CHAPTER – 3

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There has been scholarly body of literature on the relationship between modernisation and ethnicity. Some of the classical sociologists (Marx, Durkheim for example) emphasised the decline of ethnicity in the context of modernisation, though the exact reasons they have given for the decline are different. Others arguing on the basis of considerable body of evidence have sought to prove that the assumption that ethnicity would decline in the face of modernisation is baseless and unfounded. They draw our attention to the instances of ethnic resurgence not only in the so-called traditional societies but also in the 'supposedly' advanced and modern societies. For example, one can notice enhanced ethnic assertiveness not only in countries like India, Sri Lanka etc. but also in Canada, France, Yugoslavia, Britain and America. Even the contemporary process of globalisation has not supplanted the significance of ethnicity, as reflected in the growing incidence of ethnic conflicts.

Those who argue for the decline of ethnicity in the context of modernisation do so for different reasons. One can broadly divide them into two: Marxist expectancy and Liberal expectancy (Fenton 1999:96).

And those who argue for the persistence of ethnicity do so again for different reasons. One can divide them into two: Primordialists and Instrumentalists. Briefly stated, the former argue that ethnicity holds
ineffable affective significance for its members and therefore it would continue to exercise its influence, modernisation or no modernisation. The latter argue that ethnicity is used as an effective instrument to achieve some common purpose. Therefore the form of ethnicity may change depending upon the context but its significance would continue and in fact it has gone up in the modern world.

We therefore propose to undertake an examination of studies about the relationship between modernisation and ethnicity on the basis of the framework given below:

- **Theories of decline**
  - Marxist expectancy (e.g., Marx)
  - Liberal expectancy (e.g., Durkheim, Gordon)

- **Theories of persistence**
  - Primordialists (e.g., Geertz)
  - Instrumentalists (e.g., Cohen, Glazer and Moynihan)

In our view, the above framework has its advantages and disadvantages. Its chief advantage lies in the fact that it would enable us to arrange numerous scholarly works on the relationship between modernisation and ethnicity in a systematic and meaningful way. But its main disadvantage, it needs to be mentioned, is that it would not enable us
to appreciate subtleties that are associated with each study. For example, some studies can be unambiguously described as primodialist and some instrumentalist. But there are some cases where an apparently instrumentalist position does in fact contain an element of primodialism on ethnicity. Nevertheless we believe that this would provide us a good starting point to look at the various studies that examine relationship between modernisation and ethnicity. Wherever we misinterpret a particular study, we stand corrected.

One point needs to be mentioned at this juncture. Some studies have directly problematized the relationship between modernisation and ethnicity. Others have done it by implication. However such studies also give us valuable insights into their relationship. It will be in the fitness of things if we make another point clear. We are interested only in those studies which look at the relationship between modernisation and ethnicity either directly or indirectly. Therefore we do not propose to review those studies which are on ethnicity per se or modernisation per se. This may force us to leave out many studies, though valuable by themselves, from our review of literature.

THEORIES OF DECLINE

Marxist Expectancy

As quoted at the very outset, Marx argues that the importance of ethnic, religious, racial and nationalistic attachments will decline
with the growth of capitalism (a modern socio-economic system). In his vision of the modern world, there is no place for ethnicity. Nationalism is viewed largely as a reactionary force, an ideological weapon meant to perpetuate the social, political and economic domination of the capitalist class (Tiskhov 1997). The interests of the exploited labouring classes lie in transcending local particularisms and nationalism by uniting as an international class of workers.

In the Marxist theorisation, class would assume central importance. Class relations are transformed by the revolutionary forces of capitalism. These class relations are founded upon the exploitation of labour by capital and the inevitability of the search for profit. The economic tendencies or laws of capitalism provoke recurring crises in the sustainability of capitalism as an economic system: the growth of class consciousness and organisation provoke political challenges to the capitalist state. All these challenges will, in the last analysis prove decisive, replacing capitalism with socialism. A new economic organisation will be dedicated to social production for use rather than profit.

However, for Marx there are two points of entry for an interest in ethnicity. The first is that nationalism and ethno-national sentiments are viewed as distractions from the development of a rational class consciousness, the political formation of which hastens the demise of capitalism. The second point is that ethnicity is seen as having ideological and political functions within capitalism, specifically as a form of
consciousness which divides and therefore weakness working-class consciousness and organisation (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991).

