A CRITIQUE OF THE DOMINANT MARXIST INTERPRETATIONS OF THE INDIAN STATE

INTRODUCTION:

Complex problems involved in the study of nature and dynamics of state in the Third World have been highlighted in the first chapter. While analysing the characteristics common to all the developing countries, it was pointed out that the nature of the state in the Third World should not be generalised. Since the classes which attained political power after the eclipse of colonial rule differed from one state to another, the Third World exhibits different forms of state. This point should not be overlooked in the study of nature of the post-colonial state in India. India being a part of the developing world, dynamics of the Indian state can not be fit into the framework that is usually provided to the study of the state in the Western capitalist societies. At the same time, it should also be stated that apparent similarities should not tempt one to reduce the nature of Indian state to some fixed model built on the basis of study of one or a few underdeveloped countries. Since its social structure, economic development and political history have their own specificities, the Marxists interested in comprehending different dimensions of Indian state should make concrete analysis of the concrete situation in India.
Indian Communists are of course aware of these basic tenets of Marxist Leninist method of enquiry. But somehow even after 40 years of independence, parties and persons claiming themselves communists could not come to a single accepted conclusion about the class character of the post-colonial state in India. A layman interested in knowing the Marxist viewpoint would get confused to see competing and often conflicting interpretations of Indian state. Since it is obvious that all interpretations cannot be true at one point of time, it becomes necessary to evaluate all those interpretations on the anvil of Marxism Leninism in order to examine whether or not any of the existing analysis comes near to Indian reality. Though we would like to reflect on interpretations of all parties and persons claiming themselves Marxists Leninists, due to limitations of the study, we would be limiting ourselves to the study of the contributions of only traditional communist parties viz., the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) and also the works of certain academic relative autonomous. While reviewing the interpretations of these parties and academics wherever necessary, their methodological fallacies and conceptual inadequacies would be pointed out and possible alternative explored. At the end of the chapter, an attempt may be made to develop a more meaningful and dialectical framework for approaching the problem of Indian state.
TRADITIONAL COMMUNIST PARTIES:

Diverse interpretations given to the Indian state are not to be attributed to the breakup of the united Communist Party of India. Even when the communists were united the party could not stick on to one single view of Indian state. Though all of them express their allegiance to the theoretical document of 1951, the interpretations given to this line changed in course of time. The Madurai Congress of the united Communist Party convened in 1953 endorsed the Party Programme of 1951 which characterised the Indian state as a semi-feudal and semi-colonial state. But this kind of interpretation could not explain many of the post 1947 developments in India. For the communists, the dynamics of the Indian state, especially its foreign policy remained a hard nut to crack. Unable to digest how a semi-feudal and semi-colonial state could follow an independent foreign policy, the Delhi meeting of the Central Committee gave an argument that it is possible for the Indian state to adopt an independent foreign policy since the influence of the national bourgeoisie in the Indian economy, and over the government and the state was on the increase. The next congress held at Palghat in 1956 characterised the Indian state as "landlord bourgeois state in which the bourgeoisie is the leading force". Though the basic strategy of anti-feudal and anti-imperialist democratic revolution was not changed, the Communist party then stopped calling India a stage of imperialism. Such changes within the united communist party are in a sense
inevitable consequence of lack of homogeneity among the members of the Party. Bipan Chandra’s article, "A Strategy in Crisis" has clearly pointed out the diverse viewpoints held by different groups within the united communist party. Their differences on questions related to the nature and dynamics of Indian state have subsequently got manifested with the breakup of the united communist party into CPI(M) and CPI(ML).

Before judging whether the method of approach adopted by the different communist parties and the conclusions to which they have come are in accordance with the basic tenets of Marxism Leninism, a brief study of their analyses of the state and the ruling classes in India becomes necessary.

CPI : National Bourgeois State :-

The Communist Party of India (CPI) has been characterising the Indian state as a National bourgeois state. After the breakup of the united communist party, the CPI openly endorsed the 20th Party Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) which saw the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism in countries like India by following non-capitalist path of development. Kruschev’s attempts to see an element of progressive nature in national bourgeoisie has profoundly influenced the theoreticians of the CPI. It was contended that because of their participation in the anti-imperialist struggle, certain sections of the bourgeoisie have become progressive in
their outlook and practice. It is because of their presence in the state power that the Indian state has been able to take up many progressive steps. It seems, according to CPI the class of nationalist bourgeois does not include monopolists who tend to compromise with feudalism and imperialism. The CPI opines that though the monopolists exercise powerful influence over the policies of the state, the Indian state as such is not dominated by the private monopolists. The leaders of the CPI argue that the public sector has developed to such an extent that no individual monopolist can excel the state sector either in its size or scope of its activities. Because of this advantage the CPI believes that the national bourgeois state can take up many anti-monopoly measures, provided it has a political will to do so. To the CPI, governmental policies like nationalisation of banks and industries, development of public sector and enactment of measures such as MRTP Act are anti-monopoly in their content. Their leaders consider that if the state has a political will, then it can nationalise all monopoly organisations. Similarly, in the nonaligned foreign policy of the Indian state, the CPI sees anti-imperialist and pro-socialist content. The CPI leaders think that the development of the public sector with the Soviet aid would help the state to fight both the internal monopolies and foreign imperialists. The CPI accepts that the land reforms initiated by the state led to the development of capitalism in agriculture, though they say that there are still vestiges of feudalism here and there. Their belief
in the progressive character of the national bourgeoisie make them give a call for 'National Democratic Revolution' directed against feudalism, imperialism and monopolies. They believe in peaceful transition to socialism through non-capitalist path of development. The national bourgeoisie will be an ally in such revolution.

