Chilika) report for instance, graphically illustrates how India's largest brackish-water lagoon has been subjected to commercial exploitation and "marginalised its fishing communities as a result of the rich and powerful non-fishing communities from outside, who usurped the indigenous peoples' right over the Chilika resources"[3]. The report also notes that growing commercialization has brought about new and hitherto unknown sources of class divisions within the fishing communities. Obviously, they have not meekly submitted to the process with folded palms. In their case, the demand for ecological protection has been synonymous with the demand for their survival as distinct and vibrant, self-sustaining communities. As Susana B.C. Devalle observes - albeit in the far-off Jharkhandi context of central India : "The struggle for the forests in Jharkhand forms part of a wider political discourse in which life - not just "survival" - is defined in its widest sense : as the defence of the adivasis' physical, historical, social and cultural continuity. At the same time, this defence expresses indictment of the dominant discourse on "progress"[4].

While drawing our attention to the organic connexion between ethnicity and ecology, the present paper seeks to reconsider the erstwhile Assam movement of 1979-85 and conclude that the movement under review was hardly sensitive to the said connexion. This may be taken as a negative case in the sense that its insensitivity and sometimes attempts at subsuming the larger issues of ecology under the ethnic question were nothing but what may be called, a reductionist endeavour. We may even stretch the point further to argue that the ethnic communities cannot (hope to) survive as autonomous and distinct cultural entities without simultaneously making attempts at maintaining the ecological balance and biodiversity. The paper also points to Assma's recent attempts at coming to terms with the ecological issues and treating them in a broad and non-reductionist manner.

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A Methodology of Reconsideration :

Any movement of some significance gives itself to two very different kinds of reconsideration. On the one hand, we may reconsider it in a crudely utilitarian manner, that is to say, by way of estimating its costs and comparing them with the benefits that it was successful in obtaining. For instance, the Assam movement has cost Assam very dearly in so far as the losses - both human and material, are concerned. The Asom Gana Parishad that came to power immediately after the movement was over, listed as many as 677 persons who had sacrificed their lives during the movement as 'martyrs' and no less than 49 persons who were injured and harmed were provided with compensations[5]. The costs will appear to be enormously high if one adds to these the number of people who had fallen prey to genocidal riots that shook various parts of Assam since the early months of 1983. According to Amnesty International, "during February 1983, widespread communal violence occurred in the state of Assam where an estimated 3500 people, mainly Bengali-speaking immigrants were killed by the Assamese (Many of whom had been campaigning for the repatriation of Bengali Muslims who had entered the state)"[6]. One should also keep in mind that the movement triggered a saga of violence not only in Assam but the region as a whole. An unofficial estimate that by its own admission is 'incomplete' puts the number of persons killed in course of nationality struggles in Assam during 1987-95 at 60[7]. Most importantly, its social cost was incalculable : it had almost irreparably embittered the inter-communal relations in Assam. Compared to the cost, the achievements of the movement may be dismissed as mere peanuts, more so when one takes two factors into account : One, what was accepted by the government in the shape of the much-tauted tripartite Accord was offered to the leadership way back in 1980 and one really wonders why the movement was unnecessarily prolonged for a period of another five years. Two, if one compares what was offered through the instrumentality of the Accord with what ultimately was put into practice, one is forced to conclude that the movement had led 'an entire generation of Assamese' astray. It was at its best a hoax - nevertheless an attractive one that caught their imagination and fired their minds[8]. It was what Prof. Hiren Gohain calls, 'a dangerous game' (sarbanaseeya khel)[9].

On the other hand, there is the anti-utilitarian consideration

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according to which a movement's worth depends on its potential of being 'disqualified' by the very framework that assesses it in a crudely utilitarian manner. Utilitarianism viewed in this sense, may be likened to what Foucault calls, 'a regime of truth' that determines 'the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true'.[10] Anti-utilitarian reconsiderations make us to believe that if the Assam movement appears to be too costly, it proves to be so if we compare the costs incurred with the benefits accrued and get ourselves involved in preparing a balance-sheet. The members of a community do not consider any cost to be too high at a time when its survival is at stake. Thus, the movement is said to have (i) enabled the Assamese to throw away all to galvanize themselves into a homogeneous community, (ii) registered their presence in the so-called, 'national' scheme of things so far unilaterally controlled and administered by the Centre and (iii) encouraged them to take pride in their community in myriad social interactions rather than finding fault with others. Asom Sahitya Sabha, the supreme literary organization that provided much of moral and intellectual leadership during the movement once called upon the Assamese to prepare themselces for 'the supreme sacrifice' in order to assert 'their right to survive with dignity and self-respect'[11]. It is for this reason that the Nagas have to be engaged in an uneven war against a 'superior' enemy even if they know fully well that odds are heavily weighed against them : "We are safe as long as we fight to save ourselves.... The enemy is superior, therefore, our war will have to be a protracted one"[12]. The threats are so overwhelming that one is swept away the moment one stops fighting and it is in the fight itself rather than in its victory that a community feels that it survives as an autonomous and distinct cultural entity.

I have tried to reconsider the Assam movement in an anti-utilitarian manner, that is to say, as a process whereby the Assamese community got itself formed[13]. The movement to my mind, was larger than what immediate cost-benefit calculations characteristic of utilitarian appraisals would have us believe. It is in this larger perspective that ecological issues assume some significance. The process of community formation remains incomplete if it shows a backseat to the ecological issues and in its overzeal tends to subsume them under the ethnic question. The survival of a community is likely to be at stake if it does

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not take cognizance of ecological issues and fails to understand the organic inter-connexion between ethnicity and ecology.

The Perspective

Underlying this reconsideration, there are at least three major sets conceptual distinctions that need to keep in mind at the very outset : First, we must make a distinction between those problems which our cognitive frameworks (which we have at our disposal at any given point of time) sensitize ourselves to and makes us recognize them as such and certain others which our cognitive frameworks do not sensitize ourselves to and hence, we do not seem to recognize them as problems that need to be taken notice of and resolved. The seriousness of the problems may not go hand in hand with their social recognition for more often than not, we face problems that only take us to inevitable apocalypse but, we remain gleefully insensitive to them. The rapid depletion of earth's life-bearing resources does not couse much of concern in our everyday lives. This is in the words of a very eminent social scientist, like 'organizing a picnic on the crater of a mighty volcano'. For purposes of convenience, we will refer to the first type as problematic in order to distinguish them from more mundane and ordinary problems of the second type. The obsession with our cognitive frameworks may sometimes 'insulate us from those socially important problems which cannot be stated in terms of the conceptual and instrumental tools they supply'[14]. One of our central arguments in this paper is that the problematic underlying the Assam movement was never sufficiently broad to include the ecological question and treat it as an irreducible problem in need of being expressly resolved for ensuring the survival of the Assamese community. The paradox of the Assam movement was that it had brought a community without making provisions for its vitality and sustenance.

As a corollary to it, we should also make a distinction between environmentalism and ecologism. As Andrew Dobson maintains : "…. environmentalism agrues for a managerial approach to environmental problems, secure in the belief that they cannot be solved without fundamental changes in present values or patterns of production and consumption, while ecologism holds that a sustainable and fulfilling existence pre-supposes radical changes in our natural world and in our

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mode of social and political life"[16]. In line with this distinction, we may say that the problematic that the Assam movement represents before us, was environmentalistic rather than ecologistic and one would do well to agrue that the post-movement Assamese community shows signs of gradually coming to terms with the ecologistic problematic.

Given that ethnicity and ecology are organically related to each other, the commonly-made distinction between ethnicity and modern state 16 pre-supposes an opposition between state and ecology. Modern state's ecocidal image has received some attention in the extant literature. Modern state cannot do without promoting a design of development that is destructive of the ecological balance and that cuts into the life-bearing resources of earth. To stretch the argument a bit further, ecology per se has become a site of contest between the state and ethnicity : On the one hand, the state tries hard to lay hold of the earth's resources that have hitherto belonged to the community as a whole and establish its monopoly over them by promoting commercialization and other profit-oriented systems of appropriations - thereby turning the resources into exchangeable commodities to be privately grabbed and used for private purposes. On the other hand, communities fight hard to arrest the trend and seek - with or without success; to recapture their hold over the resources and put up a resistance to it. Atluri Murali has narrated how the colonial state helped in transforming forest resources hitherto regarded as the collective property of the community, into private properties in Andhra during 1600-1922[17]. Since the Assam movement did not seem to understand the organic connexion between ethnicity and ecology, it could not at the same time feel the necessity of making a decisive break with the development design pursued and promoted by the state, nay the state per se. The movement as Dipankar Gupta puts it, 'did not put pressure on the given ideological and theoretical parameters of the nation-state'[18]. While this may be true in a large measure, this appraisal ignores many of the shades and layers that lay hidden underneath the movement and that remained unreconciled to the parameters of the modern Indian state. Ecologism on the contrary, depreciates the modern state and opens up a burgeoning space for NGO activities beyond the domain of the state. This paper terms it as a social niche where the ecologistic problematic is articulated and fermented.

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The Insensitivity

From the above discussion, it is now clear that ethno-ecologism implies a recognition on the part of the particular ethnic community of the irreducibility of the ecological question and its opposition to the modern Indian state. We will try to argue that in neither of these senses, can the Assam movement be said to have been informed by the ethno-ecologistic problematic the illustration of the movement is cited only as a negative case. In more positive terms, the movement subsumed the question of ecology under the over-riding question of ethnicity whereby problems relating to ecology were regarded as those of ethnicity - more precisely, of establishing and maintaining control over life-bearing resources of the region. It gives the existing system of collection and consumption of resources a clean chit. But, it finds fault with the existing system of ownership and control over them. There is no guarantee that once the ownership and control pass over to the hands of the natives from those of the outsiders, the ecological problems will be automatically resolved.

For instance, there is always a demand for accelerating the rate of drilling of oil resources and resentments are voiced against Oil India's inability to meet the targeted rate. While targeted rates of drilling of crude oil were 3.05 and 3.07 million tonnes in 1981-82 and 1982-83 respectively, the actual rates came down to 2.96 and 2.83 million tonnes respectively. When the target was set at a more modest rate of 2.98 million tonnes in 1983-84, the question that was persistently raised was not how long would Assam take to exhaust her precious oil stock but 'what this downward trend was pointing to'[19]. This has to be read together with the demand for raising the royalty of oil. An increase in the quantity of crude oil drilled from out of the rigs coupled with a perceptible increase in per tonne royalty may fatten Assam's exchequer in the short term, but is definitely to ruin her in the longer term. In 1981 when the movement was in full swing and had adversely affected the drilling operations, Assam was losing an estimated Rs. 2.3 crores daily[20]. Encroachments on forest reserves, areas dangerously close to coalfields of Margherita and other public lands like, the grazing reserves, charlands etc. become the objects of criticism not because they were threatening balance but because the culprits were 'foreigners' who had

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no right to migrate to Assam - let alone, stay and settle there. Had they been of native origin and happened to be sons of the soil, there might not have been so much of resentment - if at all. In February 1980, Purbanchaliya Lok parishad, one of the major constituents of All-Assam Students' Union, All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad combine alleged that about 11000 and 8000 bighas of land had been usurped by the foreigners of Banladeshi origin at Karoimari and Matikhowa grazing reserves respectively[21]. According to an estimate made in 1984, there has been a 19 percent decline of grazing reserves during the least 17 years. The argument behind the blockade of plywood industry organized in 1980 was not that the industry was clearning off Assam's precious woods but that its owners, managers as well as upper-income employees were drawn from outside the region[22]. The Government of India acknowledged that out of a total of 16.42 lakh hectares of reserve forests in Assam, about 13,4713 hectares have been under illegal occupation[23]. The following Table (I) measures the extent of illegal occupation in the charlands of Assam :

Table - I

Illegal Occupation in Charlands

Sub-division	Charland (in bighas)	Occupation (in bighas)	Percentage
Bhubri	874000	21000	2.4
Goalpara	184000	20000	1.08
Mangaldoi	123636	16000	1.3
Guwahati	78000	Total	100
Tezpur	37000	5221	14.11
N.Lakhimpur	40304	22109	54.86
Jorhat	26000	19000	73.1
Marigaon	21000	13000	61.9
Barpeta	43784	Total	100
Dibrugarh	44000	Total	100
Nalbari	6335	Total	100
Silchar	50	Total	100

Source : Compiled from *Dainik Asom*, 16 May 1983.

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The argument is not that people should not inhabit areas so close to the river beds as this would result in a certain raising of their levels and consequently inundation but that the 'foreigners' have no right to settle in Assam.

What is important to note is that the state is seen to act in collusion with the so called foreigners. Thus the state's eviction drive is interpreted as selective in the sense that it is interested in evicting only the Assamese who are illegal occupants but are helpless and do not supposedly have any alternative residential arrangements to look forward to [24]. Asom Jatiyatabadi Dal accuses the government of granting pattas over 3000 bighas of land in South Nagaon[25]. The government seems to have taken an extra-care to get the 'foreigners' settled in different parts of Assam.

The Niche

A brief reconsideration of the Assam movement suggests that it remained insensitive to the organic connexion between ethnicity and ecology. It also in the same vein, failed to take note of the premise that the ecological question cannot be tackled within the framework of the modern state. The point is to create a social niche beyond the institutional and ideological parameters of the modern state. It is true that there were efforts - nevertheless small and modest, at creating such a niche. On one occasion, the students of Mangaldoi College had dug up a 3500 - ft. - long canal through voluntary labour. This was expected to save as many as 14 villages, the college itself and N.T. Road from annual floods. What is important to note is that they did not accept any aid from the government[26]. Inspite of their great significance, these efforts are limited in at least two ways : One such efforts are not informed by what we have called, ethno-ecologistic problematic. Rather, they are informed by ethno-environmentalistic problematic. One witnesses such efforts only when the people face some emergent problems. One does not observe these efforts once the problems subside or are resolved. For instance, there are no corresponding efforts at pre-empting or taking precautions against such annual catastrophes as floods either by way of raising one's voice against haphazard and unplanned development that is one of the major causes of floods or by way of preventing people - irrespective of their ethnic origins, from getting settled in river beds and thereby elevating their levels and reducing the

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water-carrying capacity or both. The efforts are curative rather than preventive. It reveals the movement's larger failure in locating the problem of floods or for that matter, any ecological problem in the proper perspective. Such patchworks and fire-fighting efforts can at best be called, ethno-environmentalistic. Secondly, the refusal to accept governmental aid and assistance in all cases, was not backed by any comprehensive project of organizing the life-process of the Assamese community independently of the state. It was with the active intervention of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) - especially since the late-1980's, that the people - at least a section of them could realize that it was possible to lead worthwhile lives without taking recourse to the state[27]. ULFA to my mind, has been by and large successful in creating a niche which sensitizes people to an alternative life-style and inculcates in them the training of doing without the state[28].

Moreover, there is a tendency particularly in intellectual circles, to look upon the social niche as a pure and clinically sanitized sphere of human activity where people participate as an undifferentiated and homogeneous collectivity and keep themselves free from conflicts that otherwise tear the body politic apart. Also, with the withdrawal of the state as an embodiment of irreconcilable conflicts - class or non-class, it is possible to keep this sphere unaffected by social conflicts. There is no reason however, why this sphere will always homogeneize and cement them together into a cohesive collectivity. As a test case, we may refer to the controversy that has recently rocked Assam over the activities of Association for Voluntary Action and Rural Development (AVARD-NE). We all know that it is one of the premier NGOs operating in Majuli, the world's largest riverine island situated in Assam. Its north-eastern office was headed by Shri Sanjoy Ghose, one of the country's famous NGO-activists having professional training in rural management and flood control. AVARD (NE)'s most important project was a surprisingly low-cost experiment in erosion control on a stretch of 1.6 kilometres at Pohordiya village. The organization's conflict with the United Liberation Front of Assam is by now pretty well-known. We however will restrict ourselves to an analysis of four major areas of disagreement between them : First, it seems clear from the newspaper-reports available to us that ULFA chooses to make a distinction between NGOs which are locally rooted and have their headquarters in Assam

and those which are not. While justifying the 'killing' of Shri Ghosh, Shri Arabinda Rajkhowa, the underground Chairman of the Front in a statement made on 22 August 1997 issued what Monimoy Dasgupta of The Telegraph feels 'a veiled threat' to the NGOs operating from outside: "The argument rings true that the envelopes (containing the statement, SKD) have been sent to those NGOs which do not have their headquarters in Assam"[29]. Earlier, the ULFA Commander-in-Chief Shri Paresh Baruah had reportedly asked the NGOs without bases in Assam to seek his permission to remain in the state. It is also reported that since Shri Baruah's whereabouts are unknown, they are unable to obtain his permission. In other words, the tussle between the insiders and outsiders characteristic of many of the earlier movements of Assam is seen to be telescoped in the contest over the niche that protracted struggles of the Assamese people have created for themselves. It emanates from ULFA's deep-seated conviction that NGOs having no roots in the Assamese soil have no right whatsoever to conduct their operations here. Secondly, it also appears that ULFA and many other NGOs including the one we have already referred to, are lying for the same niche by way of engaging themselves in a fiercely competitive campaign for winning people's hearts, broadening their social constituency and taking the wind out of the adversaries' sail. If newspaper reports are any indicator, the 'abduction' and 'killing' of Shri Ghose has definitely cut into ULFA's legendary popularity in the riverine island and its leadership seems to be painfully aware of the slow yet unmistakable erosion of their popularity : "It seemed that the tide was turning definitely against ULFA"[30] with the effect that hundreds of intellectuals - defying a 'Janata Curfew" clamped by ULFA as a protest against Independence Day celebrations on 15 August 1997, took out a procession 'in support of the country's unity and integrity'. Besides, the islanders observed an unusually successful bandh as a mark of their protest against 'abduction' and 'killing'. When two of Shri Ghose's alleged 'abductors' were shot dead in Majuli, local residents of Kamalabari reportedly shouted slogans in support of the police action[31]. ULFA obviously cannot afford to remain oblivious to these happenings. In a bid to recapture its support base, Shri Mithinga Daimary, its Publicity Secretary, in a press release issued in August 'appealed' to the people of Assam "to frustrate the designs of the rulers to alienate the ULFA from the masses". The police has claimed to have recovered a

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hand-written note with a docket number atrributed to ULFA from the pocket of Shri Siraj Bora 'who was killed in an encounter of August 25, 1997' saying that 'Bhaskar (an ULFA-cadre, SKD) has met Mr. Bhuyan (Shri Ajit Bhuyan, the editor of Asomiya Pratidin, SKD) and sought his advice to tackle the anti-ULFA mood in Majuli"[32]. In other words, one of the challenges that ULFA admittedly faces today, is how to overcome the 'anti-ULFA mood' and it can no longer take its popularity for granted.

Thirdly, that NGOs are functioning successfully does not however mean that a niche has also been successfully created beyond the spreading tentacles of the modern Indian state. These organizations, more often than not, act in close complicity with the state itself. Hence, an expansion of their activities does not necessarily imply a contraction of state's sphere of influence. ULFA's politics points to this tacit paradox and therefore, is known for its antipathy towards the organizations which do not - or may be cannot, make a decisive break with the state's edifice. One of ULFA's principal charges against AVARD(NE) is that it was acting as an 'agent' of the Indian state and was involved in supplying secretly the information that ultimately led to the arrest of Shri Mahendra Khound, the Finance Controller of its Pub-Mandal parishad. Even if one dismisses such allegations as baseless, one must acknowledge that one of the major contributions of ULFA is that it draws our attention to the complexities involved in the process of creating and articulating the social niche and keeping it free from state's interference. Finally, while both ULFA and AVARD (NE) are insistent on establishing peopls' right to voice dissent against the suffocatingly oppressive military campaign in Assam, the latter makes a scathing critique of the former's attempts at 'drawing the precious energy from youth to run its campaign which otherwise could have been harnessed for the all-round development of people'[33]. In simple terms, AVARD (NE)'s firm commitment to non-military means as the only ones for harnessing the energy of the youth and uplifting the economic condlitions of the people brought it into a sharp conflict with ULFA that makes no bones about its commitment to the assertion of the people's right to dissent through non-military means and its 'armed campaign' against the Indian state. In a nutshell, we may say that the process of carving out a social niche outside the institutional and

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ideological parameters of the modern Indian state is bound to pass through many travails and trauma.

The New Problematic

We have already said that our study of the Assam movement figures only as negative case in this paper. But it seems that Assam is on the path of embracing a new problematic that first of all, treats the question of ethnic survival as something organically tied to that of ecology and by the same token, envisages an unmitigable opposition between the modern state and its necessarily ecocidal designs of development and secondly, feels the necessity of creating and articulating a niche outside the state's sphere of influence. The signs of these trends slowly - but not necessarily inerasably, are appearing at the horizon. The old ethno-environmentalistic problematic is too difficult to be thoroughly discarded; the new ethno-ecologistic problematic is not too strong to take firm roots and replace the old one. Thus, a workshop on the development and use of water resources held under the auspieces of the North-East India Council for Social Science Research in Shillong during 6-7 May , 1997 emphasized that the problems in this regard are intrinsic to the development designs which have been initiated and pursued by the state in order to alleviate them[34]. To cite another instance, Prof. B.C. Borah contends that the devastating floods that visit Assam regularly without exception are due to such man made factors as 'excessive deforestation, intensive cultivation, uncovering of the hills and human settlement' with the implication that one did not know of them before 1950[35]. Poor and defective urban planning is for instance, held responsible for the recent increase in the incidence of pollution-related diseases[36].

Unless we change our cognitive equipments to take account of these problems, they are bound to sweep us away before we change them.