However, ethnic consciousness will have to give way to class consciousness with the inexorable intensification of class contradictions. The very logic of capitalism demands that particularistic attachments should have no place and class conflicts become the primary force of societal changes. As capitalism develops, so does class consciousness allying men and women on a rational basis to those whose material circumstances they share. When capitalism is transcended by socialism, then will begin the building of a rational civil society in which men and women could relate to each other free of the encumbrances of class and birth. However, for that reason those who saw themselves as building socialist states found it hard to cope with the ‘nationalistic loyalties, sentiments and collectivities’ (Diamond and Plattner 1994: Kupchan 1995). Political ideology demands that particularistic forms ought to diminish: Political realities indicate that identities remain.

In the recent past there have been influential studies within the tradition of Marxism, some arguing that ethnic and racial relations should be viewed as camouflaging exploitative class relations: and racial differentiation is always created in the context of class differentiation thus giving primacy to the analysis of class structure. Other have taken the position (which can be regarded as an internal critique of Marxism) that ethnic and racial relations should be viewed relatively autonomous from
class relations. We can take a couple of them which represent there two different positions.

Robert Miles (1982: 1986) takes the first position. His empirical research has focused specifically on the situation in Britain and in the rest of Western Europe and has looked at the role of political class and ideological relationship in shaping our understanding of racial conflict and change in these societies. According to him ethnicity is an ideological effect, a mask that hides real economic relationships (Miles 1984: 42).

The work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham, England takes the second position (Solomos 1995:41). The theoretical approach of the CSSS group was influenced by the work of Stuart Hall (1980) in particular. Its work resulted in the publication of the highly influential The Empire Strikes back (CCSS: 1982). It recognizes the continuous significance of race and in fact views race as an open political construction whereby the political meaning of terms such as Black are fought over. Collective identities spoken through race, community and locality are, for all their spontaneity, powerful means to coordinate action and create solidarity (Gilroy 1987). Glory suggests that political identities, that are spoken through race can be characterised as social movements that are relatively autonomous from class relations. This means that ethnic and racial relations are significant realities having independent and autonomous existence. This may be taken as a critique of Marx who visualizes declining significance of particularistic attachments in the modern world.
To summarise the developments within the Marxist tradition one can say that some have called for a radical revision of class analysis (Anthias 1992: Catells 1983: Gilroy 1987) to incorporate political movements that take place around forms of identity other than class. Others have suggested a need to move away from Marxism as a framework of analysis and have taken on some of the concerns of post structuralism and post-modernism (Gates 1986: Goldberg 1992). On the whole it should be said to the credit of neo-marxists that they have noted the resurgence of ethnicity in the contemporary world and emphasise need to come to grips with the hardening of ethnic identities even in the context of capitalists (modern) societies.

Liberal Expectancy

According to the liberal expectancy, the decline of ethnicity is inevitable. This argument is contextualised in terms of economic, political, social and cultural spheres. In the economic sphere, the growth of meritocracy renders particularistic attachments such as ethnic attachments redundant. Economic positions are acquired on the basis of merit rather than on the basis of birth. In the political sphere, ethnicity will no longer be relevant to civic status. The principles of liberty, equality and justice which are considered universalistic in spirit will undermine the dominance of any one ethnic group. In the social sphere, it is argued that formal associations supplant allegiance found on kinship and communal membership ascribed
at birth. In Durkheims's language, the natal milieu, the sphere of social ties associated with birth, progressively diminishes in importance. In the cultural sphere world trade and mass communication are seen as solvents of local cultures and the harbinger of a certain cultural uniformity that undermines ethnic diversity. These global influences are the suggested source of homogenisation.

The most unmistakable argument for the decline of ethnicity is to be found in the liberal-universalist sociology of Emile Durkheim. His argument centres upon what he calls the decline of the natal milieu—the locale and social obligations, especially of family, into which an individual is born. The belief that particularistic ties should decline is an element of liberal democratic ideology: the belief that they will decline is part of the sociology of modernisation. Durkheim viewed the French Revolution as the beginning of the redefinition of people as citizens, setting in train the development of laws and social institutions which recognized the freedom and dignity of the individual (Tiryakian 1971). He viewed 'race' and ethnic origin as declining facts of the modern social order, precisely because both were rooted in birth (Fenton 1999: 100).