Such understanding of the CPI may tempt one to make certain observations. Though the CPI's conception that the Indian state is a state of national bourgeoisie may be accepted, their arguments that some sections of the national bourgeoisie even in this era of imperialism can remain consistently progressive and that they can be made allies in the revolution seem to be against the fundamentals of Leninism. Again, whether capitalism has run its full course or not, is not relevant to the question of revolution. As Lenin says, "The basic question of every revolution is that of state power". Further elaborating this point, Stalin observed, "In the hands of which class or which classes is state power concentrated, which class or which classes must be overthrown, which class or which classes must take power such is the main question of every revolution". So, when the CPI accepts that the national bourgeoisie has come to power, then according to Leninism the national bourgeoisie must become the target of revolution. Surprisingly the CPI makes it an ally. Further it may also be said that their National Democratic Revolution has no relevance to India. Lenin's conception of non-capitalist path of development in backward
countries with pre-capitalist modes of production is not applicable to India which has already witnessed considerable development of capitalism and given birth to the classes of bourgeoisie and proletariat. Further it is not desirable to make distinction between the national bourgeoisie and monopolies, since in reality, monopolists also become a part of the national bourgeoisie. The government policies like nationalisation of banks and industries, development of public sector and the policy of nonalignment are not indications of anti-monopoly character of the Indian state; all these activities are necessitated by the general interests of the capitalist class, of which the monopolists form an important segment.

CPI (M): Landlord Bourgeois State:

The CPI(M) views the Indian state as "an organ of the rule of the bourgeoisie and landlords, led by the big bourgeoisie who are increasingly collaborating with foreign finance capital in pursuit of the capitalist path of development". After 1947, the state power in India has been captured by the big bourgeoisie in collaboration with the landlords. The big bourgeoisie being reactionary and compromising in its nature, the Indian state has failed to accomplish the tasks of democratic revolution which involve elimination of the feudal, semi-feudal and imperialist elements in India. Though the CPI (M) theoreticians call India a nation state, they avoid naming the big bourgeoisie as national bourgeoisie. Reacting to those who characterise the Indian state as a state of the national bourgeoisie the CPI (M) circles ask, "How is it
that we have a state of the bourgeoisie and all its policies only lead to the further strengthening of foreign monopolist position on the country's economy? Why is it that feudal and semi-feudal relations in land have not been abolished? Why is it that the policies of the Congress rule are directed to pauperising the general mass of peasantry? How is it that in this whole period of independence it is the big monopoly houses that have amassed riches while medium and small-scale sectors have been pushed into the crisis after crisis? Is this the consequence of a state of the bourgeoisie or of a state led by the big bourgeoisie?\footnote{Their inference is clear - all such things will not happen in a national bourgeois state, therefore Indian state is only a state of the big bourgeoisie. To overcome this state of affair, the CPI (M) gives call for People's Democratic Revolution by which they mean essentially an agrarian revolution directed against feudalism, imperialism and big bourgeoisie. The rich peasants and the broad minded national bourgeoisie can also be allies in the revolutionary front directed against the main enemies.}

Now let us examine how much Marxian is this interpretation of Indian state. Firstly, one may say that the characterisation of any state simply as a landlord bourgeois state headed by the big bourgeoisie is theoretically inadequate. The CPI (M)'s position does not clearly explain whether by 'landlord' they mean feudal lords or capitalist landlords. In many of their recent analyses, the CPI (M) itself admits that capitalism is making in-roads into agriculture. Study of their party docu-
ments shows that the landlords (class enemies) and rich peasants (class allies) do not have any qualitative differences except for the fact that the landlords hold more acres of land. However from their saying that the landlords employ wage labour, use modern technology and produce for market, one can infer that the landlords are basically "the landowners who had become bourgeoisie" (Lenin's expression). Similarly the CPI (M) does not clearly say whether the native bourgeoisie is national or comprador in nature. Yet their characterisation of India as a nation state and their statements about the contradictions between the native bourgeoisie and imperialism drive one to the conclusion that the bourgeoisie cannot be anything but national. As it is explained in our reflections on CPI's position, it is wrong to make distinction between the big bourgeoisie and non-big bourgeoisie and then brand only big bourgeoisie as a reactionary force compromising with imperialism and feudalism. Even Prabhat Patnaik, known for his CPI (M)'s leanings admits that not simply the big bourgeoisie, even small monopolies also collaborate with foreign firms, of course with the aim of competing with the big bourgeoisie. Finally the question whether capitalism has matured or not is not a criterion to judge the state of revolution. If it is accepted that the national bourgeoisie is in power, then no matter whether all other tasks of democratic revolution are completed or not, the next stage of revolution in this era of imperialism should be anti-capitalist socialist revolution.
Answering to Utsa Patnaik's criticism,\(^9\) Paresh Chatopadhyaya rightly observes, "The state of development of capitalism in Russia did not qualify her for socialist revolution. When Lenin, in his *April Theses* advanced the thesis of transition to socialist revolution, it was not because Russia's capitalist development had suddenly taken a qualitative leap but because through the events in February the bourgeoisie had assumed state power: in Russia... To put the matter schematically, Lenin based his arguments not so much on economics as on politics."\(^{20}\)