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36. The following Tables measure the incidence of Malaria and Gastro-Enteritis in Guwahati :

Table - II Incidence of Malaria in Guwahati			Table - III Incidence of Gastro-Enteritis in Guwahati		
Year	No. of Cases		Year	No of Cases	Fatalitie
1992	439		1992	105	7
1993	544		1993	136	19
1994	808		1994	401	35
1995	812		1995	108	4

Source : Nazneen Hussain,   Source : Ibid.

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AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATION IN COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL ASSAM

Monirul Hussain
Bhupen Sarmah

The primary objective of this paper is to analyse the process of agrarian transformation in Assam where more than ninety percent of the people still depend on land based activities for their livelihood. Our emphasis would be on the post-colonial period, but to comprehend the process of change historically, we would briefly discuss the pre-colonial as well as the colonial period too.

Transition from Tribalism to Feudalism :

A tiny section of the Tai or Shan tribe of Upper Burma who came to be known as the Ahoms entered the Brahmaputra valley in the early thirteenth century and established their rule. With growing political as well as economic influences, the Ahoms formed a strong state covering by and large the entire Brahmaputra valley by the end of the seventeenth century[1]. The six consecutive centuries of Ahom rule over the Brahmaputra valley distinctly shows a process of transition from tribalism to feudalism, though the process remained incomplete. The complex social formation prior to the colonial intervention was marked broadly by some elements of tribal or communal economy, a deep rooted institution of slavery with substantial impact on agriculture, and of course, growth of feudalism at a snail's pace. During the period between the thirteenth and the sixteenth century, the agricultural sector of the Brahmaputra valley was dominated by various tribes mainly of Tibeto-Burman stock. These tribes were associated largely with shifting cultivation, and Assam[2] never had a centralised state during that period.

The Ahom state sought to encourage the growth of feudalism in Assam since beginning of the seventeenth century through gradual expansion of plough and wet paddy which required permanent cultivation. For this purpose, the state evolved a unique pattern of ownership of land and revenue administration where hereditary private

property right was given to the *Bari* and *Basti* lands (garden and homestead) only. The land under the wet paddy called *rupit mati* was not heritable private property unless backed by a royal grant. The farming community, nevertheless, had a free access to the unoccupied dry lands for firewood, building materials, grazing and even temporary cultivation[3].

Excepting the areas under *Khats* (royal estates) or *Lakhiraj* (revenue free) grants made in favour of the Brahmans, religious institutions and some members of the nobility for their distinctive services, the wet fields were distributed equally among the *Paiks*, i.e. the adult males who were not slaves. A *Paik* was allotted two puras (2.66 acres) of *rupit mati* as his *ga-mati* (land attached to a person) for which he was obliged to render initially three months and later four months of his service to the state. The fixed quota of two *puras*, however, could be supplemented by any amount of tax free inferior land. Further, this could also be supplemented by an additional share of ubar mati, i.e. the land which was surplus after meeting the demands of all local *Paiks*. The additional share of *ubar mati* was initially revenue free, but a marginal amount of revenue was imposed on it in the later period. The share of *ubar mati*, or even the *ga-mati* of a *Paik* could, however, be taken back by the state. After the death of the *Paik*, or at his old age his wet paddy land always went back to the community[4]. Thus, it can be safely said that distribution aspect of wet land was essentially imbued with communal ownership. In a situation of a remarkably low density of population and hence abundance of land to the people[5], the low-lying open fields were reclamied collectively. Further, the reclaimed fields were also to be protected against floods through continuous collective efforts.

The pattern of ownership coupled with the primitive technology involved in production, arrested the capacity of a *Paik* to have command over a much bigger size of land than what was customarily allotted to him. Consequently, the Ahom rule could not encourage a significant level of accumulation of wet paddy land by any free peasant, notwithstanding the *Paiks* had an access to the vast areas of cultivable waste land. A few royal families and the clerics were no doubt benefitted by the royal grants made in favour of them.

The seventeenth century had, however, been a landmark in the history of feudalism in Assam. A gradual expansion of plough and wet
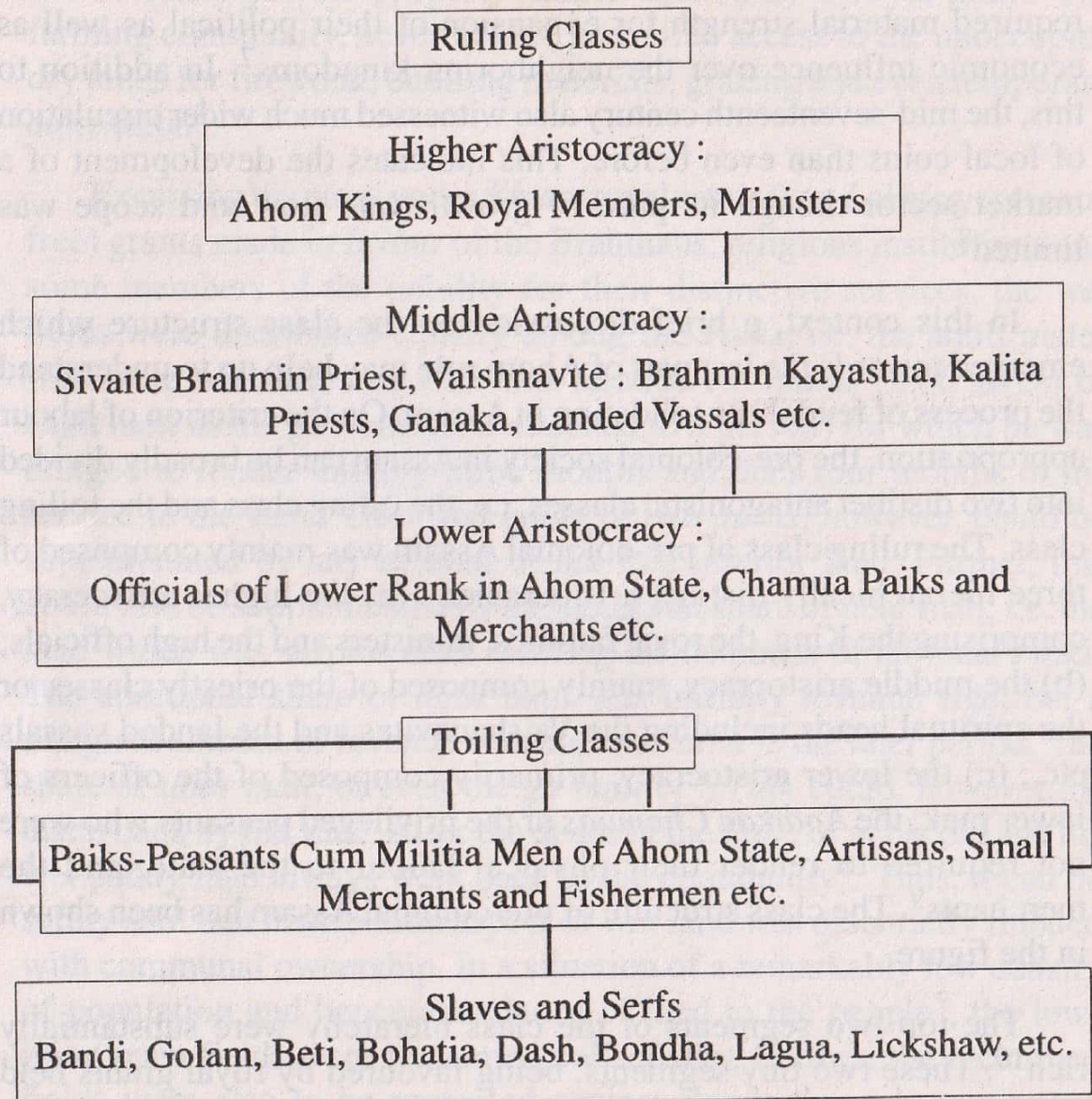
paddy cultivation in Upper Assam[6] resulted in generation of agricultural surplus to an extent. This had been accompanied by rapid development of war technology. Consequently, the Ahom kings could gather the required material strength for expansion of their political as well as economic influence over the neighboring kingdoms[7]. In addition to this, the mid-seventeenth century also witnessed much wider circulation of local coins than even before. This indicates the development of a market sector though its pace of growth was slow and scope was limited[8].

In this context, a brief discussion on the class structure which emerged towards the last part of Ahom rule may help up to understand the process of feudal consolidation in Assam. On the criterion of labour appropriation, the pre-colonial society in Assam can be broadly divided into two distinct antagonistic classes, i.e. the ruling class and the toiling class. The ruling class of pre-colonial Assam was mainly composed of three hierarchically distinct aristocracies : (a) the higher aristocracy, comprising the King, the royal families, ministers and the high officials; (b) the middle aristocracy, mainly composed of the priestly classes or the spiritual heads including the Vaishanavites and the landed vassals etc.; (c) the lower aristocracy, primarily composed of the officers of lower rank, the *Apaikan Chamuas* or the privileged peasants who were not required to render their physical labour to the state, and the merchants[9]. The class structure of pre-colonial Assam has been shown in the figure.

The top two segments of the class hierarchy were substantially rich[10]. These two tiny segments, being favoured by royal grants held their hereditary landed estates or Khats of large size and bulk of the Paiks and the slaves allotted to them in lieu of salary. The bottom of the ruling hierarchy was occupied by the *Apaikan Chamuas* who owned small means of production. They were, however, free from obligatory manual service to the state. In terms of power and privileges, this section was far behind the other two sections of the ruling class. The ruling class of the pre-colonial Assam as a whole was, however, numerically quite weak, because all three segment of this class together consitituted some one percent of the total population[11].

The vast majority of the society were either *Paiks* or slaves. They constituted the toiling class. The class of *Paik* was further divided into two categories of manual workers; (a) *Kanri Paiks*, who were liable of