With respect to ethnicity his most telling remarks were to with respect to Jewishness in France. An atheist Jew himself he thought that the kind of ties represented by an ethnic community such as Jews would decline in significance in the modern state of citizens. Significantly he stressed that his defence of Dreyfus and his critique of the persecutors of Dreyfus, a
Jewish military captain falsely convicted by treason in a wave of anti-Semitic politics, was above all a defence of the rights of men, of the liberty and dignity of the individual (Fenton 1980, Durkheim notes on anti-Semitism 1899:54).

Milton Gordon makes a similar point. He expects that the kinds of features that divide one group from another would inevitably lose their weight and sharpness in modern and modernising societies, that there would be increasing emphasis on achievement rather than ascription, that common systems of education and communication would level differences, that nationally uniform economic and political systems would prevail. Under these circumstances, the primordial differences between group would be expected to assume lesser importance (Gordon 1975).

Most American scholarship influenced by Karl Deutsch (1953) on the question of impact of modernisation on ethnicity assumes that modernization leads to a loss of ethnic identity. Karl Deutsch popularized the thesis that social changes associated with modernization will result in a shift from particularistic to universalistic identities, because of mass communication systems, mass public education system, spatial and social mobility. As a result of being subject to these social processes, ethnicity will increasingly fade into oblivion. In its place identities based on universalistic criteria would assume salience.

However, as stated in the beginning of the chapter, the expectation that ethnicity would decline in the modern world is mistaken. The events
both in the developing world and the modern world unmistakably show that ethnic consciousness has not declined. In fact it has become much more stringent as reflected in the growing ethnic conflicts which are striking both in terms of frequency they occur and intensity they demonstrate. In the case of the developing world, one can rationalise it on the basis of inadequate development and modernisation. But how does one explain the persistence of particularistic identities in the case of the so-called modern and developed societies? For example race continues to be a significant reality in U.S.A. Blacks continue to be discriminated against and deprived in social, cultural, economic and political terms. One can speak in similar terms about ethnicity. The invocation of one's ethnic background in countries such as U.S.A., Britain Canada, Malaysia etc. reflects the persistence of ethnicity which needs to be understood and explained.

There are broadly two approaches which enable us to explain the persistence of ethnicity even in the context of modernisation. They are primordial and instrumental (also referred to as 'circumstantial approaches) (Banks 1996:39).

THEORIES OF PERSISTENCE

The Primodial Approach

The primordialist approach holds that ethnicity is an innate aspect of human identity. It is a given, requiring description rather than explanation. It holds tremendous emotional significance for the members of the group.
Because of its primordial nature, it is bound to persist even in the context of modernisation.

We can now proceed to review some of those studies which are primordialist in orientation.

Edward Shils seems to have been one of the first to employ the term primordial, in reference to relationship within the family. In his view, the relational attachment to a kin member is not merely to the other family members as a person, but as a possessor or certain especially significant relational qualities, which could only be described as ‘primordial’ (1957:142). This attachment is not cemented through interaction: rather, it derives its strength from 'a certain ineffable significance --- attributed to the tie of blood'(1957:142). He perceives ethnic ties as an extension of kinship ties and attributes primordiality to them exactly the same way he does to kinship ties. The attribution of primordiality to ethnic ties would logically imply that the forces of modernisation have no much influence on the ethnic attachments. Thus ethnic ties just as the kinship ties would persist even in the context of modernisation.

Fredrick Barth's edited book Ethnic Groups and Boundaries (1969a) proved to be enormously influential in shaping the ideas about ethnic groups. The book contains short essays by Scandinavian anthropologists, each concerned with the 'social organisation of culture difference' and analyses data from Norway, North-East Africa, Mexico, Pakistan and Laos. It needs to be recognised that the chief impact was made not so much by
the studies themselves as by Barth's Introductory essay. Banks considers Barth as belonging to the group of primodialists (1996:39).

The whole burden of his argument is that an ethnic group needs to be understood not only in terms of the objective features such as dress, language etc. its members share but in terms of boundaries, he makes two significant points. First, the group may loose some of these features and acquire new ones over a period of time but the boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel and information across them. Secondly and as a corollary to the first, that such groups cannot exist in isolation but only in contrast to other such groups. That is, the boundary does not bound 'something off from nothingness, but rather it distinguishes between two (or more) 'somethings' (Barth 1969a:14-15).