**CPI (ML): A Semi-colonial and Semi-feudal State**

The Naxalites are now no more homogeneous. Their parent party, CPI (ML) has now got divided and redivided into several factions and groups. However even now, almost all groups\(^{21}\) inspite of many tactical differences, still hold on to the view that India is a semi-feudal and semi-colonial state, which has not even gained political independence. According to them the fear of revolutionary upsurge of the common masses forced the bourgeoisie and its political party, the Indian National Congress to come to an understanding with feudalism and imperialism. Except for the fact that the political power has changed from the hands of the British lords to the Brown lords there have been no basic changes in any sphere after 1947. To put in words of T. Nagir Aldy whose work, *India Unachanged* is accepted as an authority by many of the Naxalite factions, "the characteristic features of new government in name of independent India
was continuity of the old regime, of the social and economic
order, the same administrative machinery of Imperialism,
the same bureaucracy and the police. The reforms intro-
duced by the new government have not changed the founda-
tions of the Indian society in general and the ruling classes
in particular ... There is no change in their foundations of
power. According to the extremist factions the state
power in India is shared by feudal lords, imperialists and
comprador bourgeoisie. Thus they basically stick on to 1951
Party Programme of the united CPI which considered destruction
of feudalism, distribution of land to the landless and tenants
and achievement of complete and real freedom for the country
as the primary objects of the present stage of revolution.

Since the CPI(ML)'s thinking has powerful impact on most
of the leftist intellectuals in India, one can not ignore the
necessity of making general reflections relevant to the
Marxist-Leninist conception of state and revolution. Firstly,
one may take up the question whether the Indian state is politi-
cally independent or not. The Naxalites influenced unconsciously
by the logic of Dependency school generally show economic facts
to argue that the Indian state is dominated by the imperialists.
But according to Lenin the question whether the question whether
the state is a semi-colony or not is basically a political one.
In the words of Lenin, "Self determination of nations means
the political separation of these nations from alien national
bodies and the formation of an independent nation state." Criticising Rosa Luxemburg's conception that due to the increasing
penetration of the imperialists in Poland and other Balkan states there is no possibility of these states emerging as nation states, Lenin correctly pointed out, "For the question of political self determination of nations and their independence as states in bourgeois society, Rosa Luxemburg has substituted the question of their economic dependence." It is precisely what the Naxalites in India do. It may be true that India is economically dominated by the imperialists, but it has no relevance to the question of emergence of India as a nation state. It is wrong to consider that only in semi-colonies the foreign capital can penetrate. To quote Lenin, "finance capital is such a great, such a decisive force in all economic and in all international relations, that it is capable of subjecting and actually does subject to itself even states enjoying the fullest independence." Out of their own necessities, at times politically independent states also depend on the metropolitan bourgeoisie. "Not only small states, but even Russia, for example, is entirely dependent economically on the power of the imperialist finance capital of the rich bourgeois countries. Not only miniature Balkan states, but even nineteenth century America was economically a colony of Europe, as Marx pointed out in Capital ... but this has nothing to do with the question of national movements and the nation state." 26

Since the question of semi-colony is in a sense related to the existence of comprador bourgeoisie, one may be driven to examine CPI(ML)'s conception of comprador bourgeoisie.
According to its theoreticians there are two sections within the bourgeoisie - comprador and national. They tend to identify all capitalists who collaborate with foreign monopolists as comprador in character - even the public sector built with foreign assistance is comprador in nature. But this argument is simplistic and at any rate inadequate. While analysing foreign collaborations, one should examine whether such collaboration is made entirely in the interests of the foreign finance capital or whether such collaborations are invited to meet the requirements of the indigenous capitalist development. One should also see whether our capitalists while making certain economic concessions to the foreign finance capital show its willingness to sacrifice, if necessary, even the political independence of our country. If state power is in the hands of the comprador bourgeoisie, how come the state nationalise certain foreign firms? If the Indian state is a puppet in the hands of the imperialists, how can the state shift its tilt from one superpower to another and as against the intentions of both the superpowers, the state manages to extend its hand of friendship to China? These questions need to be answered by all those who subscribe to Naxalite ideology.

Finally one may also make an observation that inheritance of political structure of the British imperialists, in itself is not a sign of lack of nationalism on the part of nationalism on the part of the bourgeoisie. It is wrong to expect that the national bourgeoisie which is equally exploitative in
nature attempts to destroy the colonial state structure and place it by a new pro-people's state. All the changes necessary for the political rule of the bourgeoisie have been initiated immediately after the transfer of power. The existing parliamentary institutions, with centralised bureaucratic and military setups have nothing in common with fragmented state in China before revolution. As Lenin says, "the development, perfection and strengthening of the bureaucratic and military apparatus proceeded during all the numerous bourgeois revolutions, which Europe has witnessed since the fall of feudalism." Even Karl Marx pointed out, "All revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it. The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded the possession of this huge edifice as the principal spoils of the victor." So, to expect the bourgeoisie to take up mission of the proletariat and criticising it for not doing so, is not a scientific way of understanding the history.