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CLASS STRUCTURE OF PRE-COLONIAL SOCIETY IN ASSAM

```
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │   Ruling Classes    │
                    └─────────────────────┘
          ┌──────────────────────────────────────────┐
          │         Higher Aristocracy :             │
          │  Ahom Kings, Royal Members, Ministers    │
          └──────────────────────────────────────────┘
      ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
      │            Middle Aristocracy :                  │
      │ Sivaite Brahmin Priest, Vaishnavite : Brahmin    │
      │ Kayastha, Kalita Priests, Ganaka, Landed         │
      │ Vassals etc.                                     │
      └──────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
      ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
      │            Lower Aristocracy :                   │
      │ Officials of Lower Rank in Ahom State, Chamua    │
      │ Paiks and Merchants etc.                         │
      └──────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │  Toiling Classes    │
                    └─────────────────────┘
   ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
   │ Paiks-Peasants Cum Militia Men of Ahom State,        │
   │ Artisans, Small Merchants and Fishermen etc.         │
   └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
   ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
   │                Slaves and Serfs                      │
   │ Bandi, Golam, Beti, Bohatia, Dash, Bondha, Lagua,    │
   │ Lickshaw, etc.                                       │
   └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Source : Hussain, 1993 op.cit.

obligatory manual service of any kind to the state; and (b) *Chamua Paiks*, who were permitted to contribute periodically share of their specialised products or their skilled service. Both the categories of *Paik* were organised in *Khel*, and many of the *Chamua Khels*, such as those of goldsmiths, goldwashers, oil-pressers etc. were more or less like guilds. However, the vast majority of the peasantry were *Kanri Paiks*. To be precise, the *Paik* as a social category, which numerically predominated the pre-colonial society, was composed of the manual workforce of the adult males drawn from the non-ruling class and non-slaves. It must also be noted in this context that about one-fourth to

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one-third of the mobilized Paiks were assigned as Likchou to the officers in lieu of their salary. And the Likchou had to work in the private Khats and households of officers. Further, there were also a large number of Paiks who were permanently withdrawn from their Khels and attached to the Satras (Vashnavite monasteries), and temples for providing specific service. They were called Bhakats when attached to a Satra, and Dewalia Paik when attached to a temple. These two sections of Paik had no obligations of any kind towards the state[12].

We find the *Bohatia* (serfs) and the *Bandi-Beti* (male and female household slaves) at the bottom of the class hierarchy. The household slaves could be bought and sold, and they were even exported to Bengal[13]. The institution of slavery was deep rooted in pre-colonial Assam, as the ruling class to a large extent had to depend upon the slaves to cultivate their *Khats* and also for their household works. Mainly the prisoners of war, condemned criminals and persons born of slaves constituted a major section of this class[14]. However, quite often, the *Kanri Paiks* used to sell themselves to a rich man to get rid of the risk he had to bear at the time of war. Further, slavery was also caused by debt, because a *Bandha* (the person who mortaged himself for an indefinite period) in course of time could be converted to a slave. Guha estimated that the sections of slaves, serfs and bondsmen constituted approximately 10% of the total population of Assam in mid eighteenth century[15].

A close observation would reveal that the state apparatus as well as the modus operandi of the class hierarchy had been marked by certain degree of centralization of authority[16]. The class hierarchy which took a concrete shape in the seventeenth century helped in the feudal state extraction because, being representative of the state, the King had gradually established ownership of the entire wet paddy and waste lands, and enjoyed the monopoly over the distribution of land and mobilization of surplus. Further, a class of feudal landed aristocracy had also been established by the state by providing the tax free grants of waste land on which the *Paiks*, serfs and slaves were settled to cultivate them. The Brahman abbots and the priests who were favoured by the royal grants constituted a class of spiritual leaders cum landlords and they extracted labour rent in general, or rent in cash or kind in lieu of it from their tenants. Furthermore, several hereditary vassal chiefs were allowed to enjoy autonomy in their respective territories and had the obligation to

supply a fixed contingent of soldiers to the Ahom King[17]. All such factors indicate a process of transition and gradual consolidation of feudalism in Assam under the Ahom rule.

The process of feudal consolidation in Assam inherited certain structural weaknesses which manifested themselves in the form of increasing political contradiction between the ruling class and the peasantry. Neither the ruling class, nor the peasantry was, however, a class for itself, yet the Civil War which broke out in 1769 and continued till 1806 could be conceived as an outcome of the unresolved contradiction between these two antagonistic classes[18]. The prolonged Civil War ended indecisively but ruined the political structure of growing feudalism and its economy. Due to its internal contradiction, the feudal state had failed to resolve the Civil War and it paved the way for external intervention and finally, the British colonialist annexed Assam in 1826.

Colonial Distortion :

The colonial strategy of plunder required a drastic change in the agrarian sector of Assam. The most significant and abrupt steps taken by the colonial state were to monetize the revenue system and introduction of the concept of private ownership over land. Land was transformed into a saleable and purchaseable commondity. The old revenue system was substituted by a qualitatively different land revenue system. As a result, the colonial state had totally ruined the Ahom aristocracy, but compromised with the section of spiritual leaders cum landed aristocracy. The colonial state finally introduced the *Ryotwari* system over the semifeudal agrarian structure of Assam proper.

In order to systematize the collection of rent, the colonial state had worked out a detailed administrative arrangement and encouraged the emergence of a class of revenue collectors cum landed aristocracy, particularly from the upper caste Asamiya Hindu and well to do Muslim families. Being patronaged by the colonial state, this newly emerged class became an important category both socially and economically. With all sorts of semi-feudal practices like bondage, usury etc. this class dominated the overwhelmingly agrarian society of Assam. In the emerging class structure, they stood between the rulers and the ruled.

However, after exploring the possibilites of tea plantations in Assam, the colonial state boosted up the tea sector at the cost of general

agriculture. By frequently enhancing the land revenue, the colonial state attempted to squeeze the peasants in order to flush them out to the labour market so as to enable the new planters to use the service of the ejected peasants in the growing plantations. Yet, the colonial state had failed to push the indigenous population to the tea sector as wage labourers. Thus, in order to meet the growing need of wage labourers at the tea sector, the colonial state encouraged a massive inflow of labourers to Assam from different parts of British India. Further, to maximize land revenue, the colonial state also encouraged heavy migration of landless peasants particularly from East Bengal to occupy the cultivable waste land of the Brahmaputra Valley[19]. The large scale migration of people from different parts of the country during the colonial era had not only changed the population pattern of Assam, but it also had severe impacts on the stagnant agricultural sector. With no visible improvement in terms of productivity, the agricultural sector failed to generate enough food required for the fast growing population. Consequently, Assam had to depend increasingly on Bengal for food. It can be said that colonialism in Assam resulted in pauperization of the peasantry at a large scale, though it could not proletarise them[20].

One of the most significant impacts of British colonialism in India as a whole, had been a sharp division of the agrarian society into two antagonistic camps, i.e. the feudal landlords and the oppressed peasantry which included both tenants and the small farmers. Under the colonial system, therefore, we find a contradiction between the oppressed peasantry and the colonial state on the one hand and between the farmer and feudal landlords on the other. Obviously, the feudal landlords maintained a non-antagonistic relation with the colonial state. With growing political consciousness, the oppressed peasantry sought to resolve the contradiction with feudalism and colonialism through violent means. It had manifested itself in a number of peasant uprisings which took place towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the first two decades of the present century in different parts of British India including Assam. At such a crucial juncture, the Indian National Congress (INC) which represented the aspirations of the Indian national bourgeoisie tried to mobilize the peasantry to fight against the British colonialism by launching peasant movement in different parts of India under the leadership of Gandhi. These peasant movements had clearly established the fact that the INC had compromised with the powerful landlords in order to fight against colonialism and to capture power

after independence[21]. In fact, with the help of the ideology of nationalism, the INC had camouflaged the basic contradiction between the oppressed peasantry and the feudal landlords.

In the specific context of Assam, we have found that the landed aristocracy which was privileged under the colonial rule, later on provided political leadership to the Assamese masses during the course of freedom movement. Perhaps, this explains the reasons for the absence of any well organized radical peasant struggle in Assam during the period of freedom movement. Of course, the oppressed peasantry in certain pockets violently fought against the landlords as well as the colonial state. This undoubtedly indicates a growing consciousness of the peasantry against landlordism and colonialism. However, keeping in tune with the rest of India, the leadership of the freedom movement in Assam tacitly camouflaged the contradiction between the peasantry and the feudal landlords. The leadership of the freedom movement in Assam, i.e. the landed aristocracy captured power after independence and started operating at the regional level as a junior partner of the Indian ruling class.

Agrarian Transformation : The Post-colonial Phase :

The immediate task before the post-colonial state in India under the new democratic set up was not only to logically base its class rule but also to promote agricultural growth required for rapid industrialization. This has necessitated a set of reforms in the agrarian structure with effective intervention of the state. Thus, in the agenda of post-colonial reconstruction, the Indian state devised its strategy for institutional reforms which included land reforms, establishment of agricultural co-operative, community development programmes etc. with their stated egalitarian objectives as a part of the new ruling class ideology. Such institutional reforms were followed by technological reforms. One of the major effects of such reforms, has been the multiplication of economic classes within the peasantry. Needless to say that the rich peasants have been the major beneficiaries of the agrarian reform programmes. As a result, we find, the emergence of the rich peasantry as a distinct class for itself capable of furthering its own class interests with increasing political influence.

The ruling class in post-colonial Assam too initiated a series of agrarian reform programmes. The primary objectives of all the reform

programmes are decisively commensurable with the objectives of the national planning and obviously, compatible with the growing capitalist interest in agriculture. With apparent concern for eradication of class exploitation and maximization of production efficiency, the major agrarian reform programmes initiated in Assam aimed mainly at, (a) abolition of intermediaries; (b) ceiling on landholding; and (c) tenancy reforms.

In a recent study we have, however, found that the ruling class in Assam has so far been successful to do away with the feudal relations in the permanently settled areas to a certain extent. In fact, in response to the various reform programmes the zamindars and other such intermediaries have assumed the role of big landlords they now depend on hired labours instead of tenants. The steps taken by the government to impose ceiling on land holdings have largely failed to achieve their stated objectives[23].

In the remaining part of Assam where feudalism as a mode of production could not reach its climax, the major enigma of the agrarian structure is definitely the semi-feudal practices in different forms[24]. With the help of intensive field works, we have argued that the reform measures followed by the ruling class in Assam are heavily biased towards the landlords. We have also observed that a host of semi-feudal practices even now have substantial influence on the agrarian structure of Assam, but the ruling class has hardly shown any interest to eradicate them[25]. In order to comprehend the pattern transformation in post-colonial Assam, we have made an attempt to identify the emerging agrarian classes empirically, and to understand their interplay in the production system. For this, we have conducted an intensive field study in four villages of the district of Kamrup. These four villages are, Bamungaon, Deulguri, Sil Bharal and Tupamari inhabited exclusively by the people of the four distinct communities of Assam, i.e. the caste Hindu Asamiya, Scheduled Tribe, Schedule Caste and Na-Asamiya Muslims respectively. Our survey covered 25 percent of the total households in each village (total 205 households) selected at random. And, in the given context of the significantly uneven pattern of distribution of land and other productive assets and various forms of feudal and semi-feudal practices involved in the agricultural sector of Assam, we have found that the "labour exploitation criterion" devised

by Utsa Patnaik[26] would be appropriate to idenfity the emerging agrarian classes empirically.

After computing the "labour exploitation" ratio[27] (E ratio) for each surveyed household separately, we have identified the following economic classes within the peasantry of Assam :

A. The Exploiting Class   :   i.   Landlords
                              ii.   Rich Peasants,
                              iii.   Middle Peasants,

B. The Exploited Class   :   i.   Small Peasants,
                              ii.   Poor Peasants,
                              iii.   Agricultural Labourers.

Table - 1

Differentiation of Agrarian classes

Class	Percent of total House- holds	Percent of total Opera- tional area	Average number of labour days hired in/appropriated			Average no. of family labour days in operational holding I	$E = \dfrac{X}{Y}$
			a	b	X= a+b		
1. Landlord							
i. Capitalist	1.40	6.31	500	60	640	0	-
ii Feudal	5.37	0.32	0	320	320	0	-
2. Rich Peasant							
i. Freto-b ourgeois	11.22	29.02	440	24	472	157	3.22
ii. Proto-feudal	1.95	4.16	90	245	335	165	2.03
3. Middle peasant	14.15	24.80	92	-15	75	240	0.31
4. Small Peasant	16.10	24.65	-30	-42	-80	105	-0.39
5. Poor Peasant	16.10	11.06	-224	-43	-267	139	-1.92
6. Agricultural Labour	17.07	0.00	-230	0	-230	0	-
7. Miscellaneous	16.50	0.00	0	0	0	0	-

Table - 2

Village wise distribution of class position of the households

Class	Percent to the total households in the village			
	Bamun Gaon	Deul guri	Sil Bharal	Tupmari
1. Landlord				
i. Couitslist	1.49	2.08	0	1.59
ii. Feudal	4.48	6.25	7.41	4.76
2. Rich Peasant				
i. Proto-bour-geois	16.42	12.50	0	9.52
ii. Proto-feudal	4.48	0	0	1.59
3. Middle peasant	22.39	6.25	3.70	15.87
4.Small Peasant	13.43	29.16	7.40	12.70
5. Poor Peasant	16.42	16.67	29.63	9.52
6. Agricultural Labourer	8.95	16.67	22.23	23.81
7. Miscel laneous	11.94	10.42	29.63	20.64
Total	100	100	100	100

Depending on the form of their exploitation, we have further divided the first two exploiting classes into certain sub categories. The landlords are divided into two classes : (i) Capitalist landlords and (ii) Feudal landlords. In case of the former, the value for 'a' i.e. the net labour days hired in is more than the value for 'b' i.e. the net labour days taken through rent. And, in case of the later, however, the value for 'b' is either greater than or equal to the value of 'a'. The value for 'y' i.e. the family labourdays engaged in agriculture, for both capitalist as well as feudal landlords is zero. Similarly, we have also divided the rich peasants into two distinct classes, (i) Proto-bourgeois, and (ii) Proto-feudal.

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We have shown in Table - 1 the position of all the agrarian classes we have identified in our surveyed villages. Table - 2 provides us further insights to situate the class positions of the surveyed households in all the four villages separately.

As Table - 1 reveals, approximately 7% of the total surveyed households belong to the category of landlords of both capitalist and feudal type. Needless to say that this small section of exploiting class has command over a disproportionately high percentage of cultivated land. It is also clear from Table - 2 that all the four major communities of rural Assam i.e. Caste Hindu Asamiya, Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste and Na-Asamiya Muslims represented by our four surveyed villages witness the phenomenon of landlordism in common. The capitalist landlordism in Assam is, however, relatively a recent phenomenon, and we have observed that all the capitalist landlords we have identified were in fact feudal landlords a decade back. The family members of this section of the households do not perform any manual labour for their agricultural production. As these household have the capacity to invest enough capital, they have an access to the modern agricultural inputs such as irrigational facilities, tractors or power tiller, seeds of high yielding varieties, chemical fertilizers and pesticides etc. It has been observed that the average production per unit of their cultivated land and cropping intensity for these households are much higher than the others. As a result, these households produce enough marketable surplus per year. The feudal landlords, however, depend fully on the labour appropriated through rent. In other word, they lease out their entire cultivated land and live on the rent paid by their tenants. In addition to that, they hardly invest any capital for their agricultural production.

The second analytical category, i.e. the class of rich peasants is distinguishable from the class of landlords on the basis of the component of family labourdays associated with the former. The per capita land resource position for this section of households has also been found to be considerably high and as we can see in Table - 1, appropriation of others' labour by these households is more important than their family labour. We have found that more than 11 percent of the total households belong to the Proto-bourgeois type of rich peasant, and in terms of cropping pattern, technology of production and yield ratio of the major

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crops for this section of the households are not very significantly different from that of the capitalist landlords. The Proto-feudal type of rich peasant, however, depend more on the labour appropriated through rent than labour directly hired in.

Table - 2 reveals that the percentage of Proto-bourgeois type of rich peasant is much higher in all the surveyed villages (except for Sil Bharal) than the Proto-feudal type of rich peasants. Further, the former is more prominent in Bamungaon than Deulguri and Tupamari. Perhaps a deeper impact of formal education and comparatively a better resource basis of the farmers, are some of the major factors which have contributed to a faster pace of capitalist transformation of the Caste Hindu Asamiya farmers that the farmers of other communities.

The third category of the peasantry, i.e. the middle peasants, is primarily self-employed, and the per capita land resource of the houseohlds of this category is not as high as the other two categories mentioned earlier. Yet, since the value for 'x' i.e. the sum total of the net labourdays hired in and net labourd ays taken through rent is positive, we can say that this category of households is also exploiter of others' labour. The more striking feature, however, is the aspect of self-employment which is explicit in Table - 1. We have observed that the larger chunk of the middle peasants are still associated with the traditional practices of cultivation, and the production is mainly for self-consumption with little amount of marketable surplus. Their method of cultivation is labour intensive and consequently, both average yield and cropping intensity are much lower than the capitalist landlords or the proto-bourgeois rich peasants.

The small peasants are primarily exploited, and the resource position of this category of the peasantry is much weaker than the middle peasants. We have found that these households are yet to win the struggle to reach the level of subsistence. Therefore, quite often they have to supplement their inadequate income from their own resources by working for others either as wage earner or as tenant.

The poor peasants, for their pathetic resource position, have to work mainly for others in order to obtain a subsistence. In addition to work on their own land, they work for others as wage earner or through leasing in land, or both as earner as well as tenant. We have also noticed

that some of the households are purely tenants. Needless to explain that the poor peasants are the worst victims at the hands of the feudal landlords or the proto-feudal rich peasants. As Table - 2 reveals, the poor peasants are concentrated mainly in the village Solbharal followed by Deulguri. And, in these two villages, we have also found the highest percentage of the feudal landlords.

The landless agricultural labourers can also be perceived as the class of agricultural proletariat class in itself. They are full time labourers and do not possess any cultivated land. Consequently, they depend fully on hiring out of labour for wages. We have found that this section of the households is the worst victim of the system of *Bandhaki*, - a system which helps particularly the capitalist landlords and the pro-bourgeois type of the rich peasants.

Summary and Conclusion :

The pre-colonial social formation of Assam witnessed the persisting influence of tribalism, a deep rooted institution of slavery and a process of growth and consolidation of feudalism which remained incomplete. The elements of tribalism dominated the production system of Assam untill the end of the sixteenth century. The Ahom state, however, encouraged the growth and consolidation of feudalism particularly since seventeenth century. The process of transition had, however, remained incomplete as the increasing contradiction between the state and the oppressed of the peasantry finally culminated in a Civil War. This had paved the way for external intervention and finally the British Colonialist annexed Assam in 1826.

The colonial rule in Assam significantly changed the agrarian structure. The land became a commodity. By monetization and repeated enhancement of the land revenue, colonialism ruined the Ahom feudal aristocracy on one hand and attempted to squeeze the peasantry in order to flush them out to the labour market on the other. Broadly, the pre-colonial agrarian structure was done away with and the new class structure that emerged was constituted by the landlords, self-employed peasant proprietors and the tenants. A class of agricultural labourer was in the process of formation with the help of large scale migration of the landless peasants from East Bengal. It can be concluded that, so far as the indigenous population is concerned, colonialism pauperized

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the peasants at large scale, but could not proletarise them significantly.

As a part of post-colonial reconstruction, the ruling class in Assam too initiated a large number of agrarian reform programmes. Now we have got substantial empirical evidences to say unmistakably that the agrarian structure of present Assam does witness a lethargic growth of capitalist relation. Though it is extremely small, the emerging capitalist relation in the agricultural sector of Assam is undoubtedly an outcome of the intervention made by the post-colonial state through its agrarian reform programmes. Some of the feudal landlords were allowed to retain their land and landed property much more than the average level. They can afford to irrigate their cultivated land at their own expenditure, and they have virtually monopolized the consumption of modern agricultural inputs. In the process, they are gradually emerging as capitalist landlords and proto-bourgeois type of rich peasants.

Nevertheless, at the broader societal context, the agrarian reform programmes have totally failed to bring about any significant change. Not to speak of the small and the poor peasants, even the medium peasants have failed to improve their material condition of life, and the agrarian structure is still heavily loaded with the semi-feudal relations of production. Now one can observe that the ruling class in Assam has attempted to superimpose capitalism in the agricultural sector without mitigating the semi-feudal interests. Simply speaking, the transformation has remained incomplete loaded with severe distortion and contradictions.

Notes and References :

1. See for details, Amalendu Guha, *Medieval And Early Colonial Assam : Society, Polity, Economy*, K.P. Bagachi & Company, Calcutta 1991.

2. Here Assam means Assam Proper, i.e. the five distinct of the Brahmaputra Valley under the colonial rule. These five districts are Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur. See for details, S.K. Bhuyan, *Anglo Assamese Relations : 1771-1826*; DHAS, Guwahati, 1949.

3. For details, see, *ibid*, pp. 7-11, 529-39; Guha, *op.cit*, pp.. 44-50; and Gait, *History of Assam*, reprint, Third revised edition, United Commercial Press Ltd. Calcutta, 1967, p. 145.

4. For the pattern of distribution of land, see Guha, *op.cit*, Bhuyan, *op.cit*. Gait, *op.cit*.

5. See for details, Bhupen Sarmah, *Political Dimension of Agrarian Reforms in Assam Since Independence*, an unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of Gauhati, 1994.

6. Upper Assam means the districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur during the colonial rule. These two districts had the highest percentage of land under the wet paddy cultivation. See for details, Bhupen Sarmah, *op.cit*.

7. For instance, Kamrup was incorporated to Ahom Kingdom by 1682.

8. See for details, Gait, *op.cit*. pp. 155, 222-223.

9. See for details, Monirul Hussain, *The Assam Movement: Class, Ideology and Identity*, Manak Publications Pvt. Ltd. Delhi, 1993, pp. 29, 197-200.

10. For example, in mid-eighteenth century the marriage dowry of a Borphukan's daughter comprised two elephants, ten horses buffaloes, one thousands cows, one hundred slaves, three hundred wardrobes, eighteen pieces of gold utensils, eighteen pieces of silver utensils, one gold saddle and several sets of gold silver jewellery. See Guha, *op.cit*. pp. 51-52, 54-55.

11. *ibid*, p. 57.

12. *ibid*, p. 53.

13. *ibid*.

14. *ibid* and Robinson, *A Descriptive Account of Assam*, Sankaran Prakasan, Delhi, Reprint 1975.

15. Guha, *op.cit*. p. 53.

16. For a detailed account of the system of administration, see, *ibid*, and Bhuyan, *op.cit*.

17. Guha, *op.cit*.

18. For a descriptive account of the war see, Neog, *Sankardeva and His Time : Early History of Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Assam*, Lawyers Book Stall, Guwahati, 1965; and *Socio Political Events in Assam Leading to the Militancy of the Moyamania Vaishnavas*, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1982; and for analysis of the war in terms of class see, Hussain, *op.cit*., Guha, *op.cit*.

19. For details about migration during the colonial era, see, Guha, *Planter-Raj to Swaraj, Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1977; and Hussain *op.cit*.

20. See Guha, op.cit, 1991.

21. See among many others, D.N. Dhanagare, *Peasant Movement in India : 1920-50*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983, Kapil Kumar, *Peasants in Revolt*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1985; E.M.S. Namboodripad,

"Class character of the National Movement", *Social Scientist*, Vol.4, No.1, August 1975; B.T. Ranadive, "Indias Freedom Struggle", *Social Scientist*, Vol.14, No.8-9, August - September, 9186 etc.

22. See for details, Guha, 1977, *op.cit.*

23. For a detailed evaluation of the agrarian reform programmes in Assam, see, Bhupen Sarma, *op.cit.*

24. The agrarian structure of Assam is significantly influenced mainly by the practice of *Bandhoki*, i.e. mortgage of cultivated land and share - cropping in different forms, such as *Adhi and Chukani* or *Theka*. For an empirical analysis of such practices see, Bhupen Sarmah *op.cit.*

25. For details see, *ibid.*

26. See Utsa Patnaik, "Class Differentiation within the Peasantry : An Approach to the Analysis of Indian Agriculture" in Utsa Patnaik (ed.) *Agrarian Relations and Accumulation - the mode of Production debate in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990. This criterion was developed by Utsa Patnaik long back (See Utsa Patnaik, "Class differentiation within the Peasantry : An approach to the Analysis of Indian Agriculture" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XI, No. 39, Sept. 1976) and has recently been applied by a good number of scholars.