Barth argues that ethnicity is a superordinate identity, one which transcends or is at least equivalent to all other identities (such as those based on gender or status) and as such his position is closer to that of primordialist-ethnicity as a permanent and essential condition: "the constraints on person's behaviour which spring from his ethnic identity --- tend to be absolute" (1969a:17). In other words, so long as ethnic groups exist, ethnicity exists.

But the person who is most clearly identified with primordialism is Clifford Geertz (Geertz: 1963). Geertz says that ethnicity is 'primordial' and defines primordiality, which is worth quoting at length, as follows:
"By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the 'givens' of existence, or, more precisely, since culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the 'assumed 'givens' of social existence, immediate contiguity and live connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language or even dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These contiguities of blood, speech, custom and so on are seen to have an ineffable, and at times, overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbour, one's fellow believer, ipso facto, as a result not merely of personal moral obligation, but at least in great part, by virtue of some unaccountable import attributed to the very tie itself'. (1973:45).

Thus ethnicity holds tremendous ineffable and affective significance for the members of a group who share language, culture etc. Ethnicity does not arise out of personal attraction, tactical necessity or communal interests. However, his definition is viewed as a mixture of relatively precise sociological conceptualisation and ideological mystification (Rex 1996: 188). The question remains unanswered in his definition is that we replace the ties which are given to us in our families of birth by others which we choose. In doing so we may identity with an increasingly wide range of other ties. What needs to be explained is the extension of the feeling of original ethnic bondedness to a wide range of persons and into adult life.
The position taken by Bromley and his colleagues is strongly primordialist though they recognise the importance of specific historical, economic and political factors in shaping the expression of ethnic identity. While not 'eternal' (Bromley 1974:61), the expression of ethnicity is so strongly resilient that it persists through generation and through a variety of social forms. A stable core of ethnicity, the ethnos or ethnikos-persists through all social formations. It must be remembered that the term 'ethnos' is used in a general, abstract sense, while the term 'ethnikos' is taken to refer to a specific manifestation.

He recognises the fact that it is in ethnic interaction that ethnic identity is consolidated and the interaction must be of a relatively permanent nature. He gives the example of sports teams in different strips as interacting, self-defined groups, each with distinctive features and yet not constituting ethnic groups for the duration of their team identity is strictly limited (1974:58).

The relevance of Bromely's theory lies in the fact that it has been able to explain the persistence of ethnic or cultural distinctiveness in the Soviet Union which is supposed to have withered away in the face of rational socialist planning (Shanin 1989:418). In America too the melting pot theory was proved wrong as ethnic groups, instead of 'Americanising' or assimilating as suggested by it, persisted.

Another person who has taken clearly a primordialist position is Harold Isaacs. In 'Basic Group identity: the Idols of the Tribe' (1975), he
states that basic group identity consists of the ready-made set of endowments and identifications which every individual shares with others for the moment of birth by chance of the family into which he is born at that given time in that given place' (Isaacs 1975: 31) These 'endowments and identifications' consist of the child's body, exhibiting a particular phenotype and the history, language, religion and overall 'value system' of the child's parents. Isaac's approach to these endowments is straightforward and unquestioning: at the grand, pan-human level on which he sustains most of his discussion, he considers the 'child' to have an unproblematic place in the society into which it is born and ignores much anthropological evidence which demonstrates that the moral or social existence of an individual (as opposed to his or her biological existence) needs to be constantly reforged in many societies-reforged through rituals (including rituals surrounding birth), through manipulation of genealogies through rituals (including rituals surrounding birth), etc.

According to A.L. Epstein (1978), there are many types of identity that an individual may carry, but he endorses the view that ethnic identity is a 'terminal identity, one that embraces and integrates a whole series of statuses, roles, and less identities' (1978:101). His concept of identity draws on the writings of a number of psychologists and post-Freudian psychoanalysts, but in particular on the work of Erik Erikson who argued that an individual's development of identity was a life-long process and as much influenced by external, social factors as it was by internal
psychological factors (Epstein 1978:7). His objection to the instrumental view of ethnicity is based on the fact that sometimes ethnicity is active but does not seem to have any 'purpose'. Without having a particular ‘need’ in economic or political terms ethnicity asserts itself (1978:98). This point only goes to make his primordialist position quite clear.