ACADEMIC RELATIVE AUTONOMISTS:

Except for the scholarly insights shown by a few social scientists like A·R·Desai, Paresh Chatopadhyaya and Srikant Dutt into certain important aspects related to the state, for decades, the question of nature of Indian state has remained almost untouched by Marxist academics in India. Even when they are to analyse certain trends in Indian politics, they generally neglected to take into consideration the specificity of Indian society. Sometimes in the name of class analysis, these Marxists
undermine the significance of the autonomous roles played by different social forces like castes, religions, tribes and linguistic groups. Even in the much trumpeted class analyses a trend of reducing the study of classes to the mode of production or to the question of extent of concentration of foreign capital, has dominated the left minded academics in India. Being the victims of economism, a characteristic typical of traditional communist parties, the leftist scholars could not succeed in giving a comprehensive theory of Indian politics. As a result, even now the Indian academic research continues to be dominated by the liberal interpretations of Indian politics.

However, thanks to the Western debate over the question of relative autonomy of the capitalist state, in the recent period, at least some of the Indian scholars have got themselves liberated from the clutches of economism and instrumentalism. The necessity of studying the positive and autonomous role that the state plays has been recognised. Certain studies concentrating on the relationship between the state and the dominant classes have come to light. Though a comprehensive study of the nature of state on these lines has not yet come out, one has to explore the potentialities and weaknesses of this trend in the broad interests of developing Marxist Leninist framework to understand the complex role that the Indian state has been playing. With that aim, an attempt may be made in this section to review some of the contributions of academics like K.N. Raj, Hamza Alavi, Sanjeeb Mukherjee, Pranab Bardhan and Anupam Sen as far as they are related to the question of relative autonomy of the Indian state.
Perhaps the first intellectual reaction to the instrumentalist view of the state in India has come from the well-known Indian economist, Prof. K.N. Raj. Following Kalecki, K.N. Raj has argued that the governments in the intermediate regimes, of which India is an example need not necessarily serve the dominant propertied classes namely the big bourgeoisie and the feudal lords. Certain developments in the post-war world created the conditions which enable the state to play a different role. These favourable conditions include 1) numerical dominance of lower middle classes at the time of independence, 2) extensive involvement of the state in economic activities and 3) availability of credit from socialist countries. K.N. Raj considers that given the conditions, "the state could ... perform the role of dynamic entrepreneurs, undertake the basic involvements necessary for economic development, and promote a pattern of amalgamation of the interests of the lower middle classes with state capitalism." The state can consolidate its power by gaining a measure of independence from foreign capital; by carrying out land reforms and by creating conditions necessary for a continuous economic growth. According to Prof. Raj, the lower middle classes and the rich peasantry constitute the ruling class of such intermediate regimes. Lower middle classes include, along with small proprietors in agriculture, industry and commerce, a wide variety of professionals, doctors, engineers, teachers, bureaucrats and others - irrespective of whether they are
self-employed or work as wage earners. By rich peasantry they mean capitalist land owners. What brings these two classes together seems to be their dependence on state capitalism for their own development. 34

At about the same period, Hamza Alavi has come out with a different theory of the state in post-colonial societies. In his analysis of the nature of Pakistan state which he thinks has relevance even to Indian state, Alavi takes up more or less a Structural Marxist view. He sees the state as a military-bureaucratic structure, relatively autonomous of the economic structure on the one hand and the dominant propertied classes on the other. The specific conditions that enable the state to play such an autonomous role in the post-colonial societies include 1) inheritance of overdeveloped state from the imperialist power at the time of independence and 2) inability of the dominant classes and their parties to use the state as their instrument. The state in such societies, "mediates between the competing interests of three propertied classes, namely the metropolitan bourgeoisie, the indigenous bourgeoisie and the landed classes, while at the same time acting on behalf of them all to preserve the social order in which their interests are embedded, namely the institution of private property and the capitalist mode as the dominant mode of production." 35
Contribution of Sanjeeb Mukherjea, another relative autonomist is also worth mentioning. He seems to be very much influenced by Poulantzas and Miliband. He takes up in his analysis of Indian state some of the assumptions of Poulantzas as his hypothesis. But ironically he more or less adopts Miliband's empirical methodology to prove his hypotheses. According to him, heterogenous character of Indian bourgeoisie lack of consciousness on the part of the bourgeoisie to visualise its own interests and their desire to have political stability in the country - all these necessitate presence of a stronger state. Just like Poulantzas, he presupposes that the state can comprehend the 'real' or 'true' interests of the bourgeoisie. In Sanjeeb's view, the bourgeoisie in India shares the state power with other dominant classes like feudal lords, capitalist owners and imperialists.

Among the recent Indian writers, Pranabh Bardhan has given an interesting account of the dynamics of Indian state. He thinks that the general view of relative autonomy i.e., the state acts not at the behest of but for all practical purposes on behalf of the dominant propertied classes, is highly inadequate. Opposing the instrumentalist view, he argues, "There are of course serious constraints posed by the imperatives of the dominant propertory classes but to
focus exclusively on them is to ignore the large of choice in goal formulation, agenda setting and policy execution that the leadership usually has and the powerful impulses shaping policies and actions that are generated within the state fuelled by its conception of national interest.\textsuperscript{37} Bardhan repeatedly asserts that the Indian state is relatively autonomous of the dominant coalition constituted by capitalists, landlords and professionals. He attributes relative autonomy of the state to 1) existence of ever developed state\textsuperscript{38} 2) direct ownership and control in the economic sphere and 3) enormous prestige and sufficiently unified sense of ideological purpose of the state elite. This relative autonomy enables the state to shape the class alignments, provide material basis for the new classes and undertake the regulating and development role in the economy.