27. The "labour exploitation" ratio (E ratio) can be calculated as :

$$E = \frac{x}{y} = \frac{a+b}{y} = \frac{(a_1 - a_2) + (b_1 - b_2)}{y}$$

where, a_1 = labour days hired in

a_2 = labour days hired out

b_1 = labour days taken through rent

b_2 = labour days given through rent

therefore,

a = net family labour days engaged in agriculture.

b = net family labour days engaged in agriculture.

and   y = net family labour days engaged in agriculture.

Now, the peasantry can be categorised into certain mutually exclusive economic classes by setting limits to the E ratio as shown in the table below, see for details, *ibid.*

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ECONOMIC CLASS	EMPIRICAL CHARAC-TERISTICS	REMARKS
A. Landlord	E -> a	x positive and very high, yis zero
i. Capitalist	a > b	Labour hiring is greater than rent.
ii. Feudal	a > b	Labour hiring is at most as high as rent
B. Rich peasant	E < +1	x positive and high, y positive,x > y
i. Proto-bourgeois	a > b	Labour hiring is greater than rent.
ii. Proto-feudal	+1 > E > 0	Labour hiring is at most as high as rent
C. Middle peasant	0 > E >-1	X positive but small, y positive, x<y.
D.Small peasant	E > -1	X is zero or negative but small, y positive, 1 x 1 < y
E. Poor peasant	E - > - a	X is negative and high, y positive 1x1 > y
F. Atgricultural Labour		X negative and very high, y is zero

SITUATING NSCN AND ULFA : INSURGENCY IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

Udayon Misra

This paper attempts a brief survey of two insurgent movements of North-East India, - one led by the two factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and the other by the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). It traces the beginnings and growth of the Naga struggle, and attempts to analyse it in the light of the policies and methods adopted by the Centre over the past four decades and more. The paper tries to place the Naga struggle in its historical context and discusses the shifts in strategy and tactics from the days of the Naga National Council in the fifties and sixties to the emergence of the NSCN in the eighties as the dominant underground force in Naga politics.Compared to the Naga struggle which may be termed as the oldest insurrectionary movement in the country since Independence, the ULFA is of recent origin and has been viewed, not without cause, as an off-shoot of the Assam Movement (1979-85) on the foreign nationals' issue. The ULFA's ideological pretensions, its support hase and the historico-cultural and economic factors contributing to is emergence and growth are discussed, as also the inherent contradictions within the militant outfit. A comparison of these two movements, placed as they are in very different socio-political contexts, and an analysis of their interdependence on each other has been attempted.

One of the first challenges to the nation-building process in independent India came in the form of the insurrectionary movement in the then Naga Hills District of the province of Assam[1]. The Nagas, an Indo-Mongoloid people, are divided into fourteen major tribes who speak over twenty dialects[2]. They shared a common tradition and culture in the form of religious beliefs and social customs, although the tribes differ from one another, with each possessing a dialect which is often

unintelligible to the other[3]. Before the coming of the British, inter-tribe warfere was a common feature among the Nagas who are closely knit along clan and village lines. With the Ahom rulers of Assam (1228-1826) the Naga tribes maintained a love-hate sort of relationship and for centuries they maintained their trade links with the plains of Assam[4]. Several of the Naga chieftains acknowledged the supremacy of the Ahom kings and owed allegiance to them[5]. But a marked feature of Ahom rule was that they never interfered with the tribal autonomy of the Nagas[6].

The British, who finally occupied Kohima in 1878 after a protracted struggle, could never extend their jurisdiction to cover all the Naga tribes. Initially, the British were hesitant to extend their administration into the Naga Hills because this was not considered profitable[7]. But as Naga raids on British territory in Assam continued, a "forward policy" was devised, and British rule was eventually extended up to a part of the Naga Hills. The British policy of minimum interference was clearly dictated by the need to keep expenses low. Leaving the hill tribes to manage their own affairs according to their customary laws was of great advantage to the British because it helped them run the administration with a minimum number of officials. While the British rulers took full advantage of the territorial control of the Naga Hills to protect British interests in the form of tea, coal, oil and timber in the Brahmaputra valley, considerations of expense deterred them from developing these regions. The economic development of the Naga Hills received the lowest priority, and transport and communication routes were opened up only when considered absolutely necessary to maintain British control. Instead of opening up trade and communication links with neighbouring Assam, the British declared the Naga Hills as an "Excluded Area" and enforced the "Inner Line Regulations". These measures resulted in cutting off the tribes from whatever links they had with the people of the plains and pushed them to a state of near-total isolation. Cultural interaction between the hills and the plains came to an end. The Inner Line Regulations made it imposssible for national political parties to extend their influence in the Naga Hills which remained totally cut off from the struggle for India's Independence[8]. Thus, on the eve of the country's Independence, the Nagas were not psychologically prepared to be ruled by an Indian

political party. The Nagas had always prided themselves on their independent status and as way back as 1929, the Naga Club[9] had submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission demanding that the Nagas be kept out of the proposed constitutional changes and direct British administration be continued so that their customary life pattern was not disturbed[10]. As the struggle for Independence gained momentum and the day of the British departure from the sub-continent drew near, the conscious section of the small, educated class among the Nagas expressed their reservations over the Naga Hills becoming a part of the Indian Union without the wishes of the Naga people being ascertained.

As India moved towards freedom from British rule, the Naga National Council[11] called upon the Nagas to prepare for "self-determination". Although the NNC opposed both the idea of a Crown Colony under the British or the Grouping Scheme as offered by the Cabinet Mission, like many other tribal organisations of the North-East, it was not clear on the question of autonomy. Initially, the NNC maintained that it would fight for "home rule", while retaining its links with India. It appears from the NNC's earlier statements that it was not prepared to sever its links with India and would have settled for some form of regional autonomy. Jawaharlal Nehru too reacted along these lines when in a letter to the NNC secretary he stated that the Naga territory could be given some form of autonomy within an autonomous province of Assam in free India[12]. It is interesting to note here that Nehru had in his letter to the NNC secretary acknowledged that the Naga Hills never formed part of India as such. He wrote in August 1946 : "It is obvious that the Naga territory in eastern Assam is much too small to stand by itself politically or economically. It lies between the two countries India and China, and part of it consists of rather backward people who require considerable help. When India is independent, as it is bound to be soon, it will not be possible for the British government to hold on to Naga territory or any part of it. They would be isolated between India and China. Inevitably, therefore, this Naga territory must be part of India and Assam with which it has developed such close associations"[13]. Nehru had talked of giving autonomy to the Naga Hills within the province of Assam. But the NNC was divided over the question of autonomy, with one section

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putting forward the idea of an independent Naga homeland. Others preferred a manatory status, with Great Britain as the guardian power. Not satisfied with Nehru's assurance, the NNC demanded an "Interim Government" of the Nagas for a period of ten years. During these ten years the Nagas would be under a "guardian power" and would be free to decide their future after the lapse of ths period. The Advisory Committee od Aboriginal Tribes refused to recommend this scheme to the Constituent Assembly and a deadlock ensured.

Meanwhile, a section of the NNC was growing increasingly intransigent and was abetted by the British officials. An attempt was made to resolve the deadlock through the Hydari Agreement[14]. It is relevant to note here that the Hydari Agreement acknowledged the Naga National Council as the sole representative authority of the Naga people and gave it right of control over almost every aspect of Naga life ranging from customary tribal laws to the ownership of land and taxation. It assured full autonomy for the Naga tribes and this was an unprecedented move in the sense that a body whose credentials were yet to be established through a democratic process was being given such wide-ranging powers. Although the NNC initially did approve the Hydari Agreement by a majority vote, yet the extremist section within it ulmimately refused to accept it by stressing that Article 8 of the agreement was being misinterpreted by the Indian Government[15]. Soon the moderates within the NNC lost ground, and it was declared that Art 8 actually gave the Nagas the right to complete independence, once the interim period of ten years was over. This was not aceptable to the Indian Government which insisted that the said Article gave the Nagas the right to suggest administrative changes within the Indian Union but not that of secession[16]. The NNC which was gradually giving up its demand for autonomy and opting for independence, now informed the Indian Government that "the Nagas would cease to be a part of the Indian Union from December 6, 1947"[17].

With Angami Zapo Phizo's[18] election as the President of the NNC in 1949, the moderates were completely ousted and the demand for Naga independence gained momentum. Under Phizo's leadership the NNC was swiftly turned from a largely amorphous middle-class organisation into a militant outfit wedded to the idea of a sovereign Naga homeland. It followed up by rejecting the Sixth Schedule of the

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Constitution and held a "plebiscite" on the question of Naga independence. Instead of opting for the democratic changes envisaged in the Sixth Schedule, Phizo worked hard to win over the support of the traditional Naga chiefs and headmen. The successful "plebiscite" was followed by a total boycott of the 1952 elections. No Naga either sought elction or exercised franchise and the District Council was aborted. This was followed by a phase of civil disobedience throughout the Naga Hills resulting in mass resignation of school teachers, boycott of all government functions and refusal to pay taxes. Through these moves, each more successful than the other, the NNC proved that it had emerged as the sole spokesman of the Naga tribes and that the verdict of the Naga people was in favour of "home rule".

One of the first major moves of the Naga National Council, under Phizo's leadership, was to win over the support of the tribal councils and the chiefs to the cause of Naga independence. It is significant that although the leadership of the NNC was drawn from the incipient Naga middle class, yet no threat was posed by the NNC politics to the traditional leadership of the tribal councils, with the village headmen continuing to play as important a role as ever in Naga life. It is not uncommon that in the course of the growth of the nationalistic forces in a tribal society, the small middle class leadership faces strong opposition from the tribal chieftains who, often than not, used to derive their power form inter-tribal rivalry. This was exactly the case in neighbouring Mizoram where the Mizo Union and the District Council found themselves at loggerhead with the chiefs who wielded great power and influence. But, in the Naga Hills, the NNC chose to draw its power from the tribal councils. Though this strategy of the NNC paid immediate dividends, yet in the long run this has proved to be counter-productive because inter-tribal rivalry was soon to affect the organisational structure of the NNC, and later on, of the NSCN as well. Nevertheless, Phizo's decision to override the District Council in favour of the traditional tribal councils gave the NNC a wide support base just when he needed it.

No being able to check the trend of events in the Naga Hills, the Government of India decided to crack down on the NNC towards the middle of 1953. The crackdown was preceded by an infructuous visit to Kohima by Prime Minister Nehru accompanied by his Burmese

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counterpart, Thakin Nu. Police action against the NNC and police searches in Naga villages provided grist to the NNC propaganda mill, with most of its leaders going underground to mobilise the people. The irredentist stance of the Assam Government made matters worse and thousands of Naga young men and women joined the Naga Home Guard and the Naga Women's Society[19]. Treating the matter as primarily a law and order issue, the provincial government of Assam enacted the Assam Maintenance of Public Order (Autonomous Districts) Act, 1953, and applied it to the entire Naga Hills District. This was followed by the dissolution of the Naga Tribal Councils and the Tribal Courts. The Assam Disturbed Areas Act, 1955, was promulgated in January 1956 and law and order duties in the Naga Hills were finally handed over to the armed forces.

As the armed forces moved into the Naga Hills and hostilities increased, a moderate section within the NNC expressed itself in favour of a negotiated settlement of the Naga issue. This led to a split in the NNC leadership, with several close confidants of Phizo such as T. Sakhrie and Zasokie deciding to leave the organisation[20]. The division in the NNC leadership led the Government of India to encourage Naga, the leaders like Dr. Imkongliba Ao who were in favour of bringing the Naga Hills under the direct control of the Central Government. Even while the action by the security forces was continuing, New Delhi went ahead with the scheme to create the Naga Hills Tuensang Area comprising of the Naga Hills and the Tuensang Division of the North East Frontier Agency. This was a great step forward for the moderates who now moved for the formation of a full-fledged state for the Nagas within the Indian Union. The State of Nagaland was formed in December 1963, and the Naga Federal Government denounced the move as one aimed at dividing the Naga people.

As the new state of Nagaland started functioning, efforts were made by the Naga Baptist Church to bring about an amicable settlement to the Naga problem within the ambit of the Indian Constitution. This initiative led to the formation of the Peace Mission[21] which finally arrived at an agreement with the Naga Federal Government. It is significant that the Peace Mission appreciated the Naga people's desire for "self-determination". Although the Peace Mission's proposals failed because the Naga Federal Government refused to make any concessions

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on the question of sovereignty, yet a beginning had been made in the form of cessation of hostilities between the two sides to the conflict. Moreover, the Peace Mission also succeeded in removing partially the communication gap which existed between the Naga underground and the Indian political leaders. The Mission's acknowledgement of the nationality issue involved in the Naga struggle earned the appreciation of the underground Naga leadership.

The gradual marginalisation of the Naga National Council in Naga politics began with the first successful elections which were held in 1964. Active participation in the electoral process on the part of the Naga people marked the start of a new era as part of the Indian Union. Faced with the new situation wherein the Nagas were ruling their own state, the NNC discovered that the cause they had been fighting for all these years was gradually losing its appeal. Inter-tribe rivalry erupted within the NNC's ranks, particularly between the Aos, Angamis and the Semas. Factionalism had started in the organisation ever since Phizo had left the Naga Hills for self-exile in England in 1957 and different centres of power were emerging. And, finally when in 1975 the Shillong Accord was signed and a section of the NNC leadership laid down arms, it became evident that the democratic experiment in Nagaland was catching on, despite all its limitations. The Shillong Accord was rejected both by Phizo and a section of the NNC leadership led by Thuengaling Muivah and Isak Scu. Muivah's group finally broke off from the NNC and formed the Nation Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). The NSCN issued its manifesto in 1980 in which it declared the NNC to be a spent force which had turned "treacherous and reactionary". It affirmed its commitment to a sovereign, independent Nagaland which would be "socialist" and Christian in character. Unlike the NNC which drew its strength from both the Christian and non-Christian segments of the Naga population and which laid great emphasis on the support of the traditional village chiefs, the NSCN declared its struggle as one for a Christian Nagaland and adopted the slogan : "Nagaland for Christ". Article X(d) of the NSCN manifesto specifically states that it stands "for faith in God and salvation of mankind in Jesus alone, that is Nagaland for Christ". However, the manifesto assured safeguards for individual freedom of faith[22]. Despite such an assurance, it appears that the NSCN stands for some sort of a

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theocratic state. In sharp contrast to the NSCN position on religion, the NNC's "Yehzabo" or Constitution states that "Protestant Christianity and Naga Religion are recognised religions in Nagaland". This is but one instance of the gradual narowing down of the popular base of the underground movement, leaving little scope for non-Christians in the NSCN set-up.

It was the NNC-led movement which brought all the Naga tribes together on a common platform of ethnic nationalism. But, tribalism still continues to be a potent force in Naga politics, both within the elected government of Nagaland and in the underground. The formation of Nagaland as a state where the Nagas started sharing the fruits of power, has, in many ways, spurred the growth of inter-tribe rivalry. The massacre at Tobu where two Naga tribes clashed with each other in 1990 as well as the split in the NSCN are pointers in this direction. As way back as 1978, a senior leader of the NNC, Khutovi Sema, while addressing a convention of some seventeen tribes, had stated : "tribalism has wrought havoc to the people and had ultimately sapped the strength of the NNC". The NSCN too is today the victim of inter-tribe rivalry. For example, in a joint statement issued in July 1989, in the NSCN chairman Isaac Swu and secretary, Muivah, accused the vice-chairman of NSCN who is a Myanmar Naga, of killing dozens of "Christian socialist revolutionaries" who were Tangkhul Nagas. They even accused the Khaplang faction of collaborating with the Burmese forces in mounting an attack on the NSCN headquarters. This shows the degree of dissension and conflict within the NSCN set-up and proves how difficult it would be to unite the Nagas of India and Myanmar to form a common independent homeland.

The recent Naga-Kuki clashes which have claimed hundreds of lives has added a new dimension to the Naga conflict and has shown that the attainment of the NSCN's professed goal is beset withe grave problems. Nevertheless, the NSCN continues to be the main insurrectionary group in the North-East and, in recent encounters, has inflicted heavy losses on the Indian security forces. Its influence is still writ large all over Nagaland, and it is rightly felt that the underground outfit has important pockets of influence in the state government. In this context, several questions arise. Why does the NSCN continue to adhere to its demand for a sovereign Nagaland when other equally

organised outfits like the Mizo National Front opted to work within the framework of the Indian Constitution ? From where does the NSCN draw its strength ? What are its startegy and tactics ? Can it claim to represent the Naga masses as the NNC did ?

The answer to these questions may be found in the socio-economic changes that have occurred in the broad spectrum of Naga society in the past four decades or so. The changes triggered off by Christian conversion received a different kind of impetus when the state of Nagaland came into being and the Centre started pumping in massive sums of money in a clear effort to curb the insurgency. The entry of Indian market forces into the remotest corners of Nagaland and the speedy growth of consumerism have contributed to the rise of an affluent class among the Nagas who have strong stakes in continuing the relationship with India. The sense of egalitarianism which had been a marked feature of Naga social life is fast disappearing and attitudes towards manual labour are undergoing changes. Bonds of clan and village are loosening, and the concept of individual property and ownership of land speedily gaining ground. According to several leading Naga intellectuals, there is today a severe crisis of identity in Naga society, with many of its distinctive features giving way. Given such a situation, it is but natural that Phizo's ideal of a Naga utopia would lose some if its charm. Added to this has been the creation of a separate territorial homeland for the Nagas along with several Constitutional safeguards aimed at protecting their land and culture. The Indian State, its blunders notwithstanding, has shown a rare degree of resilience in accommodating several of the ethnic upsurges in the North-east. Despite this, the NSCN continues to stick to its secessionist path because the emergence of new political equations makes it almost impossible for it to discard its path of violence. Every government in Nagaland since the state was formed has had some stakes in continuing the insurgency. Among other things, insurgency has always been a handle to secure greater benefits from the Centre. Moreover, the present set of Naga leaders would not really wish the NSCN leadership to come overground and participate in mass politics because that would sizably reduce their own political space. Thus, the present politics of the Nagaland state dictates that the insurguency, even if on a limited scale, continues.

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In the changing political scenario, the strategy and tactics of the Naga underground have also undergone certain major changes over the years. It may be recalled that as long as the Naga National Council was in control of matters, it was the Naga Federal Government, the political wing of the NNC, and not the Naga Federal Army which called the shots. Decisions taken by the political wing of the NNC had to be duly ratified by the Tatar Hoho or the Naga Parliament made up of representative from all the tribes. But as the struggle advanced and the Indian State adopted increasingly coercive measures combined with steps to win over a section of Nagas who had opted out of the insurgency, and the underground too started being plagued by tribalism, the political wing was gradually marginalised, and the armed wing took over. This resulted in the gradual alienation of the NNC from the masses, with the organisation increasingly growing militaristic in nature. By the time the NSCN was formed, it was only the armed wing which constituted the Naga underground. It is important to realise this change in the structure of the underground outfit because with it, its tactics also changed. Whereas the Naga Federal Army under the NNC never targeted civilian targets and maintained close rapport with the Naga masses, the NSCN has not only been targeting civilians but has, also of late, resorted to large-scale extortions and occasional kidnappings. Its role during the Naga-Kuki clashes when hundreds of men, women and children were killed in the manner of ethnic cleansing, shows that the NSCN is being increasingly drawn into the vortex of tribal politics, thereby making it all the more difficult for it to co-ordinate the different outfits under a common banner. From the position of an insurgent organisation aiming at broad-based unity of the different ethnic groups, the NSCN today seems to have developed into a tribal terrorist outfit. Its present position as one of the leading insurgent outfits of the North-east stems from the fact that it has inherited a long tradition of armed struggle combined at different phases with large degrees of mass involvement, while the area of its operations makes it difficult for the security forces to score too many successes. Moreover, as already stated, the creation of the state of Nagaland and the Constitutional safefuards for the Naga people plus regulations that make it impossible for non-Nagas to play any political role in the state, have eaten into much of the support-base of the NSCN. Thus, the Naga struggle as represented by the NSCN today seems to have moved quite a deal

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away from the earlier position of armed insurgency backed by the people to a terroristic kind of plank where the question of immediate political space finds precedence over ideology and identity issues.

Unlike the Naga struggle, the rise of insurgency in Assam is of comparatively recent origin, and is seen by many observers as a direct fall-out of the Assam Movement (1979-85) on the foreign nationals issue. Though opinions radically differ on the content and course of the Assam Movement, it is generally agreed that this was one of the greatest mass upsurges in the country's history. The violence on ethnic lines notwithstanding, the involvement of hundreds of thousands of people in a protest against State policies over a sustained period of time cannot just be dismissed as a xenophobic outburst engineered by a section of the Assamese middle class. There were distinct socio-economic factors which sustained the Assam Movement in the face of severe State repression for some six years. It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into these aspects. But while talking of the birth of secessionist politics out of the professedly peaceful agitation on the foreign nationals issue, one must keep in mind the strong historical factors which led to emergence of organisations like the United Liberation Front of Assam. As Javeed Alam says : "..... normal types of federal tensions or similar regional problems can be understood and explained it terms of political economy - uneven development, lop-sided economic transformations, disjunction between industry and agriculture, etc. - but secessionism is not easily explainable in terms of simple economic criteria. What seems....crucial is the previous history of the relations of the regions or of the communities within them with the pan-Indian Nationalism"[23]. While the Nagas had little contact with the Indian sub-continent and were not even marginally exposed to pan-Indian nationalistic ideas before the country's independence, (the NNC, for example, has consistently maintained that since the Nagas were never part of the Indian nation, the question of their seceding from India does not arise), the Assamese have had centuries-old cultural ties with the rest of the country and, more than anyone else, it was the Assamese reformer-saint, Srimanta Sankardeva (1449-1568) who brought the emerging Assamese nationality into close contact with the Indian culturo-religious tradition. Yet Assam's links with the Indian cultural tradition were quite tenuous during the rule of the Ahom kings

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(1228-1826) who followed a policy of isolationism[24] though the influence of Hinduism made itself felt from the reign of Suhungmung (1497-1539) and reached its peak during the reigns of Rudra Singha (1696-1714) and Sivasingha (1714-1744). The fiercely independent spirit of the Ahom kings became a part of the legacy of the people of Assam who prided themselves on having repulsed the Mughals on several occasions and having kept the sovereignty of their country intact. It is this history that is recalled in times of crisis and the idea of an Assam that was always independent and free is floated.

The concept of an independent Assam is not a new one. On the eve of the British departure, not only did several hill tribes express themselves in favour of independence, but some Ahom and non-tribal groups also stood for an independent Assam. These included a small but influential section of the then emerging Assamese elite. Even a section of the Assam Congress leadership was known to have sympathised with such a stand. The All Assam Ahom Association was quite unequivocal in its demand for a free and independent Assam and the All Assam Plains Tribal League stood for the unification of all the Mongoloid tribes and communities in a sovereign state. The all Assam Tribes and Races Federation declared in March 1945 that Assam should join neigher Hindustan nor Pakistan, but be made into a free state. Such feelings were also shared by Assamese organisations like the Asom Jatiya Mahasabha led by Ambikagiri Roychoudhury. Although Ambikagiri initially pleaded for Assam's rightful place in the confederation of Indian states, he was one of the few Assamese leaders who was quite sympathetic to the Naga struggle. His organisation, in a meeting held in January 1948 resolved that Assam should secede from India and become a separate, independent country like Burma. Even after the Assam Association (1903) became part of the Indian National Congress and the province actively participated in the Congress' programmes, the Assam Congress leaders continued to speak in terms of full autonomy for the state. In the Constituent Assembly the Assamese members consistently argued for more powers to the states and asserted that concentration of power in the hands of the Centre could lead to the states breaking away from it[25]. Among other clauses which they opposed was the right of the Centre to appoint Governors and to alter and diminish existing State Boundaries. The Assam Premier