The study conducted by a Norwegian anthropologist on a Gujarati community in London is of special interest in understanding the continued salience of ethnicity (Tambs-Lynche 1980). The study explores the life and actions of a group of Gujarati Patidars, members of a land-owning and agricultural caste in India who migrated to Britain (either directly or via East Africa) during the 1960s. The Partidars are known colloquially in Britain as the Patels, the surname of many of them, he provides an analysis of their mercantile ideology which, he claims, is the significant fact that sets them apart from the whole British population and constitutes the major element in the construction of an ethnic boundary (1980:125).

The Patidars have made a mark for themselves in the economic life of London. Though they prefer economic activities like the other Britishers do, they perform with a distinctive cultural slant. They have entered into the British relations of production but not the British pattern of consumption because that would mean the loss of their ethnic distinctiveness (1980-26). Their continued cultural distinctiveness needs to be looked at in terms of their refusal to blindly follow the Britishers economic life style. By this he echoes Barth’s primordialism, assuming that the question is not so much
'why ethnicity' as 'how ethnicity'. But the fact remains that the relationship between modernisation and ethnicity is problematical in the context of Patidars in London. There is a tendency to retain one's distinctiveness even in an urban and modern setting.

Tony Parming and L. Mee Cheung in their paper titled “Modernisation and Ethnicity” (1980:131-142) convincingly argue that modernisation does not necessarily lead to a loss of ethnic identity as it is a primordial reality. They deal with the impact of modernisation on the ethnic identity both on the individual level and the collective levels. They argue that modernisation by releasing forces such as rapid social changes, spatial and social mobility etc. tends to weaken ties to family, kinship group, village etc. from where individuals derive their emotional sustenance. As a result of the weakening of such affective ties, individuals begin to experience alienation and/or rootlessness. This is followed by identity crisis. This is where primordial groups such as ethnic groups become relevant. They satisfy the urge of an alienated and/or uprooted individuals for social belonging because they are affective rather than instrumental and provide identificational continuity in time.

On the collective level-ethnic resurgence is a manifestation of mobilisation along ethnic lines by oppressed and disadvantaged ethnic groups to overcome their structurally inferior position. In multi-ethnic societies, historically, it would be correct to assume that class stratification and ethnic differentiation coincide. Some dominant ethnic groups at least in
the initial stages tend to mobilise along ethnic lines to overcome their position of deprivation. Secondly, the growing appeal of nation-state as a political force has an inevitable consequence of mobilising people along ethnic lines. There is a tendency to equate nation-hood with statehood in multi-ethnic contexts, this results in strong pressures toward assimilation of the non-dominant groups (‘Americanisation’ in the United States, ‘Russification’ in the then Soviet Union etc.). This, too, inevitably causes social mobilisation along ethnic lines simply because we have no recorded historical case of a people voluntarily renouncing their own collective identity in favour of another.

Stack analysing contemporary ethnic mobilisation throughout the world even in the face of growing modernisation shows an inclination towards the primordialist approach as it alone can explain “the non-rational, even irrational dimensions of ethnicity which are an undeniable aspect of contemporary ethnic mobilisations throughout the world” (1986:2). He concludes that “if ethnicity is always viewed as subservient to material conditions then the complexity, resilience and even irrationality of ethnic bonds are likely to be underestimated” (1986:8). In other words, even after recognising the “importance of a number of socio-economic and political factors acting as critical intervening variables in the critical intervening variables in the crystallisation of ethnicity there remains a 'shadow and elusive quality to ethnonationalism” (Stack 1986:8).
What emerged from the above is that, according to him, we need the primordial approach for a complete explanation of ethnic solidarity, especially for its most extreme, strident irrational aspects, such as the attempt to define a modern ethnic identity on the basis of an atavistic identity.

Most recently George Schopflin (2000) after making a comprehensive survey of the emergence of the nation state in Europe makes his position quite clear. Both ethnic origins and state construction played a role in the rise of modern nation-state. The emphasis of one to the exclusion of the other makes any analysis of the nation-state and unrewarding. The nation-state should be understood as the dynamic interaction of ethnicity, citizenship and the State, all three -being identity-forming processes and a source of power. The implication is that Western states, far from having 'left-ethnicity behind', have contextualised it and have successfully hemmed it in by constructing state machinery and civil society that ensure that ethnicity is not the sole source of political power (2000:6). But the continued significance of ethnicity, which is viewed as having primordial significance, in the so-called modern West setting needs to be appreciated. Ethnicity, far from vanishing in the face of modernisation continues to be recokened in the project of nation-building.
The Instrumental Position

The instrumental or the circumstantial approach holds that ethnicity is an artifact, created by individuals or groups to bring together a group of people for some common purpose. It is used as an instrument to mobilise the members of a group to achieve socio-economic and political objectiveness.