Finally one may have a look at Anupam Sen who gives an extreme version of relative autonomy of Indian state. Sen believes that the Indian state was and is autonomous of all classes in India. To quote his own words, "Briefly our thesis is this: the state in India, conditioned by the nature of its social formation, was and still is autonomous, and this autonomy has had and still has a positive impact on the character of the economic development and underdevelopment of India during the pre-British, British and post-independence periods.\textsuperscript{39} While autonomy of the state in pre-colonial India was attributed to the Asiatic mode of production, he thinks that co-existence of
different modes of production - Asiatic, feudal, capitalist and colonial - is responsible for the autonomy of Indian state during the colonial era. To him, even the post-independent Indian state enjoys autonomy because of factors like inheritance of the colonial social formation, state ownership of the basic industries, support from the petty-bourgeois elements and failure of the bourgeoisie to transform agriculture into capitalist undertaking. According to Anupam Sen, at the time of independence Nehru and his Congress Party "whose leadership was predominantly made up of petit-bourgeois origins" confronted the state which had "considerable leverage, free from any dominant class hegemony, to plan and determine India's future social development". Nehru used the socialist rhetoric to build up the public sector and thereby strengthened the economic power of the state and made it independent of economic subservience to the capitalist class. Anupam Sen seems to believe in the absolute superiority of the state over all classes. As he himself puts it, "The state in India manifested itself over almost all classes, the bourgeoisie, the peasants and the workers. If it had any relationship on the basis of inputs with any class, it was to some extent with petit-bourgeoisie. However in terms of output, it would be very difficult to locate the state in any class because, as it appears, its policies were and are principally directed towards the augmentation of its own power and not the power of any social class".
There seems to be a strong opinion among the intellectuals of different shades in favour of including the professionals and bureaucrats as members of the ruling classes in India. One may observe the tendency even in the arguments of K.N. Raj and Pranab Bardhan. It would be interesting to know how they justify their viewpoints. According to Bardhan and K.N. Raj, professionals and bureaucrats constitute a new class of rentiers. They argue that along with physical assets, possession of certain kinds of knowledge and skill (e.g., administrative, managerial, scientific and technical) should also be considered as private property which has taken different forms. To quote Bardhan, "if physical capital can be the basis of class stratification, so can be human capital in the form of education, skills and technical expertise." In that case, the income the professionals and bureaucrats derive is not wage and hence they are not to be equated with the working class. K.N. Raj in fact quotes Ossowsky who says, "The proletariat is a man who is unprotected from the extremes of exploitation by any special qualifications, which would prevent him from being replaced by another worker with equal physical strength. According to Marx's intentions, this criterion would exclude the engineer or doctor from the class of the proletariat." It is also argued that because of their privileged positions and accessability to different state organs, these professionals and bureaucrats manage to "direct
education investments away from the masses ——(They) have been able to protect their scarcity rent, and by acquiring licence giving powers at various levels of bureaucracy some of them have increased their capacity to multiply this rental income”.

Having gone through all their views, it now becomes necessary to examine whether all these arguments have their base in Marxism. Though Marx and Engels spoke of the significant role played by these sections at various moments in history they did not clearly say whether those groups can be considered as separate classes. Quotations from the early works of Marx (as Bardhan does) are not enough to state Marx’s position. In such cases it becomes necessary to fill up the gaps by enriching the Marxist understanding. With that goal in our mind, an attempt is made to develop a theoretical framework which can clearly establish the status of professionals and bureaucrats in the social dynamics.

The dynamics of each aspect of society depends on the nature of different social forces at play. Infact civil society represents all kinds of social relations that exist among the members of the given social formation. Yet in Marxist analysis one should make distinction between primary and secondary social forces influencing the dynamics of civil society. In this context, one needs to comprehend the differences between the classes and social categories. It is necessary to define the terms ‘classes’ and ‘social categories’.
It is reasonable to define classes as those groups of people who have similar status in economy and possess particular ideological outlook and political practice corresponding to their status in economy. By social categories, one may mean, those groups of people who, despite occupying different positions in economy, get united by certain other common interests which may be real or imaginary. Along with social groups like castes, tribes, religious communities, students, linguistic communities, one may also include the professionals and bureaucrats under the title, 'social categories'.

Each social category has its own specific interests. In the process of attempting to realise their interests, social categories also influence the state and politics of that society. At times, for their own interests, social categories make some kind of alliance with one or the other classes. While some of them align with the ruling classes, some other keep in touch with the dominated classes. These class loyalties may not last for long. Their own particular interests may necessitate shifting of their alliance from class to another. The mobility of these social categories also depends on the ability of the classes to influence them. The Marxists should have clear understanding of the potentialities and dynamics of these social categories. Nevertheless it should be kept in mind that 'in the ultimate analysis, the determining forces of the history of all class divided societies will be classes - not social categories.'
It is wrong to reduce social category to any particular class, for, each social category is in turn composed of members occupying different status in economy. Since the economic status and the class cutlck and class practice that they acquire differ from one to another, social categories represent multiplicity of classes. Hence reduction of professionals and bureaucrats into any one class should be avoided.