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Gopinath bordoloi even demanded that there be a Constitutional provision allowing oil and kerosene producing states like Assam to get back seventy-five per cent of excise duties collected by the Union government. He also demanded that seventy five per cent of the export duty on tea should come to the state which produces it. His was a plea for complete autonomy for Assam so that the state could develop its resources to the full. All this must be seen in the light of the Assamese people's search for a cohesive identity, within India if possible, and outside it if the circumstances so demanded. Discussing this, Ashish Banerjee says : "Assam presents by far the most complex picture in terms of its efforts to develop a cohesive identity. With the penetration of British plantation interests in Assam the entire economy as well as demography composition was substantially altered. Migration to Assam took place on a massive scale with the influx of Bengalis as well as plantation labour, not to mention Marwaris and other trading communities. Large tracts of land were given at concessional rates to the tea-plantation owners as part of deliberate British policy. Besides, not only was the Surma Valley, a part of Assam largely populated by Bengalis, but also the Brahmaputra Valley developed Bengali concentrations such as in the Goalpara district. Tribal population presented a different kind of problem to the uneasy combination of the emergent Ahom and caste-Hindu Assamese middle classes. Besides, a deliberate policy of migration from Eastern Bengal promoted by the Muslim League especially in the years preceding independence compounded problems even further"[26]. The desire of Assam for greater political and economic power was clearly motivated by the fear that under a strong Centre it might once again be subjected to unrestricted migration, colonial pattern of exploitation or may even be tagged with other states as was attempted during the Grouping Scheme by the Cabinet Mission.

Yet, in spite of the presence of strong centrifugal forces, none of the organisations which advocated a sovereign Assam could make much headway. Rather, it was the Indian National Congress led by Gandhiji which drew mass support throughout Assam, both from tribals as well as non-tribals. Both the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement drew enthusiastic response from the Assamese people. Ashish Banerjee writes : "In Assam, in spite of the tremendous

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complexities, nationalist agitations were powerfully carried out in the main centress - Nowgong, Sibsagar etc"[27].

In the years immediately following Independence, the bitterness and suspicion generated by the Grouping Scheme gradually died down (the separation of the Muslim majority Sylhet district in the Referendum greatly eased Assamese fears of being reduced to a minority) as the Assamese gained a new-found measure of confidence under the leadership of Bordoloi. The involvement of Assamese masses in the freedom struggle further strengthened bonds with the rest of India, with patriot-poets like Jyotiprasad Agarwalla and Bishnuprasad Rabha providing ideological impetus to the relationship with the Indian Union. It would be relevant to note here that when in the fifties the Naga insurgency broke out, the overall mood in Assam was in favour of the counter-insurgency measures taken by the Centre and the State governments. Phizo's attempts to build up a common poatform of the people's of the North-East against New Delhi met with no response in Assam. Even the virtual abandonment of Assam by the Centre during the Sino-Indian war of 1962 could not bring about any radical change in Assam's attitude towards the Indian Republic. One the contrary, it sparked off a wave of patriotic fervour with artists like Bhupen Hazarika eulogising in popular songs the sacrifice of the Indian jawans.

But the overall mood of the people started to change from the late sixties when the question of a colonial pattern of exploitation of the state's resources by the Centre seemed to surface. The first major mass movement in Assam was the one centred on the demand for an oil refinery in the state in the late fifties. The Centre refused a refinery to Assam citing primarily defense reasons[28] and instead decided to set up a large refinery at Barauni to refine the Assam crude carried over hundreds of kilometres of pipeline. Though eventually New Delhi conceded to the popular demand by setting up a tiny refinery in Guwahati, the damage had been done to Assam's relationship with the Centre. And, when by the late sixties the economic situation in the State further deteriorated with unemployment figures reaching a new high, the stage was set for a confrontation with the Centre. The Lachit Sena, an ultra-nationalist organisation of Assamese youth, made its presence felt in Guwahati by attacking non-Assamese business houses in 1968.

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This was followed by a mass movement in 1969 for a second refinery in Assam. Meanwhile, the regional press became increasingly vocal about the Centre's exploitation of Assam and it didn't take too long for the issue to become entwined with that of unabated foreign influx into the state from neighbouring East Pakistan and then Bangladesh. The pressure on jobs and land ultimately found expression in the anti-foreigner outburst. The Centre was now held responsible not only for continued colonial-pattern of exploitation of the state but also for abdicating its responsibility as far as maintaining the sovereignty of the country was concerned. Even as the Assam Movement advanced, the colonial thesis gained ground and comparisons were made in the regional press between West Pakistan's treatment of the eastern wing and New Delhi's treatment of Assam. The stage, therefore, was gradually being prepared for the emergence of a political group which would eventually demand a sovereign Assam in order to put an end to the "colonial" exploitation of the region. The Indian State, on its part, displayed a large measure of insensitivity and decided to rely on coercive measures backed by repressive laws to subdue the popular movements.

The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) was formed on the 7 April 1979, some two months before the All Assam Students' Union announced its first 12-hour Assam Bandh on 8 June 1979, against the infiltration of foreign nationals into the state. Several of the founding members of the ULFA belonged to the Ahom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad and had close links with the All Assam Student's Union. The ULFA leaders actively participated in the anti-foreigner stir which gathered steam from September 1979 onwards, and the first chairman of the outfit later on became the Deputy Speaker of the Assam Assembly as a Asom Gana Parishad nominee. The Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad, unlike the AASU, has all along been a semi-militant organisation with many of its members having been known to hold leftist and radical marxist views. Though not in any sense a communist organisation, the AJYCP talked of "building communism on the foundation of nationalism" and its ideology was a mix of nationalistic aspirations of the Assamese people and a claim for greater autonomy for the states[29]. It stands for eviction of encroachers from the tribal belts and blocks (reserves), dual citizenship and greater control of the state over its onw resources. The AJYCP roots of ULFA should help one in assessing the organisation's emphasis on "scientific socialism"

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from time to time, something which has been picked up by social scientists and journalists from time to time to give a Marxist veneer to the outfit which in effect is largely militaristic in nature. The fact, however, is often overlooked that right from its inception the ULFA has maintained close links with the AASU and the AGP, occasional differences notwithstanding, and during the first few years most of the ULFA recruits were drawn from the ranks of the AASU. Though today the ULFA seems to have moved away from its original plank of Assamese nationalism to a position where it speaks for the "people of Assam", yet its main appeal springs from the idea of some form of regional nationalism where all those who have made Assam their home would be bound together by a kind of overall Assamese ethos. In a revision of its earlier stand on "denationalisation" of the different ethnic groups, the ULFA has now extended its support to the struggle of the ethnic minorities in the state and views such struggles as part of the greater struggle for an independent Assam. Its earlier position had been that, for the sake of achieving its goal of independence, ethnic differences would have to be submerged so that the chief emphasis could be given to the fight to end the colonial rule of Delhi. In a clever twist, it now tries to link up the colonial thesis with the present state of backwardness of the ethnic communities whose aspirations are, it claims, part of its greater struggle.

For the first five years or so of its existence, the ULFA maintained a low profile, concentrating on building up its organisation, establishing foreign links and trying to establish a popular base by punishing bootleggers, profiteers, "anti-socials" and particularly those involved in a leading role during the 1983 elctions. The last was clearly aimed at winning over the support of the broad masses of the Assamese people who viewed the 1983 elctions as the ultimate treachery of the Centre in regard to Assam. But as the need for funds to procure arms grew, the organisation changed its tactics, and the attack on a Guwahati bank in may 1985 was the first indication that ULFA had emerged as a major presence in Assam's political scene. The next five years from 1985 to 1990 saw dozens of non-Assamese businessmen being gunned down for their refusal or inability to meet the militant outfit's demands. This was the period of the Asom Gana Parishad's rule, and the ULFA took full advantage of their close links with the one-time AASU leaders to set up an almost parallel administration in many areas. It succeeded

not only in penetrating into the State's bureaucracy at all levels, but also got its men posted at the right spots in the police and the intelligence network. It was only when the ULFA started targeting the influential tea lobby of the state that the Centre began taking grave note of the Assam situation. But by the time Operation Bajrang was launched subsequent to the dismissal of the AGP government in November 1990, the ULFA had already collected crores of rupees from the tea garden management in the state. Operation Bajrang could not achieve much because hours before it was launched, the ULFA leaders and cadres went underground, taking full advantage of the mass contact programme which they had nourished over the years. The killings, however, were resumed a few months later, this time the targets chiefly being members of the Congress party. But, surprisingly, the ULFA adopted a neutral stance during the 1991 elections which brought Hiteswar Saikia and his Congress into power. Yet it did try to use its influence in bridging the difference which had surfaced within the Asom Gana Parishad, hoping that the return to power of a regional party would make matters smooth for it. Operation Rhino launched in September 1991 proved to be a greater success from the security forces' point of view and most of the ULFA bases within the state were demolished, hundreds of cadres were arrested and scores killed. But the successes of the army were neutralised to a large extent by excesses committed in the course of the operations, and ULFA was quick to capitalise on the anger and bitterness of the average Assamese villager at the manner in which the Indian security forces were conducting themselves. The middle class outrage at the ULFA killings was now replaced by concern and sympathy for the fate of the "boys". The large turnouts at the funerals of ULFA cadres killed in "encounters", indicate that all its weaknesses notwithstanding, the organisation had succeeded in striking strong rural roots. The common feeling seemed to be that the "boys" were not fighting for personal gain but for a greater patriotic cause. This feeling would, however, gradually undergo a change even as the public came to know more about the life-style and manner of functioning of the ULFA cadres who, according to a journalist, brought the five-star culture into the insurgent movements of the region[30].

Unlike the Naga National Council which spearheaded the Naga struggle during its initial years, the ULFA has been right from the beginning, a militaristic organisation. The political wing of the outfit

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has never had much of a say in policy matters. This is in sharp contrast to other conventional insurgent organisations where the political wing has a greater weightage. The danger of the armed wing marginalising the political wing has been noticed in many an African state where armed insurgency has overthrown colonial rule. For example, in Guineau-Bisseau the revolutionary leader Amilcar Cabral made it a point to punish all those officers who tried to give the armed wing priority over the political wing, and he consistently warned his countrymen of the dangers from militarian. This militaristic structure of the ULFA has stood in the way of inner-party democracy and has also led to lack of proper co-ordination on policy matters between the different district and local units. The dominance of the armed wing has often led to ideological weaknesses which have been reflected in the organisation's growing alienation from the masses. Though at one phase the ULFA did try to strike a rapport with the masses through its welfare programmes under its mass organisation, the Jatiya Unnayan Parishad, yet it soon retreated into its militaristic shell where secrecy, discipline and the unquestioning carrying out of orders seems to be the rule. This has often resulted in grave aberrations and the image of the outfit has greatly suffered as was the case when the mass graves were found in the village of Lakhipathar during Operation Bajrang by the Indian security forces. Added to this is the fact that the ULFA at no stage tried to test the people's support for its actions. Unlike the NNC which carried out a "plebiscite" and poll-boycott to test the people's will, the ULFA has devised no mechanism for this end. Hence, its claim of support from the broad masses of the Assamese people is yet to be substantiated. It is yet to present a viable programme detailing its plan for Swadhin Asom in which the complex relationship between the Assamese and the different ethnic groups will be worked out. Organisations like the United Reservation Council of Assam (URMCA), an umbrella body of several plains tribal and backward communities, has time and again questioned the ULFA's credentials and accused it of advancing the interests of the caste-Hindu Assamese lobby. Given the complex heterogenous ethnic situation in Assam, it is doubtful if an organisation like the ULFA can take along with it the different ethnic groups, most of whom are struggling under their own banners to wrest concessions from the Centre. Summing up such a situation, Donald Horowitz in his

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"Ethnic Groups in Conflict" (1985) writes : "The strength of a secessionist movement and the heterogeneity of its region are inversely related. Since most secessionist regions are ethnically heterogenous, most secessionist movements end up divided, and quite a few begin that way. Asked why the many ethnic groups opposed to the Burmese government do not form an alliance, a Karen secessionist replied straightforwardly : "Because most of us do not get along well together. That's why we want independence in the first place". Such an observation appears relevant to the present situation prevailing in the North-eastern region of the country where complex demographic patterns and ethnic heterogeneity an some of the important factors which have prevented the coming together on a common platform of the different inssurgent groups.

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Notes and References :

1. The Naga Hills District was formed in 1866 with Samaguting as its headquarters. Even after teh District headquarters was shifted to Kohima, the Naga Hills District covered only central Nagaland, and did not include the Naga-inhabited areas in neighbouring regions. Naga scholars of today blame the British for deliberately dividing their land into Naga Hills proper, and parts of Assam, Manipur and Burma. See Y. Yuno, *The Rising Nagas* (New Delhi), 1974), p. 62.

2. M. Alemchiba, *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland* (Kohima, 1970), p. 214.

3. The different Naga tribes communicate with one another in a pidgin Assamese called Nagamese. Even today, although English is the official language of Nagaland, radio broadcasts are made in Nagamese, which is understood by all the tribes. Proceedings of the state legislature are also kept in Nagamese.

4. Y. Yuno, p. 62.

5. M. Alemchiba, p. 33.

6. L. Devi, *Ahom-Tribes Relations* (Gauhati, 1968), p. 21.

7. V. Elwin, *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century* (Bombay, 1969), p. 162.

8. S. Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India* (New Delhi, 1973), p. 72.

9. The Naga Club was formed in 1918 and may be said to be the first attempt at organised all-Naga opinion.

10. M. Alemchiba, p. 163.

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11. The Naga National Council, formed in 1946, was born out of the Naga District Tribal Council, and claimed represent all the Naga tribes.

12. M. Alemchiba, pp. 166-67.

13. Y, Yuno, p. 197.

14. Article 8 of the Agreement was worded as folows : "The Governor of Assam as the agent of the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of ten years to ensure the due observance of the Agreement. At the end of this period, the Naga National Council will be asked whether they require the above Agreement to be extended for a further period or a new Agreement regarding the future of the Naga people is arrived at".

15. M. Alemchiba, p. 173.

16. S.K. Chaube, p. 144.

17. Y. Yuno, p. 197.

18. Phizo was born in 1900 in the village of Khonoma. While his followers insist the he served in the INA from 1943 to 1945, others are of the view that he collaborated with the Japanese, and was imprisoned after the British recapture of Burma. See S.K. Chaube, p. 144.

19. The Naga Home Guard was raised by Phizo from among the Naga ex-servicemen and young recruits. It was the begining of the Naga Federal Army. The Naga Movement and the Naga Women's Society were the youth wings of the NNC.

20. M. Alemchiba, p. 185.

21. The members of the Peace Mission were Jayprakash Narayan, B.P. Chaliha and Rev. Michael Scott.

22. L. Luithui and N. Haksar, *Nagaland File* (New Delhi, 1984), p. 137

23. J. Alam, "Conceptualising State-Society Relations in India", *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.11, No.1 (1995)

24. S.L. Baruah, *Last Days of Ahom Monarchy* (New Delhi, 1993), pp. 25 and 35

25. G. Phukan, *Assam's Attitude to Federalism* (New Delhi, 1984), pp. 82-84.

26. A. Banerjee, *"Federalism and Nationalism : A Historical Survey"*, mimeo, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, 1989

27. *Ibid.*

28. S. Hazarika, *Strangers of the Mist* (New Delhi, 1994), pp. 249-50.

29. U. Misra, *North-East India : Quest for Identity* (Gauhati, 1988), pp. 149-50.

30. S. Hazarika, p. 175

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GLOBALISATION, POVERTY AND THE CRISIS OF GOVERNANCE IN NEPAL

A.K. Dutta

The democratic transformation in most of the Third World societies has been marked by severe stress and strains. The transformations have been phenemonal in as much as the experience of democratic governance was virtually non-existent. Even otherwise, the societies of these countries, were under stark poverty; development for them implied economic growth, equitable distribution and social justice. Paradoxically the new rulers who thronged the scene, were drawn for all strata of society, and their varied experience and background made them vulnerable to internal and external pressures. Underdevelopment and backwardness was their fait accompli; what they were burdened with, is to correct the structurel weaknesses and create a society which could ensure both democracy and development[1]. While Nepal was not under any colonial domination, the institutions of democracy never had any legitimate basis; it is monarchy, which was at the helm of affair.

The Texture of Democracy :

Nepal's political democracy remained under shrouded mysteries, unlike other South Asian countries, except India. Tottered by political regimes, which are brittle, and coalitions which are fragile and short-lived, the political process was subject to severe stress, and faltering democratic transformation. A long interlude of Panchayat Raj institutions with its bankrupt policies, and corrupt bureaucreacy, patronised by so-called rich Nepalese elites brought about devastating hiatus between rich and poor. The Panchayat system banned political parties, imprisoned political leaders, and threw them into jail, thereby weakening the democratic basis of social solidarity. People involved

in running the administration, were currupt, incompetent and inefficient; the rivalry of power and status dominated the leadership[2]. The Panchayat system worked on the basis of functional dualism - while, king Birendra called for 'Politics for Development', the populist leaders were faced with the challenges of "democratization" - indeed, the bane of the Nepalese political system - was the banning of both the leading political forces - One, under Nepali Congress Party, and the opposition crystallizing under the banner of the communist party of Nepal.

The Panchayat rule lasted from 1960 to 1989. The first democratic decade as it is euphemistically called, lasted from 1951- 60. The period was marked by internal political squabbles; some 35 political parties vied for position and power. The Nepali Congress-headed government took over power, in 1959; its efforts to implement radical programs like Birta abolition, rapid industrialisation, development and communication were not crowned with success[3]. The Koirala government was frozen by king Mahendra, proclamining that development should be the first priority and democracy should come later. But the panchayat system, introduced by 1962, outlined in the 1962 constitution supported a partyless system, with four-tier structure - village/town to the district, district to the zone, zone to the national legislature[4]. A Ministry of National Guidance would control, regulate and supervise election of candidates, to different layers of the Panchayat system. Nepal's sovereignty was vested in the king, because all powers - legislative, executive and judicial - emanate from the king, as the repository of ultimate authority. It was only in 1980, after the national referendum that certain 'limited' powers of democracy, were ensured; the Panchayat system ratified through people's consent, gave a new twist to the experiments of democracy. While the reforms permitted political participation of NC and the banned Communist Party, the paradigm of politics was not stable; internal clashes, party rivalry and factionalism rent the political scene; most of the people who were aligned for the Panchayat system, worked primarily for self-interest, promotion and creating wealth. Lack of political accountability, absence of checks and balances degraded faith in the political system, and institutionalised corruption at all layers of society[5]. Indeed, the inauguration of multi-party system and 1991 election was held in the charged atmosphere of past legends and the present resurgent crises. The interim government pledged to resolve the crises of - corruption, smuggling, black-marketing, and the commission-paid bureaucracy,

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and chalked out a macro-economic policy - of fiscal, monetary, and commercial management to generate more domestic investment and regulate unwarranted and illegal trade. While the economy did farely pick up, during the interim period (April, 1990 - May, 1991), there were growing crises in Nepalese structures of governance - political rivalry, non-cooperation from bureaucracy, and rise of militant trade unions, and ultra-left wing communism[6]. After ascending power structure, the NC government attempted to remove some bottlenecks, by redistribution of productive resources, helping the rural poor, and decentralisation of economic power to the grassroots level. But the internal squabbles and personality clashes inside the ruling party, led to fragmentations and ultimately to the mid-term election of 1994[7]. The mid-term election changed the political scenario, in favour of UML, (United Marxist leninist(which secured 42.9% of the votes, and 89 seats while NC obtained 83 seats, with 40.4%. The NDP secured 20 seats (9.7%), the Nepal Majdoor and Kissan Party (NMKP) secured 4 seats, with 0.74%) votes; NSP won 3 seats (0.59%), and independent candidates won 7 seats 8.4% while the UML formed the government, it was short-lived, only to be ousted by a non-confidence, tabled by NC. The new ruling party of NC, under the leadership of Sher Bahadur Deuba altered the policies of Marxist-led government of M.M. Adhikary, and promised to open a liberal "free market economy", and rejecting the "welfare oriented socialist model", of 'building your village' programme[8]. However, the NC government was also short-lived, and was faced with a no-trust motion against the government, on charges of - failure to maintain law and order, corruption and misuse of state exchequer, and misusing the official media. Another coalition, headed by NDP's, Lokendra Bahadur Chand, with the support of CPN (UML), NSP, and NMKP took over the government in 1997. Bam Deb Gautam, of CPN became the Deputy Prime Minister. Even if, the present government is enjoying majority support in parliament, the crisis of government has not mellowed down[9]. Misuse and appropriation of state exchequer, administrative mismanagement, neglect of oppressed classes, the break-down of industrial infrastructure, unemployment and absolute poverty, breakdown of law and order, and the innocent murder, by the Maoist as well as gagging the voice of the electoral opposition, patronising of corruption and blackmarketing, rising budget deficit, governmental and banking institutions over-dependence on black money, and smuggling and more so, interference in peaceful

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demonstrations and mass neetings, arrest and repression of opposition leaders - are lending to create dictatorial and fascist tendencies[10]. Unscrupulousless, and narrowminded party politics have already brought total desperation in the minds of the people, and political pluralism, or the process of governance is severaly dialuted by the "criminal designs of the political parties to politicize the civil service, judiciary, public service commission, and the office of the Auditor General", which are the foundation piller, offering a convenient check to any type of democratic governance[11].

Neo-Liberal Globalisation and State-Society Relations :

The nature of globalisation in South Asia and in Nepal, in particular, has been mixed and queer mixed, in the sense that Globalisation has failed to filter down to the bottom, while the spread of Globalisation has led to rapid commodisation; the political market opened by the bourgeoisie to general rung of the people, has thrown open a large number of challenges : while there has been explosion in the process of commodisation, the growth of small enterpreneurs, and the effect on the marginal income of the poor, is so small that it has led to contraction of the market[12]. Global capital has failed to deliver its historic mision of reaching the bottom of the poor, or the marginalised. Combined with this fact, is the large number of socio-political constraints in the state-building process of South Asia. The large exodus of people, from one part of South Asia to another part has contributed to social tension, mal-adjustment and often confrontation, with other countries. The level of state-civil society adjustment is marred with the new contradictions of the political market[13]. The governance of democracy, in any society, demands not just the opening of political freedom and human rights, but also requires certain type of adjustments, in civil society, which, irrefutably, is filled up with a large volley of contradictions. Market institutions and their present versions invade freedom in all spheres - "both in large scale and small scale, while a smaller number is really interested to offer an "alternative institutional definition of market" (Unger, 1987:480, 482). The neo-liberal process of Globalisation is not only altering the character of the market, but also prompting the changing nuances and rhetoric of state welfarism; while the state, in apparent sense, is being marginalised, its growing role is manifested in its reinforcement of security system, balancing the contradiction between labour and capital and more so in bridging

the inherent clash in which Nepalese society is plunged into14. Moreover, a long legacy of monarchial rule and Panchayati experiment condoned the attitudes and persceptions of the people; the oppressive state policies led to submergence of individual and social identities, but failed to prevent articulation when political market became sovereign. In Nepal, with an ill-formed democratic structure, the political coalitions which are emerging or nascent, are undoing the restructuring of state and capital. It has failed to root out poverty and inequality, while internationalisation of commodity market has opened up large opportunities of privilege. Quite logically, those who ascend power attempt to exploit the large chunk of cake ignoring the large mass of people who remain impoverished and marginalised15. The role of non-governmental actors, or participants in the process of development does not neutralise poverty and inequality but create series of contradictions in the process of development[16]. Unless there is an balanced and well articulated democratised power structures, it is impossible for a state to commit itself fully to solve the cancer of poverty, because the gains of economic liberalisation often are manipulated by few, who command power and influence.