It would be clear from the above that the primordial approach seeks psychological explanation for the behavioural phenomenon of ethnic solidarity whereas the circumstantial approach prefers a behavioural explanation. The proponents of each approach have tended to argue that the other is restricted as to the range of ethnic behaviour it can explain. The problem with the primordial approach, the circumstantialists argues, is that while it can explain the persistence of ethnic identity over time, it can not address the issue of why such identity can and indeed often does change or fluctuate in its intensity as well as be differentially distributed at a given moment of time throughout a single group-a deficiency that they believe is remedied by their focus on social circumstances surrounding this identity or rather on changing or differential social circumstances. That is, they argue, that a constant can not explain a variable. The primordialists, for their part, contend, that while the circumstantialists can explain why ethnicity fluctuates over time they are less able to account for the fact that despite its temporal fluctuations, ethnicity often persists, sometimes over centuries; changing circumstances can explain the fluctuation but only primordial
sentiments can account for its persistence. They argue, in other words, a variable can not explain a constant.

We would now proceed to examine some of the studies associated with the instrumental position. After that we would take up some related approaches such as rational-choice, optional situational and oppositional approaches for a brief examination. The last mentioned approach i.e. the opposition approach is said to provide the basis for the synthesis of primordial and instrumental approaches.

It needs to be reiterated here that an examination of all these approaches would lead to the logical conclusion that ethnicity would persist even in the context of modernisation as it serves certain instrumental purposes.

One of the most pronouncedly instrumentalist positions has been taken by Abner Cohen. The whole burden of Cohen's argument presented in his Custom and Politics in Urban Africa (1969) is that ethnicity is instrumental, that is, the reasons for the assertion of an ethnic identity by a group are essentially economic and political rather than psychological. Thus his position is clearly anti-primordialist. He demonstrates this with a study of Hausa Traders who are involved in the trade in Kola nuts and cattle in the Southern city of Ibadan (Nigeria). The assertion of ethnic identity among the Hausas is relatively recent, say from 1950s. He identifies two factors as being responsible for the strong ethnicity of the Hausas in Ibadan. First there are internal causes which revolve around the need to maintain a monopoly of
the Kola nut and cattle traders. Hausa traders in Ibadan (where they are producers) send kola nuts (which are chewed as a stimulant and much used thought West Africa) to Hausa traders in the north where they are in heavy demand (1969:131). Conversely, the cattle are sent to the South for consumption there. It serves their business interests the best if they use the ethnic networks to control their end of the two traders. Secondly, there are the external causes. There has been certain amount of erosion in the political autonomy of the Ibadan (which was there during the indirect colonial rule) following the blossoming of Nigerian national politics (an illustration of modernisation). As a response to this they defined and asserted their ethnic identity. He uses the expression 'Retribalisation' to describe this process.

Michael Hector views the growth of ethnic solidarity among the people Celtic fringe of Great Britain as a response to economic, political and cultural marginalisation. He notes: “The spatially uneven wave of modernisation over state territory creates relatively advanced and less advanced groups takes place. As a consequences of this initial fortuitous distribution of resources and power between the two groups, the superordinate group, or the core, seeks to stabilise and monopolise its advantages through policies aiming at the institutionalisation of the existing stratification system” (Hector 1975:9). Conversely, individuals from the less advanced group are denied access to three roles. This stratification system, which may be termed as a cultural division of labour, contributes to the
development of distinctive ethnic identification in the two groups. Ethnicity, then is used as a tool to overcome such marginalisation.