**QUESTION OF POLITICIANS AND IMPERIALISTS**:

How relative is the relative autonomy that the Indian state enjoys? On this point there is no unanimity among the relative autonomists. Anupam Sen believes in absolute superiority of the state in all matters: others do not take such extreme stand. Sanjeeb Mukherjee considers that the relative autonomy of Indian state is inversely proportional to the power of the ruling classes. While attempting to prove this hypothesis, Sanjeeb Mukherjee more or less reduces the state power to the power enjoyed by the politicians (that too Congress Leaders) and the bourgeoisie to mere capitalists. Then he undertakes to study how the state elite (politicians) is superior to the bourgeoisie in its ability to comprehend and realise the 'true' interests of the ruling classes. This conception seems to be narrow even from Miliband's point of view, for, to Miliband the concept of state elite is a wide category.
which includes civil servants, military officials, police, judges and politicians.

Pranab Bardhan slightly deviates from this narrow conception of relative autonomy. Bardhan feels that the Indian state has enjoyed greater autonomy up to the sixties. But with the waning of the aura of legitimacy of leaders; failures in the economic field and constraints imposed by the articulated interests of the dominant propertied classes, from the seventies onwards, the relative autonomy of the state is reflected more often in its regulatory role than its developmental role. Though this observation may be correct one needs to remember that he is also more or less reducing the state to the state elite.

Hamza Alavi’s position is completely different from others. He says that the state is relatively autonomous of the dominant classes namely the metropolitan bourgeoisie, indigenous bourgeoisie and landed classes. But to him, the state means a ‘military-bureaucratic structure’. He has many reservations to include politicians in the state structure of the post-colonial societies. He thinks that the politicians in a country like India will only play the role of brokers. There is hardly any class based political parties in the Third World. In the case of India, the multi-class character of the ruling Congress Party and the weakness of the indigenous propertied classes allow the Indian state a measure of relative
autonomy, so much so, that the state can continue to serve the interests of the metropolitan bourgeoisie even after independence.

This view appears to be very confusing. One may rightly question how the contradictory interests of the indigenous propertied classes and the metropolitan bourgeoisie before independence suddenly turns into competing interests after the dawn of independence. The nonaligned movement is a clear example to show that in some respects, the metropolitan bourgeoisie and indigenous propertied classes are antagonistic in nature. To say that the state is forced by its own objective position to make certain concessions to the metropolitan bourgeoisie is one thing and to argue that since the state is relatively autonomous it can continue to serve the interests of the metropolitan bourgeoisie is another thing. One should be able to distinguish between the two.

Finally, contradicting Hamza Alavi, one may say that by the time India secured independence, it has witnessed the development of a homogenous national bourgeoisie class fairly conscious of its economic and political interests. That the capitalists have contradictions within themselves should not make one ignore their unity vis-a-vis other antagonistic classes. Recent studies have shown that after 30's, the capitalists have gradually consolidated their position within the Indian National Congress. Moreover, it may be made clear that though Congress was an umbrella party of different
classes and groups, its leadership from the beginning continued to be in the hands of the politicians who are liberal in their outlook and practice. If one applies the criterion that we used to judge the class character of the professionals and bureaucrats, the political leaders of the Congress, despite their contradictions with the capitalists became a part of bourgeoisie. As political representatives of the bourgeoisie, Indian political parties, especially the Congress Party, played a very conscious role. To say that all the farsighted policies of the state like land reforms, development of public sector, nationalisation and nonalignment are initiated by the 'military-bureaucratic structure' and that the Indian politicians only played the role of brokers is against historic reality.

INSEARCH OF MARXIST LENINIST FRAMEWORK:

While analysing the views of traditional communist parties and recent academic relative autonomists, an attempt has been made in the above two sections to expose their methodological fallacies and conceptual inadequacies. In this concluding part of the chapter, on the basis of our critical reflections on different approaches reviewed so far, an effort may be made to develop a more dialectical and more meaningful Marxist-Leninist perspective to the study of Indian state.