The logic of globalisation requires - liberalisation and privatisation, ironically, the state in Nepal was already burdened with structural crises - Nepalese agriculture was mal-developed, industrial bottlenecks presisted, the dependence on foreign aid was excessively high, apart from widespread illiteracy, poverty and malnutrition; its dependence on India and failure to grow on its own stunted the development process17. Like many other developing countries, she relied in 50's and 60's on "Centrally directed, bureaucratically controlled development strategies" (Leo Rose and Scholz, p. 109). But the operation of centrally-sponsored, directionless state was obstructed by the lack of institutional mechanism. Nepal lacked not only in adequately cultivable land, but the process of land distribution was blocked by the ruling bourgeoisie who monopolised most of the land[18]. Poverty was not only widespread, but it was more pervasive, because of the faulty governmental policies - corruption, mismanagement and inefficiency. The consequences of Globalisation in Nepalese context have been manifold - it did not only rupture the state-society relations, but brought about a fundamental change in the persception of people. The legacy of long suppression and widespread poverty of the people found articulation in democratic movements. The 'Campaign for democracy' was supported both by the

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leading political parties - NC, and the United Left Front, apart from other political parties and coalitions of small splinter groups[19]. But the run for political democracy and neo-liberal market economies, worked at cross-purposes. While the neo-liberal Globalisation required a strong state-society relations, curiously enough the advocacy of global civil society was not received by the Nepalese people. Nepalese perceived the new orientation of Globalism as antithetical or antagonistic to the development and restoration of multiparty-democracy, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development, with self-reliance as the primary goal[20]. The experience of Nepalese people, with plans, programmes and objectives for the last four decades had been a dismal one. It did neither benefit the poor or the landless, nor it remedied the structural and existing inequality in distribution of income and assests; instead, it benefitted the urban elites and the rural elites. The bulk of the majority remained at the marginal or less level; the country turned from agricultural surplus in foodgrains and net exporter, to a deficit country[21]. As per the Royal address, delivered in 1997, to the Parliament 45% of the people live below the absolute poverty line; infact it is difficult for such people to take part in a open marketing system[22].

While, in political and economic fronts, Globalisation was a questionable proposition, in terms of creating a new social order, the idea of Global civil society was certainly an illusion[23]; indeed, in a society rent by socio-political contradictions, and cultural hiatus the multi-ethnic, plural state of Nepal had to accommodate a large number of migrants - From India, Tibet, China and other peripheral areas. The growing tension between the two communities - phadis and Madehsiyas, mainly prompted by the increasing migration, led to adoption and orientation of new values and attitudes[24]. The intergroup competition and rivalry in terms of ownership of land, control of political and economic power and protection of cultural and ethnic identities - were mixed with the demands of the political market of sovereign democracy[25]. With already hazardous environmental configurations, and rugged hilly terrain, Nepalese economy could not grow. The political democracy was no solution to the crises of stagnation and under-development[26]. The main dilemas of the Panchayat system, was corruption, mismanagement and privatizing of profits and dividends, for themselves rather than for the poor and the marginalised; the present fledgling political-democratic structure, with its 'marriage of convenience' coalitions, - is opening up the same pandora's boxes, with

little difference - that power is transferred to a different set of people - who have failed to protect the vast bulk of the poor and is becoming pawn to an already-established structure of power and domination[27]. The democratic constitutional structure is as much under seize, because of the corruption and manipulation of the few, as it was under a 'Patron - clientiele' dominated rule of Panchayati democracy.

The State and The Poor :

Nepalese politics is essentially the politics of poverty; nowwhere, in the world the process of governance has been diluted so much by the war of governance - Platitudes, Slogans, 'empathy for the poor', 'land to the tiller', 'corruption', 'favouritism' 'invasion of the migrants'[28]. The scale of deprivation or the extent of marginalisation of the poor is incredible. The first elected government, after the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990, proclaimed poverty alleviation and self-sustainable development, as the primary concern[29]. The 'New Democracy', envisaged by the UML, (United Marxist - Laminist party) proclaimed that it is entirely a new kind of capitalist system, which will "encourage national capitalism and create conditions for transtition to socialism"[30].

By Global estimates, the poverty in Nepal is simply staggering. The World Bank records that the rural poverty stands at 61%. Using the internatinally accepted poverty line of US $ 150 per capita per annum, the poverty incidence jumps to 70% of the population, and almost 80% in the hills[31]. The Eighth Plan document estimated the size of absolute poverty incidence in 1992 about 9.2 million or 40% of the estimated population. Based on macro-level and micro-level study reports, the guessed estimate of present poverty incidence is 55% of the total population or about 11 million 'absolute poor' in a total population of 20 million. According to the world Development Report, 1997, the percentage of people living in less than $ 1 a day (ppp), between 1981-1995, is 53.1%. The patterns of income distribution - shows that the top 10% of the households have 47% of total income, while the bottom 20% of the households received 4.6%[33].

The images and resources of the poor are too disheartening and beyond measure. While 95% of the poor live in rural areas, the average operational landholding of a poor farmer in Terai is about 0.14 hectare,

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per capita, and in the hills, about 0.05 hectare per capita[34]. The recently concluded survey of Rural credit, suggests that there are about 78% small and marginal farmer households out of the total and they now only 47% of land, and have average per capita annual income of less than US $ 100[35]. A field survey report undertaken, suggests that 59.182%, belongs to the absolute poor category, 22.45% relative poor, (Economic Journal of Nepal, Oct-Dec. 1996). The rate of rural under-employment is believed to be over 40%[36]. The Rural Credit Surveys also show that 39% of the rural families are under debt, 86% of whom, borrowed from non-institutional sources, only 20% from institutional and 6%, from both. The majority of the poor is absolutely poor, spending three-fourth (3/4) of their budget, in food alone, a small part on clothes and fuel, and almost nothing, for health and education[37]. Unfortunately, even recognizing the 'poor', the approach to poverty alleviation is only piecemeal; reform, restructuring and 'productivity increase', or productive investment are the catchword or slogans for the policy makers; little is done to offset the dominant class or propertied interest, and very little, to bring about the process of allocation and distribution. Ironically, the same poor is being asked to participate in a private entrepreneurship or capital formation or human resource-building programmes, denying the basic assumption, that it is difficult to participate, without certain measure of self-support. Obviously, the absolute poor cannot generate investment, or foster in the growth of capital formation, through savings mobilization and transfer of surplus into productive capital[38]. The strategies of poverty alleviation adopted by the Nepalese state, in Eighth Five Year Plan, seek to adopt multipronged strategies, recognising the inadequacy of development programmes in the past. It recognized that the past efforts, for several decades, have failed to control either population growth rates or to reduce inequality, and itensify massive education and generate incomes for the poor[39]. The Statist strategies of poverty amelioration concentrated on : macro-economic growth, maximising the rate of GNP, helping the poor through rural developments, rural distribution of assets, through land reforms, small industries, and labour-intensive rural works[40]. The Eighth Plan suggested various macro and sectoral programmes : identification of backward areas, and poor families, rural public works, increased access of poor to productive resources, direct contracts to poor communities, effective legal protection to deprived sections, of society employment creation in non-agriculrural sectors,

mitigating negative impact on environment, institutional support to poverty alleviation programmes, pro-poor interventions in health, and education, resettlement of landless poor in leasehold forests[41]. In Nepal, the objective of structural adjustment programme (SAP) initiated in 1985, was to achieve micro-economic stabilisation and structural reform, through reduction of governmental expenditures, tight monetary policy and structuring of capital markets, removal of control of private sector enterprises, open door policies towards global capital reduction or removal of government subsidies, and stabilizing real wage rates[42].

Impact of Globalisation and Liberalisation :

The impact of the reforms, however, is dismal enough. The Nepalese economy failed to absorb shocks in the adjustment process; the trade liberalization has not contributed to GDP growth rates; infact, the devaluation or extensive trade liberalization has benefited only the big industralists, large landowners and highly technical professionals[43]. The rapid growth of the non-agricultural sectors, has reduced the share of the agricultures share of GDP from 50% in 1990, to 40% in 1996[44]. The service sector, according to ADB Report, has gorwn by 7.3%. On the contrary, gross domestic saving declined to 11.0% of GDP, and gross national saving to 12.6% of GNP, in 1996 compared with investment levels of almost 24% of GNP[45]. In Terai, 10 industrial estates were established since 1959. Out of 418 industrial units, 107 units have closed down, while 53, are under construction. The majority of the existing 62 public enterprises are operating unsatisfactorily, for which government bears a heavy loss[46]. While privatisation has resulted in large degree of decentralisation, the western model of privatization has not always proved to be sound, so far as the structural charecteristics of modern capitalist economy is concerned. In fact, as the statistical data suggests, the trade liberalization has not contributed to GDP growth rate[47]. It is true, rather, that Nepal's performance is worse, compared to other developing countries, because of trade liberalisation and currency depreciation. The comparative trade advantage of Nepal is relatively limited. Economic liberalisation has not led to efficient reallocation of resources, and export expansion, because the export base and industrial production is very small, which is again dominated by light manufactured goods[48]. The Nepalese economy inherently suffers from structural rigidity, low skill capacity, poor infrastructure, and a weak cultivation or learning process. Markets, on the other hand,

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are either non-existent, or imperfect or constrained by varied interplay of forces, including massive smuggling of Indian goods, and existence of foreign Chinese, Japanese or Singapore goods[49]. Industrial production is so much dependent on imports for majority of its inputs that much of large scale industries, have chronic shortages of foreign exchange, and low capacity utilisation, apart from skilled manpower. External factors, often take a heavy toll, and rising burden of debt servicing, and falling terms of trade with other countries, even in South Asia, often causes loss in earning of foreign exchange, to catter for heavy industrialisation[50]. The external debt outstanding has shot up from 2056.9 in 1994 to 2327.0, and is projected to increase upto 2667.0[51]. The loss of earning in 1990 caused by changing terms of trade since 1980, has been estimated to range from 2 to 13% of 1990 GDP. While uniformity of liberalization process worked against exports of manufacturers, devaluation resulted in uniform price changes over the whole range of tradable goods, rather than for selected commodities. The consequence of all this, is that Nepal is being increasingly marginalised in international trade, because of her extensive dependence on production and exports of primary goods[52]. Economic liberalisation, indeed, set aside the considerations of long-run development of supply capacity, and the operation of market forces. Instead of development-oriented liberalization, which would have fostered the growth of industrial production, and assure a degree of protection to home industries little attention were paid to protect the basic sector, like agriculture, which is the primary foci and pillar of country's economic solvency[53]. In actuality, unlimited imports and smuggling of cheap goods from across the border have pushed the Nepali industrial sector out of competition. Industrial growth and over-all economic growth been blocked because of rent-seeking behaviour and pattern of trading, in financial activities or rural estates[54]. The pervasive network of patronclientele relationship among politicians, and bureaucrats, officials at upper or lower level, at the cost of public exchequer has landed the economy under permanent seize. Most programmes or projects end up by patronising urban and rural elites, contractors and consultants, who work with them[55]. Globalisation has globalised misery and poverty, for the large chunk of Nepalese while democracy has opened up wider socio-political conflicts, and internecine clashes, - between groups, communities, individuals and institutions.

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Conclusion

In any developing state, the task of a government is to rule and govern, so that it may attain legitimacy and credibility. Suharto's Indonesia, notwithstanding its authoritarian-military structure, could manage and marginalise poverty to a significant extent despite all the pitfalls of third world states; in Bhutan, an absolute monarchy is prevalent for the last few decades; even with its limited resource base, it could manage its economy, and kept significant growth rates. Singapore could maintain its legitimate quality of governance and credibility despite the dominance of one single ruling party, PPP, for the last three decades. Paradoxically, Nepal remained economically poor and even if it is a fact that a democratic constitution exists in Nepal, that there have been tortuous struggle for democracy on all fronts, by the dominant groups in society the democratic transition has failed to produce a legitimate and effective system of governance[56]. The agenda of economic reconstruction does not necessity imply dispensation of public institutions, constitutionalism or rule of law, placing the individuals in a higher pedestral than 'communities'[57]; infact, if Singapore succeeded in her efforts, it is because, Singaporeans built up the state on the basis of genuine transformative striving : the welfare functions of a state cannot be dispensed with in the name of decontrol, or deregulation. Its ultimate justification lies in forming of human capital, or reducing barriers to income-earning opportunity, and prompting social stability and cohesion. It is often argued that "the democratic process does not exist, and cannot exist as a disembodied entity detached from historical conditions and historically conditioned human beings. Its posibilities and its limits are highly dependent on existing and emergent social structures and consciousness"[58]. In Nepal, the situations do not warrant that there is absence of democratic consciousness, or enlightenment, as some scholars would us believe. In Latin America also, the challenge of democracy was posed by cultural barriers. Democracy today is no longer confined to the boundaries of the nation state. It is part of the bigger transnational process, since all of us have become essential parts of a transnational world and the challenge of the Nepalese people is to start with alternative imaginations of democratic self[59].The self is not one of perpetuating the dogma of electoral politics or emancipatory politics, but a view of freedom, detached from view of oppesition between self and other consonace between communities of discourse and translation, in practice. It is not

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enough to call for freedom, democracy, and human rights : one should attempt to ensure that these are protected, nourished and enlarged, so that poverty and unemployment, or marginalisation are blanketed and ultimately banished by the twin commitments of socio-economic reforms and stability, and ensuring independence of institutions, which are vital for the functioning of a true process of governance.

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NATION- BUILDING IN BHUTAN : PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

K.M. Deka

The kingdom of Bhutan with a population of slightly over 1.6 million and a territory of 46,000 square kilometres was one of the 560 and odd Princely States during British Rule in India. Following the lapse of British suzeraintly over Bhutan, caused by the withdrawal of the Raj from the Indian subcontinent, the Himalayan kingdom did not accede to India but it decided to opt for independence. Sovereign Bhutan initially seemed least concerned about the unprecedented changes occuring in its southern neighbours and she was inclined to continue with her old order--social and political. Also she did not contemplate to break her self-imposed isolation from the rest of the globe. However, the emergence of the People's Republic China and the forcible integration of Tibet into it shook the morale of the Bhutanese king. Under tremendous stress, the king hastened to adopt the model of a nation state and initiated the process of nation-building in his kingdom which had been until then an entirely feudal country.

This paper makes an attempt to analyse the major problems encountered by Bhutan in its endeavour to build itself as a nation. Three major problems have been encountered by Bhutan in the process of her nation-building. Those are the problems of (i) protecting her sovereign status as a nation, (ii) ensuring national integration without compromising with her security, and (iii) achieving economic development so as to ensure stability in the realm. The paper discusses these problems and indicates the prospects of nation-building there in the 'peaceful dragon country'.

I

Assertion of Sovereignty vis-a-vis Special Treaty Relationship

Fragmentation of Bhutan's sovereignty is a legacy of the past. Bhutan was a theocracy (called Chhochi in Dzonkha language) during the period from 1616 to 1907. In this system, the Dharma Raja was theoretically the supreme head of both temporal and secular affairs of the country but in practice, sovereign powers over secular matters were exercised by the Deb Raja, thus fragmenting the country's sovereignty. Bhutan's sovereignty also came to be fragmented in another way. The Penlops (Provincial Governors) in the absence of an effective central government were the real repository of sovereign powers in the country. In fact, the strongest of the Penlops often acted as the *de facto* sovereign ruler of Bhutan and the Deb Raja was undoubtedly his nominee, *albeit*, formally chosen by the Council of State for appointment by the Dharma Raja. The rivalry among the Penlops for supremacy led to internecine civil strifes which normally ended in utter chaos. The fact that there were as many as fiftyfive Deb Rajas as against only five Dharma Rajas during 1616-1905 amply illustrates this point[1].

An interesting paradox relating to the consolidation of Bhutan's sovereignty needs to be highlighted here. It was by forging a special relationship with the British Government at the cost of her external sovereignty that Bhutan succeeded in consolidating her internal sovereigntly. Towards the later part of the nineteenth century, the Penlop of Tongsa emerged as the *de facto* ruler of Bhutan. He realised that a closer association with British India would provide him the much needed support to consolidate his supreme authority which was considered so vital for keeping Bhutan integrated and free from civil wars. The pursuance of Lord Curzon's 'Forward Policy' and penetration of British influence into Tibet needed the Tongsa Penlop's alliance as much as the latter needed the British support to consolidate and maintain his newly acquired *de facto* sovereign status.

The British Government in recognition of the assistance rendered by Ugyen Wangchuk, the Penlop of Tongsa, to the Younghusband expedition to Tibet decorded him with the honorific KCIE in 1905.

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Two years later, Sir Ugyen Wangchuk was elected as the hereditary monarch of Bhutan. The founder of the Bhutanese monarchy used the British support he had to consolidate his sovereign powers but at a heavy cost. In 1910, the Bhutanese King, in drastic modification of the Treaty of Sinchula, 1865, agreed to surrender Bhutan's external sovereignty to the British Government. Signed at Punakha in 1910, the treaty states, *inter alia*, that

> the British Government undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal affairs of Bhutan. On its part, the Bhutanese Government agrees to be guided by the advice of British Government in regard to its external relations[2].

An effective central government in Bhutan was the most important development which the British government was so eagerly looking for. The British Political Agent for Sikkim and Bhutan had the following observation to make on this development :

> .... his accession to the Maharajaship is not only a gain to Bhutan, but is of great advantage to the British Government who will henceforth have a settled government with a man of strong character as its head to negotiate with[3].

The treaty also served the British interests by helping British India create of buffer zone between herself and China. A despatch from the Viceroy of India to the Secretary of State observed as follows:

> We cannot afford to let the Chinese establish influence in Bhutan ...... Moreover, it is fast becoming a Nepalese state ...... Indeed the establishment of Chinese influence in Bhutan could not fail to raise complications of a grave kind on the North Eastern Frontier and might eventually necessitate the location of a considerable force on our side of the border where, now, two companies of native infantry afford sufficient protection. We are strongly of opinion that time has come to frustrate the evident designs of China on Bhutan, and local conditions are favourable for a blocking policy. The Maharaja of Bhutan is well disposed towards us and is highly incensed with the Chinese[4].

Bhutan's position during the last phase of British rule in India was one of isolated semi-sovereignty. With the advent of India's independence, Bhutan grew restive over the question of her nationhood and full sovereignty. The integration of the Princely States with India

(and Pakistan) following her independence alarmed Bhutan considerably. The Kingdom, therefore, started negotiation with India in 1948 for a fresh treaty which was expected to advance her from semi-sovereignty to full sovereignty. The Government of India which inherited the British legacies was, however, not willing to part with the advantages that India had gained by the earlier treaties with Bhutan.

Bhutan's dilema was, however, solved by the victory of the Communist Party of China and emergence of the People's Republic on the Kingdom's northern border. Bhutan, therefore, opted for the renewal of its "special relationship" with India and the Indo-Bhutanese Frendship Treaty was signed in August 1949, as per which Bhutan "agreed to be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to her external relations", while India "undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan"[5]. It may also be mentioned here that Bhutan's right to free trade with, and transit facilities through India was guaranteed by the Treaty, and that the annual Indian subsidy to Bhutan was raised by five times over the earlier quantum fixed in 1910. Thus it seems that the situation in 1949 was as similar and the reasons as valid as those had been when Bhutan signed the Punakha Treaty in 1910. Consequently, Bhutan missed an historical opportunity to regain her external sovereignty and was to remain in isolated semi-sovereignty until she could improve upon her status by becoming a member of the United Nations.

The cartographical war waged by the People's Republic of China against Bhutan and its neighbours as well as the complete integration of Tibet as a province of China further unnerved Bhutan. The Bhutanese King in his talk with the Government of India in February 1961 stated categorically that his kingdom would have no direct dealings with the PRC despite the latter's firm refusal to accept India's overlordship relating to Bhutan's external affairs under the treaty of 1949. The King further stated that his kingdom's major problems were her disputes with the PRC and therefore he did not consider it propitious to establish links with western countries and international organisations[6].

Bhutan's apprehensions of the Chinese designs, however, seemed to have waned within a short time following India's debacle at the Sino-Indian war of 1962. She made no secret of her intention to utilise the

opportunities offered to her by the war for asserting her sovereignty in full. The Bhutanese Prime Minister declared that the 'lattest Chinese maps did not lay any claim over Bhutanese territory and that his country was not afraid of any repercussion of the NEFA happenings'. He also disclosed that he had visited Europe in order to contact industrialists there for Bhutan's economic development and that he had had a Swedish proposal to set up a paper mill in Bhutan[7]. This was a master move on the part of Bhutan intended to send a signal to both India and China that Bhutan was determined to assert her full sovereignty notwithstanding the Indo-Bhutanese Treaty of 1949. The Swedish episode was a symbolic expression of Bhutan's urge to establish direct bilateral diplomatic ties with other countries of the globe in defiance of her treaty obligations toward India, thereby restoring to herself her lost external sovereignty. It may be recalled, as a sharp contrast, that in 1961 Bhutan requested India to channel to her some funds available from the United States of America under Public Law 480. However, there was another option before Bhutan to choose in order to regain her lost external sovereignty : this was to assert her sovereignty in full by becoming a member of the United Nations Organisation.

In early 1965, the Tsogdu (National Assembly of Bhutan) passed a unanimous resolution asking the Government to seek membership of the United Nations Organisation which was conveyed to the Prime Minister of India by an emissary of the King. Thereafter, the only matter which interested the King most was his country's membership of the UNO. The King used to stress frequently that any further delay in obtaining UN membership by his kingdom would embolden not only his but also India's adverseries to exploit the situation. On one occasion, the King said that while he himself had no use for the Chinese, there were others, including the leaders of the foiled coup d'état who would not hesitate a bit to come to terms with China[8]. The King's efforts to get his country admitted to the UNO ultimately materialised in September 1971 when Bhutan became the 128the member of the Organisation.

Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, the late king of Bhutan, expressed his reaction on his kingdom's admission to the UNO in the following words:

Our admission to the UN is, verily, as important as when Shabdung Rimpoche came to our land (in 1616 and established Bhutan as a sovereign

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country), bringing to us the message of Truth and Dharma. Bhutan has all along been a paradise of peace and tranquility and I am sure it will continue to be so[9].

The present monarch, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, while speaking on the occasion of National Day celebration, 1978, observed as follows:

> Bhutan's national policy is to consolidate our sovereignty to achieve economic self-reliance, prosperity and happiness for our country[10].

This policy of consolidation of sovereignty as an important step toward nation-building in Bhutan has been transformed into action through her global role both in and outside the UNO. Bhutan's initial track record at the UN General Assembly might have created an impression that she was acting as a mere satelite of India, but her stand on the Kampuchean and the Afgan issues clearly demanstrates her determination to pursue her own foreign policy independently of India. It may be recalled that Bhutan, unlike India, voted for the U.N. resolutions denouncing military intervention in Kampuchea and Afganisthan by Vietnam and the USSR respectively. Bhutan has thus successfully consolidated her sovereignty vis-a-vis her special relationship with India. She has already opened diplomatic missions on reciprocal basis in several countries on her own without regard to the Indo-Bhutanese Treaty of 1949. Bhutan has also been continuing bilateral dialogue with the People's Republic of China over their outstanding border disputes and as many as eleven rounds of formal talks have already been held without the presence of India in those talks.[11] Similarly, Bhutan, in exercise of her full sovereignty, became member of various international and regional organisations, including the NAM and the SAARC, thus constantly demonstrating her status as a fully sovereign nation state.

II

Problem of Security and National Integration

During 1907 - 1957 Bhutan did not face any real external threat to her security. The happenings in Tibet in 1959 and the great repercussions that followed raised a serious question mark agaisnt Bhutan's security. The cartographical war started by China showing over 300 square kilometres of Bhutanese territory as that of China in the Chinese maps

enlivened Bhutan to its security needs. The Bhutanese Prime Minister approached New Delhi for acquisition of arms and ammunitions to equip the Royal Bhutanese Army[12]. Though the Indian response to Bhutan's request for arms was practically a nought, the Indian Prime Minister declered in the Lok Sabha in August 1959 that Bhutan's defence under the Treaty of 1949 was a responsibility of India[13]. However, as pointed out earlier, after the Sino-Indian war of 1962, the Bhutanese monarch declared that his Government perceived no threat to her security from China, and also he disputed the stand taken by the Indian Prime Minister that India was, under Treaty obligation, responsible for Bhutan's defence. Bhutan realised that with an army of only ten thousand men and officers she can hardly defend her territory and that she is to pursue her security through the UN system only. She therefore decided to seek membership of the UNO and with Indian help got it in 1971.

Bhutan, having succeeded in getting herself admitted to the UNO and also being assured of her territorial integrity by India and China, does no longer perceive any external threat to her security. However, security is still a potential problem for Bhutan which has a far reaching bearing on national integration in the multi-ethnic kingdom[14]. The inhabitants of Southern Bhutan are almost entirely Nepalese spesking who have or whose ancestors had migrated to Bhutan during the course of the last one hundred years or so. The Nepalese in Bhutan now constitute over one - fourth of the kingdom's population. It was as early as 1908 that these people were identified to be potential sources of instability for the country. In this connection, the Viceroy of India had the following observation to make :

.... it (Bhutan) is fast becoming a Nepalese state. Already three - quarters of the population of Sikkim are Nepalese and the Gurkhas who are multiplying fast are streaming over into vacant places of Bhutan[15].

The Government of Bhutan was alive to this problem but she has got ever more alarmed since Sikkim's integration with India in 1975 for which the Nepalese of Sikkim, who had outnumbered the "sons of the soil" there in the erstwhile Himalayan kingdom, were held entirely responsible. The Nepali proposal, albeit abortive, for a Himalayan Confederation which was to include Bhutan, and the recent political designs and activities of the Gorkha National Liberation Front in areas

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adjoining Bhutan have further aggravated the kingdom's ethnic problem[16]. The Drukpas, till now the dominant group in Bhutan, fear that they might soon be outnumbered by the Lhotshampas (Bhutanese citizens of Nepalese origin). Therefore, His Majisty's Government, on the one hand, have been purshing the process of integration of the Lhotshampas and on the other hand, have imposed stringent measures upon them.

The Government of Bhutan have granted citizenship to a large number of Nepalese living in southern Bhutan and encourraged intermarriage between them and the Drukpas by offering such incentives as land settlement, government jobs and even cash awards to such couples. The Nepaliese language has been recognised as an official language of Bhutan and the Nepaliese festival called *Dashain* has also been declared a national festival of the kingdom where Drukpa Kargyupa (a Mahayana sect of Buddhism) is the state religion. Large number of schools and hospitals and other public utilities have also been set up for these southerners[17].

However, the Lhotshampas feel that they have been given the status of second class citizens in the kingdom. This feeling has been further intensified by certain harsh measures adopted by the Government against citizens of Nepalese origin. The Government have imposed certain rigorous restrictions on the settlement of Nepalese beyond southern Bhutan. The citizenship Act, 1958 was also drastically amended in 1977 and 1985. But by far the most stringest measure adopted against Nepalese inhabitants was the expulsion of several thousand of them from the kingdom in 1987 and 1988. This action has created a great commotion in sourhern Bhutan. It has been alleged that over a lakh of Bhutanese nationals of Nepalese origin were forcibly evicted by the Government and that these people have since then been residing in refugee camps set up in India and Nepal. This problem has attracted the attention of Human Rights activists as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The Government of Bhutan, however, have altogether a different perception of the recent ethnic problem. To them, it is a problem of immigration of non-nationals and therefore a fit case for the Government to intervene as per law of the land. Lynpo Dago Tshering, Home Minister

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of Bhutan, has recently informed the Tsogdu that with a view to executing development programmes under the Five Year Plans since 1961 as many as 113,000 non-nationals, most of them being Nepalese, were recruited from Nepal by "baiders" (labour contractors). He further stated that on the directives of His Majesty the King and the cabinet, a great effort was made to reduce the number of imported workers and many were sent back along with labourers reduced from the Penden Cement and Chukha Hydel Projects[18]. Dwelling on the controversial refugee problem, the Home Minister stated on the floor of the Tsogdu as follows :

> The non-national labourers all left the country and returned home and made no complaints being forcefully evicted. Nor did they claim to be Bhutanese refugees until four years later[19].

The Minister pointed out that there were only 304 Bhutanese refugees in September 1991, when the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees started an assistance programme in eastern Nepal on the request of the Nepalese Government. Rejecting the claim that there are at present over one lakh Bhutanese citizens in the refugee camps, the Home Minister firmly maintanined that once the refugee camps were established and all kinds of assistance, such as, housing, monthly rations, health and education facilities were provided, the number of so-called refugees escalated because ethnic Nepalese flocked to Jhapa camp claiming to be Bhutanese nationals[20].

It may be mentioned here that several rounds of talks have been held between Kathmandu and Thimphu, but no final settlement of the refugee problem has been reached as yet. On the other hand, this problem has been further complicated by two recent developments.

First, the Tsogdu has branded the refugees as Ngolops (anti-nationals) and hence a source of insecurity for Bhutan. The Tsogdu therefore has called upon the government to halt employment of Nepalese nationals in Bhutan forthwith. Besides, the Tsodgu has also asked the Government to dismiss all those civil servants whose relatives left the kingdom for Nepal. Reportedly several Civil Servants falling in the aforestated category have been harrassed by the Government. This would surely alienate a section of the Lhotshampas further from the Bhutanese mainstream.

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Second, in 1994 three political parties of Bhutan, including the one having support bases in southern Bhutan formed an organisation called the United Front for Democracy in Bhutan to agitate for democratisation of the kingdom. Incidently the leaders of the Front, including its chairman, R.Kunley Dorje who happens to be a Drukpa, have been living in Nepal. In fact, the movement for democracy in Bhutan is being carried on mostly from the Nepalese soil. This has given a lever to the Government to pull against the pro-democracy agitation which is perceived by the Bhutanese ruling class as a security threat. In May this year the New Delhi police arrested the chairman of the Front against whom extradition process has already been started.

These developments have hardened the attitude of the Bhutanese Government toward the chronic ethnic problem of southern Bhutan and it has affected the process of national integration to a considerable extent. However, the King of Bhutan has been exerting a moderating influence upon the Tsogdu, the kingdom's highest law-making body, as well as the cabinet in their dealing with this sensitive ethnic problem. A quick land settlement programme in southern Bhutan has been recently initiated and about 10,000 applications are being processed by the administration. The King has also issued strict instructions to all concerned functionaries of the Government not to harrass any Lhotspampa on mere suspicion of being a Ngolop. However, the efficacy at these measures depends largely on the solution of the vexed refugee problem as well as further democratisation of the kingdom's political system.

<div align="center">III</div>

Stability Through Economic Development

Bhutan is one of the poorest countries of the world. Its economy is predominantly agrarian. According to an estimate, 95 per cent of her population are engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishing although only 9 per cent of the kingdom's land is under cultivation. Its GNP in 1967 was hardly US $ 83 per head. But she does not have sufficient resources of her own in terms of funds and human resources to undertake the task of economic development which is a must for her stability. The King, while having been convinced of the urgent need to undertake planned development of his kingdom to ensure political stability,

initially moved the Indian Government for an increase in the annual subsidy since it could be freely used with little outside control. But India was only in favour of granting economic aids for specific projects. This was made abundantly clear to the Druk Gyalpo (king) by the Indian Prime Minister during his visit to Bhutan in 1958.

After a great deal of persuation, Bhutan agreed to sign the Jaldhaka Hydel Project in November 1959. Two years later, Bhutan adopted the First Five Year Plan (1961-66) with a total outlay of NU 10.72 crore. It may be noted that Bhutan's annual income in 1963 was at best NU. 50 lakh (excluding the revenue paid in kind). Foreign aids, other than those from India, were not at all available to her during those days. So the first two Five Year Plans of Bhutan were entirely funded by India. But absolute dependence on India made Bhutan absolutely uneasy, and India's offer for continuous aids for her planned development was looked upon with suspicion. Therefore she has been making since 1971 serious efforts to diversify the sources of funds for implementation of her development projects and she has succeeded in her attampts to reduce gradually her dependence on India since them. Indian aids constituted about 89.9, 77.1, 57.0 and 49.0 per cent of the Plan outlays of the Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Five Year Plans respectively. However, India still continues to be Bhutan's largest aid giver. In resonse to Bhutan's request for increased aids for the Eighth Five Year Plan which is being launched shortly, India has agreed to continue to be Bhutan's main development partner. Accordingly, project-tied assistance from India would cover such areas as power, roads and bridges, agriculture, social sector, urban settlement, civil aviation and human resource development in the Eighth Five Year Plan period[21]. In addition, India would continue to provide funds for the spill-over projects of the previous plan.

During the first two plans, Bhutan built up a large network of schools and training institutes with a view to providing necessary inputs for development of her human resources. It was only from the Third Plan that the tempo of economic development started accelerating. Today Bhutan has a fully operational cement plant at Penden and another has been built at Nanglam. Over 400 units of small scale industry have also been developed in the kingdom which produce industrial intermediaries as well as consumer goods.

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By far the most important development projects undertaken in the kingdom are in the power sector. India has already handed over the onwership of the 336 MW Chukha Hydel Project, the first mega project of its kind, to the Bhutanese Government this year. The project was built with an Indian investment of Rs. 246 crore. Three more major Hydel Projects are lined up for execution with Indian funds of Rs. 8000 crore (60 per cent as grants and 40 per cent as soft loans) in order to harness 2100 MW[22]. These would be (i) the Tala Hydro-electric Project with a capacity of 1020 MW, (ii) the Wangehu Reservior Scheme (900 MW) and (iii) the Punakha Reservior Scheme (180 MW). These three projects are being undertaken to help Bhutan develop its economy. As per the MoU, India purchases the surplus power to the Chukha Hydel Project to meet its peaking power demand. It thus generates a substantial income for Bhutan. In fact, after commisioning of the Chukha Project, the per capita income in Bhutan has gone up to US $ 470, during the curent year as against US $ 160 in 1985[23].

Besides India, Denmark and Sweden have been assisting Bhutan in its developmental activities since early seventies. Denmark has last year approved NU. 89.79 million to Bhutan for development of its media so as to accelerate the process of modernisation in the kingdom[24]. Japan has also participated in Bhutan's development projects in a big way. Last year Japan sanctioned aids to Bhutan amounting to US $ 557 million for road construction and US $ 50 thousand for introduction of computer science in High schools. She also committed to Bhutan 4.378 billion Yens, of which 2 billion Yens would be utilised for agricultural development, while the rest for development of tele-communication in western Bhutan[25]. The European Union also have committed substantial aids to Bhutan for development of her rural sector, particularly in the field of agriculture, water supply, sanitation and conservation.

Bhutan also got the UN system involved in the process of her economic development long ago. Her initial contacts with the UN family were with the UNICEF in 1973 whose programmes covered the period from 1974 to 1978. UNDP Funds got operationally involved in 1974 and FAO executed 33 per cent of these projects in the kingdom. WFP's activities in Bhutan have been mainly in the field of improvement in nutrition of school children, while ILO activities covered technical education and training. The WHO was involved in the development of

health services of the kingdom. UNIDO and UNESCO also participated in Bhutan's development projects. While the UNDP Funds continue to be the major UN system source for Bhutan's development activities, funds have also been mobilised from the Special Measures Funds for Least Developed Countries as well as the Land-locked Countrie's Funds. Besides these sources, funds were received by Bhutan from the Colombo Plan and the Asian Development Bank.

In fine, it may be submitted that Bhutan has, through a series of diplomatic exercises, succeeded in asserting her full soveregnty vis-a-vis her Special Relationship with India under Indo-Bhutanese Treaty of Friendship signed in 1949. Bhutan has also achieved remarkable success in her efforts for planned economic development, and also in diversifying the sources of funds for her development projects so as to reduce her dependence on India. All this augurs well for the kingdom's nation - building process. However, she is yet to get over from the ethnic problem she has been facing in the South despite several initiatives taken by the King and his Government.

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11. Since India's defence interests are also involved in the Sino-Bhutanese border disputes, it is possible that India might have pulled the strings from behind the screen for which no solution has emerged even after eleven rounds of "cordial" bilateral talks.

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13. Lok Sabha Debate, 25 August, 1959.

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TRUTH AND DISTORTION : A CRITICAL NOTE ON THE STUDY OF CERTAIN ASPECTS OF SOCIAL REALITY

Dhiren Bhagawati

Truth is what corresponds to the objective reality. Objective reality is not given, fixed, determinate and immutable[1]. But it is forward looking despite of occasional reactionery pulls around it and, generally speaking, it is irreversible. Human knowledge not only grasps it but also changes it. Human knowledge is not absolute, it is conditioned by the historical situation. There is continuous interaction between human knowledge and objective reality on the basis of which existing knowledge is enriched[2]. That also is the basis of truth because the truth is what really exists through one's observation and conceptualization. Truth is also interpreted on the basis of our consciousness as if truth exists in the consciousness. Consciousness applies criteria to interprete the reality and these criteria have possibility of distorting the truth if the consciousness does not arise from its material basis[3]. Here arises the need of redemption of one's consciousness from subjective situation to reach at objective reality. If consciousness can transcend the limitations imposed by one's position in a subjective situation and can correctly evaluate the historical forces and the trends they set in operation it is possible for consciousness to redeem itself and can approximate the truth of objective reality. History and civilizations have created enough ideologies to suppress the truth.

Any critical interpretation of social reality may not approximate the objective reality and may fall short of the truth. Still it has its value so far it intends to overcome the subjective limitation and appreciate the dynamics of objective reality. However, if dynamics are interpreted with a purpose to stall them and manipulate them for perpetuating one's own interests or to strengthen the dominant ideologies of the time ignoring the historical compulsions, that amounts to distortion of the

truth. In the study of social reality social scientists face several serious problems. A social movement is progressive or regressive or a digression is to be judged. Whether it is a conservative or reactionery movement is to be decided. What should be the criteria for such judgement ? A basic consideration may be the size of people or number of social groups that the movement is likely to affect. If the movement is likely to affect the greatest number of groups or people in a society and affect them beneficially, the movement is to be evaluated as progressive. Again, the problem of interpretation of benefit accrued from the movement arises. The current wave of liberalization is interpreted to bring benefits to the masses in terms of economic prosperity, material production, luxuries and progress of communication. It certainly affects society in a large scale. But it has failed to bring material prosperity and spritual happiness to the largest portion of society in an equal term. But evils it created affect almost all equally. How wise would it be to call such a wave progressive ?

A social movement may affect a group alone in a plurality of situation and it wants to bring the group on a par with other groups of the society, the movement has progressive elements provided that it does not become a revivalist movement of the group or it does not aim at creating domination over other groups. Domination is a denial of freedom and any movement that implies denial of freedom is reactionery. Recent history has proved that domination of one group cannot be substituted by a domination of another group even for a temporary period as it is likely to be a permanent phenomenon. A word of caution about freedom is warranted here that freedom implies positive freedom alone. Even as an ideal a society without domination guards against possible danger.

A social movement may attempt a united effort of several groups of similar socio-economic situation to make a better deal for all the groups encompassed by the movement and the movement is progressive provided again it does not include or exclude groups on consideration of conditions other than that having a direct bearing on the very purpose of the movement. In fact, a movement is evaluated on the basis of its purpose, whether the purpose is freedom or domination, progress or status quo. But it is not that simple. For example the Indian National Congress in the 1930's was a movement for freedom and it incorporated

progressive ideologies. In Assam the Congress was dominated by the high caste elite of the Assamese middle class while the majority of people consisting of the tribals, the Muslims and other ethnic groups remained outside the ambit of the Congress. On the other hand, these groups attempted to form a common forum[4]. Had it been successful it would have changed the future course of Assam's politics. However, the purpose of the common forum was to fight the domination of certain sections in the society. It is not the purpose alone but also the possible consequences of a movement which are to be calculated in its evaluation.

A social movement in its course may lose track of its purpose and it may lead to its distortion or degeneration. The Congress in its progress from 1885 to 1997 showed its degeneration[5] and the Communist movement in China since the death of Mao was a case of distortion[6]. Distortion and degeneration of a movement occur for several reasons. Compromises with its ideologies at different occasions lead ultimately to degeneration. Restructuring of the party for ulterior motive of the leader may also bring the ruins of the party. Soviet Union under Stalin was an example. Passing of a leader around whose charisma a movement developed may lead to its distortion. A movement for its internal weakness cannot withstand stronger ideologies from the external environment and it collapses. A social scientist being attached to a social movement at any stage of its development may find it difficult to detach himself from the movement to appreciate its degeneration or distortion. It is desirable on the part of social scientists to follow a measure of exclusion from all organised movements in spite of their strong commitment to the ideals of such movements. This needs not violate the theory of praxis.

Very often a social movement may resort to myths-making to stir the mind of the masses. The social scientist needs to explode such myths. Although myths cannot sustain interests of the masses in the movement for long, still it can mislead the masses before they are disillusioned. A social movement with a mass basis may prove to be reactionery if it has to thrive on myths. It is not myths but issues on which a movement sustains popular support. What are the issues that a social movement focusses its attention and how these issues are likely to affect the life of the common human-beings is a major criterion to evaluate a social movement. But issues are not articulated in a vacuum.

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How the elite perceive the reality, what criteria they apply to interpret it determine the nature of issues that a movement articulates. Ideologies represent the class interests of the elite. Class analysis of a social movement remains inevitable whether one likes it or not. It alone can approach the material basis of ideologies, it alone can unveil the other forms that camouflage social relations.

Certain issues are superimposed on the class relation. The problem of identity is such an example. Identity is affiliation of an individual to a group based on race, language, culture tribe etc. which are given at birth[7]. The process of modernization and technology are often weak enough to assimilate these identities and domination takes the line of the affiliation to what is given at birth or otherwise acquired. The problem of identity rises supreme. Again imperialism when challenged by its internal crises or radically opponent ideologies, aroused racial issues in the thirties and the ethnic issues in the eighties in the world which now witnessed a worldwide upsurge of ethnic regeneration. Implication is not that ethnic identities are not real issues but they are to be understood only in the context of historical situation. When the changes are very rapid and even radical, a part of the tradition may survive[8]. Ideologies representing the part of the tradition is protected and promoted to challenge the new order, Tibet is an illustration.

Issues which are to be resolved at the civil society level are carried over to the state level because of fragile nature of the civil society or even for its non-existence. Issues overtake the society. Crisis of ethnic identity is manifest in those societies where civil society did not take shape or its nascent form was distorted by the political leadership. It is not building of state but civil society that is necessary9. The conflict between identity and integration is a conflict between the traditional order and the imperialist forces which can be overcome by a united struggle of the masses. The struggle is to be carried at the civil society level. Forces of expansion and domination in such a situation are the imperialist forces whether they are represented by international capitalism, national capitalism or regional middle class. Cultural affinities among them have already transcended the national boundaries of sovereign states.

Social organizations and movements tend to be pervaded by pursuit of domination. An aspect of the domination is patriarchy of male over

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female. The very purpose of domination is appropriation of labour of those who are dominated. Women's movement for liberation and equal share in power both at private and public spheres of human life is a part of the struggle for human emancipation. But the purpose is defeated if it turns into an attempt by the women of the most advanced and privileged sections of society to perpetuate their domination over the other sections. Like the dominant elite who are ever eager to enlist the support of other groups by accomodating certain sections of them into its fold, the women's movements of the dominant elite identify their interests with the interests of the women of all sections of society only to perpetuate their domination in society. In the study of women's movements also issues articulated and ideologies underlying the issues are to be analysed. Women's liberation strugggle cannot keep aloof from the common struggle of depressed classes of society and it cannot be for mere gaining middle class benefits like reservation of seats in elected bodies. It is to be organized at the grassroots level and for a radical alteration of relations of domination.

Public policy is an effective means for approaching social conflict but only in a situation where the ruling elite is ideologically committed to radical changes in social relations. In other situations public policy manifests the compromises made by the elite to perpetuate power or exigenecies of the situation. Unless the structural changes are recommended, mere changes in the public policy cannot be expected to achieve anything. Public policy in China or erstwhile Soviet Union, was concommittant of structural changes. The policies of the tribal belts and the blocks initiated by the political leadership of Assam in the fifties could not anticipate the tribal non-tribal relations in those areas even two decades latter. It is most pertaining to see where from public policy emanates and what ideologies back such policy.

We could very often find fault with the western analysts in their examination of Indian situation with their western perspectives. Such is the case with analyst of one situation of the country examining social reality of another situation with the perspective ingrained in a different situation. A society which is at best an ensemble of precapitalist social formations is not expected to possess the cohesion achieved by a society of capitalistic formations[10]. A concept which is modified, abstracted and even mystified to define a reality under evaluation does not even

help understand it. To be aware of the historical processes underlying social transformations is the primary requisite of social scientists, no abstraction can substitute for it.

The question of individual's identity with groups based on ethnicity, tribe, religion, language, culture, and his loyalty to the state is a product of historical situation. Conflict among them does not arise if they are historically placed. Historical forces rationalize them by replacing one by another. If a state is superimposed on people before they form into a nation, a nation is superimposed on people still under formation of nationalities[11] and nationalities are super-imposed on ethnic and tribal identities not yet prepared for a process of assimilation for the formation of a nationality, conflict assumes an alarming proportion. To suggest that there can be harmonious loyalty between an ethnic group and a national state overriding the middle ranged social formations like nationality or linguistic-cultural community is to run ahead of the course of history. The concept of a nation state has already been challenged in India[12]. It is entirely different story that middle ranged groups of identities are dominated by sectarian elite. In that case there is the need of a common struggle among the smaller identities to replace the hegemony of the sectarian elite. The baby is not to be thrown with bath water.

A distinction is to be made between the issue of backwardness of a group and the issue of sharing political power by the elite of the group with other elites. When the elites in the ethnic and tribal groups emerged in Assam they articulated the issue of backwardness to protest against the monopoly of power by the high caste Assamese middle class. In the same way the elites of the hill tribes articulated in the sixties against imposition of Assamese language on them but their basic concern was refusal of the Assamese elite to share power with them[13]. Power itself is not an autonomous factor. Power means control over state which establishes control over land, resources and jobs under the state when state was the chief employer for the middle class and the sole arbiter of a host of other conditions. In a situation where no mode of economy is dominant state plays the role of ultimate determinant of social transformation. If the political leadership controlling the state is devoid of appropriate ideologies social transformation becomes an uphill task. Social scientists need to explore these possibilities. Social scientists