The interpretations of the traditional communist parties - the CPI, CPI(M) and CPI(ML) are partly economistic and instrumentalist in their content. The Indian state is characterised
as 'landlord -bourgeois state' or 'semi-feudal -semi-colonial state' just because there exist certain semi-feudal and colonial hangovers in the economy and culture. Relative autonomy of the state and the specificity of politics are usually ignored. Their mechanical understanding of the Marxian classics and subjective study of the Indian state are primary causes for such diverse interpretations of the concrete reality. Paradoxically, the same mistakes made the parties arrive at consensus about the stage of revolution. There may be terminological differences but the substance is the same. Whether they call it 'National Democratic Revolution' or 'People's Democratic Revolution' or 'New Democratic Revolution', all of them hold that the present stage of revolution should be directed against feudalism, imperialism and the big industrial houses (whereas CPM calls them big bourgeoisie, CPI names the same as monopolies and CPI(ML) brands them as comprador bourgeoisie). All these parties hold on to the view that it is only the big bourgeoisie / monopolies / comprador bourgeoisie which collaborates with imperialism and feudalism. But other sections of the bourgeoisie are progressive, anti-imperialist and allies of 'their' democratic revolutions. All of them have a belief in the progressive character of the national bourgeoisie. Hence they attribute non-accomplishment of the tasks of democratic revolution either to the presence of feudalism or imperialism or to the big bourgeoisie; never to the inability of the national bourgeoisie and to the moribund character of Indian capitalism,
As a reaction to the traditional interpretations, the concept of 'relative autonomy' is gaining support among the academic circles in the recent days. Though this new trend seems to have certain advantages over the traditional method, it seems one need not expect too much from this change. At the outset, one may observe that there is no general agreement among the subscribers of this new trend as to what exactly the term, 'relative autonomy' should mean. As is the case in the West, different meanings are assigned to this concept. These academics have not yet developed a methodological framework necessary for a vigorous theoretical discourse. They entertain diverse views on composition of the ruling classes. More than these, it should be said that their very conception of state is not yet crystalised. Whereas one sees it as an institutional structure, others reduce it to 'government', to 'executive' or just to the political leaders holding the executive authority. Finally one may argue that mechanical application of the Western theories of state to Indian context may be counter productive. While the necessity of criticising the instrumentalist approach should not be underestimated, one should also realise that compartmental studies undertaken in the West in the name of relative autonomy are also far away from the Marxian dialectical method.

In view of these inadequacies in the dominant perspectives on Indian state, it becomes necessary to develop a comprehensive Marxist-Leninist framework which may be useful to the study of
Indian state in all its dimensions. In order to build up
Marxist theoretical discourse, one may suggest certain essential
methodological points of departure necessary for comprehending
the dynamics of Third World state in general and Indian state
in particular:

1. Though it is essential to take note of the status of classes
in economy, it is necessary to avoid looking at classes as
mere economic categories. Homogeneous classes which may be
defined as "groups of people having similar status in production
relations, followed by corresponding ideological outlook and
political practice" are rarely found in the developing socie-
ties. Incase only one's position in productive relations is
stressed, one comes across a wide strata of people in the
Third World who can not be grouped under any one class. Hence
assigning more importance to the aspect as to whose class
interests a member of group is "consciously" serving in day
to day praxis becomes necessary for identifying one's class
position. Then term, "consciously" is important, for, we
should ignore the unconscious victims of ideologies and
praxis of other classes. In this sense, even if a member is
not a capitalist, if he or she consciously acquires bourgeois
ideology, then he or she is to called a bourgeois. In case
of mixed categories dominant ideological position and
political praxis may be taken into consideration. These
criteria are needed to identify class status of certain
social categories such as politicians, intellectuals and
professionals.
2. By the term 'class interests' we should not mean what individual members of the class consider to be in their interests. Class interests in Marxian category refers to the objective possibility of a class to realise, under the given conditions, its basic urge to hold or ensure that which they possess or aspire for that they need to possess. Along with economic interests, each class shall have certain political and ideological interests. By the term 'possession', we mean both material production and realm of ideas corresponding to it.

3. Wide generalisations about the role of the classes - without taking into consideration the given context - need to be avoided. For example, while trying to understand the dynamics of the bourgeoisie in the Third World, we should first see whether they are initiating policies that lead to widest and speediest development of capitalism under the given national and international conditions. To expect the bourgeoisie in the post-colonial societies to behave like the bourgeoisie of the Western Europe is not a dialectical way of looking at the reality.

4. The word, "comprador" should not be misused. All economically dependent states need not be "semi-colonies" or "comprador states". Some measure of dependent relationship becomes inevitable for all Third World countries. Among the economically dependent countries, possibility of existence of national bourgeoisie states need not be ruled out. The basic issues involved here are as follows: whether one willingly accepted dependent relationship or not; whether one made efforts to use all available possibili-
ties to achieve economic self-sufficiency or not; whether all activities of the bourgeoisie promoted the interests of foreign imperialism or it also contributed to indigenous capitalist development and whether or not the class used all its potentialities to fight foreign imperialism to the extent its own national interests are involved. All these points need to be examined to judge the nature of indigenous bourgeoisie.

5. The other aspect is related to precapitalist socio-economic structures. While it is necessary to recognise that the UDCs are multistructural and multi-stratified societies, it should also be noted that all structures and strata are not evenly developed. Identification of the dominant structures and social strata is necessary to know the direction of economic development. If any state is to be characterised as feudal or semi-feudal, one should first examine whether they acquire dominant status or play subordinate role to the dominant capitalist mode of production. The third aspect is to observe whether the state policies are perpetuating those feudal or semi-feudal relations or trying to change them gradually into bourgeois relations.

6. It may be noted that many a times such identified categories may not be in essence feudal or semi-feudal. Traditional structures like castes, tribes and religious communities may modify their roles in such a way that they may not be in conflict with developmental process. Hence it is necessary to know whether such relations are ob structing the capitalist path
of development or whether they themselves started changing their roles in the wake of new opportunities thrown open to these sections in course of development of economy.