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need to explore if circulation of elite in politics brings any alteration of social conditions and human relations. It is also to be explored if backwardness is an associational rather than a causal factor of ethnic tribal, caste, religious, linguistic identities and if backwardness is a common trait of certain socio-economic conditions.

Religion has been used in a very progressive way in a society like Iran to bring about a radical change of social relations. Religion was used by Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan (Bhasani) in Assam to organize the poor depressed sections of peasentry against the landlords[14]. Still the pursuit of religious cohesion and identity whether by the majority or minority communities has certain inherent limitations. It weakens the cause of a common struggle of the depressed sections of society for emancipation. It is necessary to investigate socio-economic factors responsible for the outburst of communal troubles. Injustice is done to the suffering of the immigrant settlers in Assam if their suffering is given religious colour[15].

Identity assertion as the function of elite formation in a group has become a common place among the social scientists. If every human being is an 'ensemble of social relations' (in Gramsci's words) human beings donot merely interact but also try to change the interrelation among them and thereby they change themselves and the society at large. It is not merely elite formation and interaction among elites but perceptions of the elites more importantly about group relations that determine the identity assertion of groups. Ideologies of the elite play the decisive role in identity assertion. Let me conclude with a suggestion that the approach to identity politics be informed with a desire for criticism of the group with which one is identified so that a meaningful discourse with the "others" can develop.

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PERSONALITY FACTOR IN NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT - A CASE STUDY OF BELGRADE NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE, 1961

Adil-Ul-Yasin

Foreign policy making is a highly sophisticated and arduous task which is generally handled by the key decision makers who are mostly elected leaders and sometimes they are also highly placed bureaucrats. Their perception of the world politics play the vital role in shaping the foreign policy of their respective countries. It is important to observe how these people see this world. In this context Bruce Russett and Harvey Starr Comment that : "An individual's idiosyncracies are made up of values, personality, political style, intellect and past experience. They work together, creating the individual set of images about the world or the belief system"[1].

In any international conference, a group of persons generally became very active in providing some kind of collective leadership and thus become prominent among all other participants. They actively advance proposals, counter proposals representing their point of view and aim at scoring diplomatic victory over others. In this process, they usually clash with each other, as all of them cannot invariably have a single opinion or single approach to international politics. An analysis of the role of Nasser, Nehru, Tito and Nkrumah in Non-aligned conference of Belgrade in 1961 will show that they had different approaches to and perceptions about international politics despite their commonly held view on non-alignment. In this paper, an attempt has been made to emphasise more on Nehru's perception of the world and his relations with other leading personalities of the world like Soekarno, Tito, Nasser and Nkrumah in the Belgrade conference of 1961.

All these leaders for their own reasons wanted to give a shape to the non-aligned movement in an international conference. Soekarno of Indonesia wanted to popularise through a non-aligned meet his new

concept of foreign policy designed to internationalise the struggle against the emerging forces of colonialism and neo-colonialism and to propagate his ideas of 'guided democracy'. Because of the political support and strength he had been enjoying in his country, he came with great confidence that his strong political position in his country would give credence to propagate his ideas of foreign policy in an international forum[2].

The basic objective of Jawaharlal Nehru's participation in the Belgrade conference was to persuade the non-aligned nations to give more importance to the problems of war and peace and to bring the two superpowers to a negotiating table. From the begining to the end, he was skeptical about the achievement of the conference and therefore, was a reluctant admirer of its proceedings[3].

Marshall Joseph Tito of Yugoslavia had a particular reason to be interested in non-aligned conference. At that time, Yugoslavia was an outcast in the Soviet led socialist world. Therefore, Tito wanted to secure a place of importance in the third world and to make his brand of communism acceptable to these countries[4].

President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt was keen on the establishment of his position as the spokesman of the Arab world. At Belgrade, Nasser wanted to exert his position by taking up the Arab cause, more particularly, the cause of the people of palestine[5].

Nkrumah of Ghana wanted to gain acceptance as the undisputed leader of the African people. He tried to project himself as a very militant spokesman against colonialism and imperialism. Nkrumah's expectation was that the Belgrade conference would offer him a rare occasion to project his concepts of militant non-alignment[6].

Thus, different leaders came to the Belgrade non-aligned conference with different motives and views. Naturally, there was clash of personality which invariably reflected in the proceedings of the conference.

Nehru / Soekarno

The views of Nehru and Soekarno were diametrically opposite and the schism started between these two leaders from the very beginning of the conference. Before the Belgrade conference, Soekarno was pleading for an Afro-Asian conference but his long cherished desire to

host second Afro-Asian conference was shattered due to Nehru's opposition. The Indian Prime minister did not give his consent and made it clear to Soekarno that such a conference would not bring benefit to the world. These rebuffs as well as the unpleasant recollections of Nehru's 'big brotherly' behaviour at the Bandung conference impelled him to take a different course of action at the Belgrade conference. Laying great stress on the problem of colonialism, he challenged Nehru's line of thiking of war and peace and become the spokesman of the militant group. Soekarno was greatly upset and offended when Nehru gave secondary importance to colonialism. Soekarno displayed bad temper to Nehru immediately after his speech[7]. The difference of views between these two Asian leaders unfortunately created two groups. One was 'militant' and other was 'moderate'. Soekarno gave new interpretation of non-alignment which was contrary to the one given by Nehru. The result was, after the Belgrade conference, the friendly relations between the two countries became cool.

Nehru/Nasser

The relationship between Nasser and Nehru was close and friendly[8]. It is also true that, Nasser, a man of 'conviction' and 'action' had sometimes differed with Nehru, a man of 'intellectual articulation' and 'hesitation'[9]. These differences of approach to the world problems manifested at the Belgrade conference. In his speech, Nasser outrightly condemned the western military forces in different parts of the world, neo-colonialism, the use of NATO weapons by France against the people of Algeria. While Nasser was in favour of condemning the evil forces of colonialism in strong language, Nehru did not even use harsh language against any power not even China and Pakistan, despite the fact that India's relatins with the both neighbours had been not friendly at that time. While Nehru did not talk in terms of war as the instruments of settling India's disputs with these two countries, Nasser's policy was to wage a war with the state of Israel. Nasser considered that Nehru had been talking about the problem he had and not about action[10]. Nehru was inclined to interpret non-alignment policy in terms of moral principles which Nasser did not like to profess. Nehru wanted to play as a mediator between the East and the West and also in the Middle East crisis. Nasser was reluctant to play the role of a mediator. On the settlement of the Middle East crisis, Nasser was for a decisive arms conflict with Israel in order to recapture the land for the people of Palestine.

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Both Nehru and Nasser maintained that non-alignment did not mean mere moral neutrality. Both of them believed that this creed in international politics had positive actions without being involved in the bloc arrangements.

Nehru/Nkrumah

At Belgrade, Nehru faced strong opposition from the Ghananian leader Nkrumah on every issue. Nkrumah's difference with Nehru was stronger than the other three non-aligned leaders. Nkrumah's dream for a leader of united Africa had received a set back because of the lack of support from India for convening the non-aligned conference at Accra.

Nkrumah did not like the idea of cold war mediation by the non-aligned leaders. He was interested in neutral 'third force'. Nehru totally disagreed with the idea of third force. Nehru argued that the formation of the third force would increase international tension and would create more problems rather than ease the current situation and hence, it would go against the basic principle of the non-aligned movement. Further, Nehru clarified that these non-aligned countries lacked military strength and it would be difficult for them to impose their ideas on the great powers[11]. On the other hand, Nkrumah considered that the third force would strengthen the movement of positive neutralism, the other name of non-alignment[12]. Nehru's differences with Nkrumah particularly antagonised the African countries like Mali and Guinea. The African leaders had been expecting a strong anticolonial stand from India. But Nehru's utterance on colonialism, "colonialism was a dead horse" laid an impression in their mind that India would not continue to support the liberation struggle of the African countries. In order to dispel the doubt about India's anti-colonial stand. Nehru took prompt action to liberate Goa from the Portugese domination. V.K. Krishna Menon, the famous Indian statesman, observed that the Indian action in Goa was essentially taken to disabuse the doubt in the minds of the African leaders about the Indian stand on colonialism[13].

Nehru/Tito

Tito had carried with him the communist background and his socialist commitment made him sympathetic to the African nationalist movements. Nehru, it was alleged, on the other hand was giving a 'right' and 'conservative' direction to the conference[14]. Tito was more anti-West than Nehru. While Tito was not in favour of playing the role of a

mediator, Nehru was keen on bringing the two great powers to a negotiating table. Later on, however, Nehru realised that his mediatory role was not approved by most of his friends. At the initial stage, Nehru was a reluctant admirer of the conference but Tito was very enthusiastic to host the conference, firstly to build up his image in the third world countries, and secondly, to remove the suspicion of some of the non-aligned nations towards the communist countries as well as to draw the attention of the communist countries to the non-aligned nations[15].

Despite these minor differences between Tito and Nehru, both shared certain common fundamental views-the non-aligned nations must not form the third force, rather these nations should try to strengthen their mutual relations in order to make the movement a strong force in international politics.

Epilogue

Among these five leaders, Nehru, Nasser and Tito were more akin to each others views. They believe in quiet diplomacy more or less conciliatory but the rest two (Soekarno and Nkrumah) were more radicals and believed in open confortation with the West. It was also true that each of them aspired to a position of importance and leadership in international affairs.

The Belgrade conference initiated for India a moderate role in the movement. By taking a position to profess the ideas of peace and to voice against war, Nehru showed a moderate temper as against high pitched emotions of the African delegates condemning the west and colonialism. Ultimately, it was found that the non-aligned group was divided into two distinct sects - one taking a moderate stand on most of the international issues and this group was led by Nehru and supported by Nasser and Tito, and the other group led by Soekarno could be identified as militants. "The differences", writes Lefever, "among the neutralists are differences of emphasis and style, for each moulds his public philosophy to his personality and to his political and cultural setting and each adopts his policy to changing circumstances inside and outside his country"[16].

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4. Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Non-aligned world*. (Princeton, 1970) p. 105.

5. Hrair Delemajian, *Egypt under Nasir* : A Study of Political Dynamisn. (London 1971) pp. 108-113.

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7. Ide Anak reported this incident "He (Seokarno) was so emotionally affected that when the Indian prime minister finished his speech and returned to his seat which was next to the Indonesian delegation; he angrily rebuked the Indian premier, saying "Mr. Nehru are you not going to break the conference, are you ? 'But Nehru did not show any reaction, for the same reason of not making the antagonism between the two leaders worse then it was. For details of Nehru, - Soekarno clash, see Ide Anuk Agung, *Twenty Years of Indonesian Foeign Policy*. (The Netherlands, 1973) p. 323.

8. Nasser enjoyed Nehru's company. He was a great admirer of Nehru. Nasser commented, "It was pandit Nehru, one of the world's leaders whom I admire most, who was to be of the greatest help to us. One of his visits to cairo, we took a boat on the river Nile and for five hours we discussed his own experiences in India" quoted in Peter Mansfield, *Nasser*. (London, 1969) p. 97. See also Robert Stephen, *Nasser* (London, 1971) p. 303.

9. Mohammad Heikal, *Cario documents* (London, 1972) p. 251.

10. See Peter Lyon, *Neutralism* (Bombay - 1964) p. 160. Mohammad Heikel observed. "Nasser was big and strong, a man of action. Nehru was slight and fragile; a man of thought" Mohammad Heikel, *op.cit.* p. 251.

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12. Krishna Menon stated that Nkrumah did not use the word non alignment. Nkrumah was trying to popularise the term positive neutralism. Michael Brecher, *India and the World Politics; Krishna Menon's Views of the World* (London - 1968) p. 7.

13. Michael Brecher, *op.cit*, p. 136.

14. David Ross "The Belgrade Conference", *New Left Review* (London) No. 12 (November - December, 1961) p. 15.

15. Rubinstein succinctly describes the differences between these two non-aligned leaders : "Tito, the croatian metal worker, accomplished what Nehru, the Brahmin aristocrat, thought beyond reach; the vitalization of non-alignment, Tito made non-alignment a serious factor in international politics. The two men differed in outlook, termperament and aspiration". See Alvin Rubinstein, *op.cit.*, pp. 115-116.

16. Ernest W. Lefever. *op.cit.* p. 94.

POTENTIALITIES OF CONFLICT GENERATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN PLURALISTIC AND PLURAL SOCIETIES

Archana Upadhyay

It is common knowledge that the process of development in the so called peripheral areas of the international system is becoming more and more conflictual. Nevertheless, this growing intensity of conflict could be only partially attributed to the regionalization and fragmentation of World economy and World politics after the end of the 'Cold War'.

The main reason for accumulating controversies seems to be the growing complexity of modern developing societies not adequately accompanied by evolving modern institutions and mechanisms of conflict management. As is known, these conflicts arise from both economic and non-economic contradictions.

In this context, it becomes necessary to distinguish the two types of complex societies namely : "Plural" and "Pluralistic". "Plural" and "Pluralistic" societies can be united into a sort of entity by a number of features framing the polycentric configuration of society in terms of economic/political interests, various ethnic groups, co-existing religions or denominations, etc. and shaping the correlation of most active and politically significant forces in the country. The terms "Plural" and "Pluralistic" are more fixations of different levels of maturity of such key elements as national economies, institutions (economic, social, political, financial), civil society, vertical and horizontal integration, existence of commonly accepted norms of political discourse and voting behaviour and so on.

"Pluralistic" societies are those where non-economic interests and controversies (confessional and/or ethnic) are effectively dominated by contradictions accompanying the evolution of industrialised societies

(professional, interregional, industry vs agriculture etc.). In the final analysis, the political process is framed and shaped by a powerful counter-balance of forces of societal integration, namely civil society, structuring the socium vertically and horizontally as well as modern economic, financial, political and social institutions integrating various economic and non-economic interests. In advanced societies "sectional" (ethnic, denominational etc.) interests being a manifestation of a struggle for resources of the state between interest groups is a driving force of a positive modification of the existing political order. No doubt, this modification sometimes results in a more or less substantial revision of the basic principles regulating the operation of a political system.

In advanced societies divided by ethnic and/or denominational cleavages, pluralist democracy can survive in case the respective society follows a particular political model, often addressed as "consociational democracy"[1]. Consociationalism is supposed to unite disparate groupings within society by permitting politically articulate factions representing multiple "sectional" interests (ethnic, denominational, tribal - in less developed areas) to share power at national level with leaders of other parties and groups. Thus, by joining relatively broad based coalitions, and modifying and containing societal fragmentation and unrest, fragmented but stable democracies can be achieved.

Within the consociational model, social fragmentation and fissiparous tendencies could to a certain degree be contained by certain counter balancing forces, namely :

- Universal education, nurturing a more rationalist view of mankind, widening intellectual and cultural horizons, promoting tolerance to opposing views and a better understanding of the sound foundations of society;

- the operation of a sophisticated network of communication and information exchange integrating society vertically and horizontally;

- the passing of traditional society in the sense that the citizency participates in national politics directly not through the mediation of the traditional influentials : local notables, literates and numerous brokers of various sorts;

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- standardisation, formalisation and the imposition of a sense of punctuality and discipline as paramount principles shaping popular value orientations and consequently, regulating social motivations, political culture and voting behaviour;

- industrialisation and urbanisation as a continuing process of migration and absorption of new arrivals by modern institutions and, also, a powerful force widening intellectual horizons of human beings and structuring the field of mass politics;

- subsumption of the conflict between ethnic diversity/confessional plurality and political unification under the controversy over political representation as a force facilitating communication in a wider national context.

As political manifestation of non-economic pluralism, consociationalism does appear to override the dominant set of values, rituals and institutions which tend to favour the vested interest of one or more groups, relative to another. However, the key issue here is not the undemocratic nature but the potential failure of consociationalism to bring about and maintain political stability.

The term 'nation-state' is used very loosely in the mainstream non-Marxist literature. Most of the states, like Russia and India, are actually multi-national states. The rise of bourgeois nationalism in the post-Enlightenment period, led to the conflation of nation and state, which served an ideological function in overcoming pre-capitalist, especially feudal, particularisms, in the interest of centralised bourgeois states based on a national market.

Indian nationalism, which was largely the response of a bourgeosie led national liberation struggle against British colonialism, constructed the idea of an Indian nation. Unlike many other European countries, which organically developed into nations in 16th and 17th century, India had not found its basis for a nation-state till early 20th century. In a certain sense, we are a belated nation, lacking a coherent national tradition. This lack of national tradition, it appears, is compensated by the people's urge for excessive glorification of history and mythology, which expresses itself in regressive longing for the glorified past.

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The theoretical debate about what constitutes a nation, and a nationality has been enriched in recent years. A typical and influential liberal definition of nationality was given by Karl Deutsch : "In the political and social struggles of the modern age nationality then means an adjustment of large numbers of individuals from the middle and lower classes linked to regional centres and social groups, channels of communication and economic intercourses both indirectly and directly linked with the centre ... "[2]. This was more relevant than other liberal definitions which stressed ideological factors to the virtual exclusion of socio-economic relations.[3]

Benedict Anderson, in the typical Marxist tradition has argued that nations were not merely determinate products of given sociological conditions, but 'imagined communities' which were a product of what he termed "print-capitalism".[4] He further argues that the historical experience of nationalism in Western Europe, the Americas, and in Russia, had supplied a set of modular forms from which the nationalist elites had chosen the ones they liked.

Most Marxist analyses in India have followed the Leninist tradition in defining nationality as a historical community with common economic ties, a common language, common territory, a common culture and consciousness, that has considered itself to be a separate political community.[5] Thus, the majority of Marxist scholars have defined India as a multinational state.[6] Most scholars who use this theoretical concept argue that nationalities continue to develop post-independence, despite capitalist development and the creation of a national market and the propagation of an Indian consciousness. This is true also of tribal communities. The Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Report for 1966-67 observed, "the power structure of the tribal people is changing faster than their economic life ... A new desire to bind together the people of NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh) in a common bond of 'nationalism' is thus growing among the politically conscious youthful classes ... The desire for a 'national' unity of this kind is not confined to this part of India alone, but has been in evidence elsewhere also".

This is different from the Soviet and post-Soviet experience where the nationalities have already formed, though some where consolidated

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and developed as a direct consequence of the intervention of the Soviet State.[7]

It is however, clear from historical experience of both developed and 'under-developed', post-colonial capitalism, that national differences are not eliminated by capitalist development. Lenin in his "Critical Remarks on the National Question" over-estimated capitalism's ability to obliterate national distinctions. For instance, he refers to "capitalism's world-historical tendency to break down national barriers, obliterate national distinctions, and to assimilate nations - a tendency which manifests itself more and more powerfully with every passing decade, and is one of the greatest driving forces transforming capitalism into socialism"[8]

Lenin explicitly believed that revolutionaries should support this objective process : "The economic development of capitalist society presents us with examples of immature national movements all over the world, examples of the formation of big nations out of a number of small ones, or to the detriment of some of the small ones, and also examples of the assimilation of nations. The development of nationality in general is the principle of bourgeois nationalism : hence the exclusiveness of bourgeois nationalism, hence the endless national bickering. The proletariat, however, far from undertaking to uphold the national development of every nation, on the contrary, warns the masses against such illusions, stands for the fullest freedom of capitalist intercourse and welcomes every kind of assimilation of nations, except that which is founded on force or privilege"[9]

Lenin was not very right on the inevitability of national assimilation. The socio-political and cultural consequences of the uneven development of capitalism, even in the imperialist heartland, was somehow under-estimated. However, Lenin's comments on the contextualisation of nationality assertions are important, and a crucial corrective to the mechanical absolutisation of national self determination by ultra-left Maoists.

In Wheare's terminology, both the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia can be described as 'quasi-federations'[10] The disintegration of the USSR and Yugoslavia, particularly bloody in the latter, starkly highlight the

historical obsolescence of centralised multinational states. The continued nationality identities in the UK, where smaller nationalities continue to demand autonomy, especially the Irish and the Scots, exposes the obsolesence of the oldest Unitary state. The continued nationality assertions by the Dutch speaking Flemings and the French speaking Wallons in highly developed Belguim, disprove any assimilationst theory. The breakdown of the Meech Lake accord in Canada, and the near victory of separatist forces in French speaking Quebec, also highlights the continued salience of nationality assertions and the need for decentralised and truly federal state systems.

Both Russia and India are centralised federations in deep political crisis. The bloody civil war in Chechnya, and the near civil war in Kashmir and the N.E. India, are only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Too much should not be made of a critical difference in the nationality equations in the two countries. While Tsarist Russia was a prison house of nationalities with an oppressive Russian nationality, in India there has been no dominant nationality.

However, movements for autonomy and statehood (within a federation) in Jharkhand, Gorkhaland, Uttarakhand, Chattisgarh and Vidharbha could develop into more separatist movements in time. Secessionist movements led by the NSCN in Nagaland and the Naga-inhabited hill districts of Manipur, the PLA in Manipur Valley, the ULFA in Assam, Bodo groups in the plains of Assam and former TNV insurgents in tribal areas of Tripura, show the extent of alienation in North-East India and the failure of the Indian state's counter-insurgency strategies.

The major question is whether significantly more autonomy within the federation is sufficient for nationality assertions and rights, or self determination amounting to secession is the only democratic solution. Maoist groups in India argue, that there is no democratic alternative to secession.[11] But this is not quite what Lenin advocated.

However, the international conjucture has changed. In an era where a new type of finance capital together with multinational corporations is undermining state sovereignties in concert with multilateral financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank, along with the WTO,

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even vascillating bourgeois states like that in India can, potentially, play a critical democratic and nationalist role. Therefore, the Maoist formula that a breakup of the Indian union on nationality lines, is necessary for a democratic resolution of the nationality question is in keeping neither with Maoist practice nor Leninist theory.

But, it also means that the Russian and Indian federations will have to substantially devolve and decentralise powers in favour of their constituent units, particularly to the national and other regions. This would involve a major restructuring of the organisation of state power institutionalised through major constitutional reform. If democratic decentralisation and devolution of power in our two multi-national states does not take place with some dispatch, centrifugal forces abetted by imperialism may prove irresistible. If even the mighty USSR could be broken up despite the formidable Red Army, Indian militarism can be no match for nationality assertions. The only solutions to Chechnya and Kashmir like situations can be political, based on a discarding of centralised and assimilationist structures of power and ideologies.

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