7. So is the question of traditional culture. In the Third World countries like India traditions play a very important role in shaping the psychological makeup and value preferences of the people. Political and economic structures are considerably influenced by the traditions. Capitalist development at times faces obstacles due to certain traditions and cultural practices. Yet under certain circumstances the bourgeoisie itself may use feudal or pre-capitalist structures. It may be the result of its compromise with feudal elements or for its own political necessity to divide the unity of the masses. In view of these different possibilities, one should examine the following aspects:

1) Do the feudal and semi-feudal traditions remain as remnants of the old society, or are there any semi-feudal or pre-capitalist structures at the base reproducing the old traditions at the superstructural level? 2) Does such culture promote the interests of any group which can clearly be identified as semi-feudal or whether they are only used by the bourgeoisie for promoting its own interests. 3) Finally that is the role that the state plays in dealing with these kinds of traditions and cultural values.

In the light of all these guidelines, dynamics of Indian state may be studied by relating variations in the forms of government and political regimes to the changing correlation of class and other social forces inside the country. The role that
the oppressed and exploited classes play in shaping the policies of the state may also be highlighted. All these dimensions need to be examined in the context of the status that the ruling classes and the state occupy in the world capitalist system in general and the Third World in particular. Since it is difficult to do justice to all these dimensions of the state in one work, in this thesis we would be primarily concentrating on the autonomous role of the state in economic development. While the impact of other structures and social categories would be touched wherever felt necessary, the thesis stresses on the dialectical relationship that the state has with the economic base and different class forces.

*****
Notes

1. Normally Indian scholars writing on the leftist movement in India talk as if only CPI, CPI(M) and different factions of CPI(ML) constitute the Indian left. But it has to be recognised that along with these traditional communist parties, there are parties like Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI), Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) and a few Trotskyite groups in India which also claim their allegiance to Marxism. Hence their views should not be ignored in the analysis of Indian state.


3. Ibid., p.19

4. Ibid., p.20

5. Ibid., p.545. Palghat resolution also says, "The state policies are motivated by the desire to develop India along independent capitalist lines. About India's foreign policy it says, "The Republic of India in recent years has played an increasingly important role, a role that has heightened India's international prestige and evoked in every patriotic Indian a sense of national pride". More than this the document claims that "the emergence of India as a sovereign independent republic upholding the course of peace and freedom is a factor of profound significance in the present day world". (p.526)


7. Kruschev said, "It is quite probable that the forms of transition to socialism will become more and more varied; moreover, achieving these forms need not be associated with the civil war - it is not true that we regard violence and civil war as the only way to socialism". He also said, "In present conditions the ruling class in many
capitalist countries has a genuine opportunity to unite the overwhelming majority of people under its leadership and to ensure that basic means of production are placed in the hands of people ... (Uniting with) the working peasantry, intellectual and patriotic forces (working class) has an opportunity to turn the parliament ... into an agency of genuine democracy "• Quoted in Emberee, G.D., Soviet Union between Nineteenth and Twentieth Party Congresses 1952-56, Martinum Nijoff, 1959, pp.301-302


10. " Noncapitalist path does not mean negation of the whole capitalist society. Noncapitalist path does not presume the complete absence of capitalist development in the country concerned. Noncapitalist development means cutting short further stages of capitalist development and even reversing some development (monopoly) that have already taken place ". Ibid., pp. 30-71


17. Those with 5 to 10 acres of wet land or 10 to 20 acres of dry land are categorised as rich peasants and those who own more than that as landlords. See Basava Punnaiah, Tactical Line: A Review, Prajashakti, 1986, pp.32, 36. (Telugu version)


21. The exceptions being the Communist League of India which considers India to be an independent capitalist state and Mass Line group which recognises development of capitalism and characterises India as a neo-colony, not semi-colony.


23. Ibid., p. X...


26. Lenin, Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism, Moscow, 1978, p.77


29. For a clear understanding of the nature of the fragmented state in pre-colonial China refer, Singh, Vilendra, *The State in Post-Colonial Societies*, Ph.D. thesis submitted to Punjab University, 1988


34. Ibid., p. 9


38. Unlike Hamza Alavi who traces the over development of state to colonial past, Bardhan argues that the history of overdeveloped state structure goes back to pre-colonial days. Ibid., p. 37

40. Ibid., p. 105

41. For example, see Patnaik, Prabhat, "Imperialism and Growth of Indian Capitalism" in Blackburn, Robin, ed., *Explosion in a Sub-continent*, Pelican, p. 52; Bagchi, Amiya Kumar, *Political Economy of Underdevelopment*, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 179; Recently many intellectuals like Ashok Rudra and Andre Beteille also reflected on the idea of 'Emergence of the intelligentsia as a Ruling Class' in India. See, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1989

42. Bardhan, op. cit., p. 51

43. Quoted in Raj, K.N., op. cit., p. 37

44. Bardhan, op. cit., pp. 52-53

45. Mukherjee, op. cit., p. 38

46. Bardhan, op. cit., pp. 38-39

47. Alavi, op. cit., pp. 44-45


50. Even in the Western debate over relative autonomy, there was no unity among the participants. According to Miliband, relative autonomy means "the degree of freedom which the state has in determining how best to serve what these
who hold power conceive to be national interests which
in fact involves the service of the interests of the
ing the ruling classes. For Poulantzas, relative autonomy is a
structural element. Relative autonomy is necessary for
the state to act as a factor of unity in a social forma-
tion composed of specific and relatively autonomous levels.
German Derivativists think that the relative autonomy
becomes indispensable for the state to fulfill certain
social requirements necessary for capital accumulation.
For a summary of this debate see my M-Phil Dissertation,
On Relative Autonomy of the Capitalist State, University