His thesis, as stated above, while honed on the British experience, stimulated considerable research elsewhere. It had the dual advantage of providing a possible explanation of the otherwise bewildering recrudescence of ethnic nationalism in Europe while making it a response to colonialism. It thereby facilitated relating contemporary first world development to anti-colonialist nationalist movements in the third world-a crucial link in positing a macro theory of nationalism. However, despite its initial promise and subsequent refinement (Hechter 1985), the Hechter thesis has elicited as much criticism as praise. Some have questioned its applicability to Great Britain (Douglass 1988:193) and attempts to apply it on the continent have been equally controversial. Indeed, the Catalán and Basque cases have proven to be particularly thorny, since it may be argued that in both instances the ethnonationalist movements constitute a defence of economic and political privilege vis-à-vis other regions of Spain (Douglass 1985:5).

Daniel Bell, an incredibly perceptive sociologist, has identified certain social and political trends which have given rise to predominance of ethnicity in the so called modern world (Bell:141-174). First, the growing tendency towards more inclusive identities manifested more recently in the globalisation of economy and culture has immeasurably affected certain primordial attachments such as kinship, tribe ethnic group etc. from which individuals used to derive their psychological anchorages. In these
circumstances one would expect the rise of parochial forces to provide emotions and ethnicity is one of them. Secondly, the increasing politicisation of the decisions that affect the communal lives of persons makes the need for group organisation more necessary and ethnic grouping becomes a ready means of demanding group rights or providing defence against other groups. Thirdly, the inexorable break up of the traditional authority structures and the previous affective social units-nations and class-has made the ethnic attachment more salient. The diverse pressures that the nation is being subjected to have made it considerably weak. Similarly class ceased to be a revolutionary force, as predicted by Marx, as a result of introduction of welfare measures by both the developed world and now the developing world.

But why should ethnicity become prominent? Why not other categories such as class? Because, as he suggested, ethnicity can combine an affective tie with an interest. What groups such as class which speak of only objective material interests lack are emotions and affective ties. Similarly groups which harp only on emotional ties can not be salient because interests which provide sustaining power to such groups are absent. On the contrast, ethnic groups successfully combine an affective tie with an interest.

One can notice an attempt on the part of Bell to transcend the primordialist and instrumentalist debate. But at the same time the instrumentalist perspective seems more predominant as he stresses the point that ethnic grouping becomes vital in demanding rights and privileges.
Glazer and Moynihan in their highly influential work Beyond the Melting Pot (1970, 1963) a study of ethnic groups of New York city, attempted to demolish the hypothesis that ethnicity was disappearing. It was thought that 'assimilation' or "Americanisation" of immigrants was only a matter of time as all identities would meet. But the argument put forward by Glazer and Moynihan that identities had not disappeared but instead were asserting themselves had refuted the melting pot hypothesis.

They made their instrumentalist position absolutely clear in their 1975 collection of essays Ethnicity: Theory and Experience. In the Introduction to the essays, they argued that ethnic conflicts (an expression of enhanced ethnicity) have only increased in intensity in the last decade or so (1975b:6). Examples are conflicts between Anglophone and Francophone in Canada, Catholic and Protestants in North Ireland, Chinese and Malay in Malaysia etc. They basically offer two reasons for this.

The first is the evolution of the welfare state in the more advanced economies of the world and the advance of the socialist state in the underdeveloped economies. The State becomes a crucial and direct arbiter of economic well-being as well as of political status and whatever flows from that in both the circumstances. As a matter of strategic efficiency it is not beneficial to assert claims on the basis of a very general category such as workers, peasants, while-collar employees etc. Any party doing that would not be able to reap rich political benefits. On the other hand asserting claims on behalf of an ethnic group which is supposed to combine an affective tie
with an interest makes a lot of political sense. It would help a political party to reap rich political harvest.

The second reason is the determination of every group to assert its own norms against the norms of other and dominant groups. Here the influence of Ralf Dahrendorf is unmistakable. Success of an individual and by extension of the group is determined by various factors. In this respect all individuals and all groups do not experience equal amount of achievement. Groups which are left behind distance themselves and assert their own distinct norms. This is where immense possibilities for ethnic groups to become salient exist. Giving the example of India, they say that language conflicts in India today have little to do with the right to the public use of the language, as did so many struggles of the Nineteenth Century when, for example, there were efforts to Russify the Russian Empire. Today they have more to do with which language user shall have the best opportunity to get which job. Thus ethnic groups have clearly emerged as an interest group: an instrumentalist position par excellence.

Tom Nairain, following Ernest Gellner makes use of the notion of uneven development to account for the rising ethnic nationalism. In his assessment, bourgeoisie are the original motor of nationalism. However, nationalism can only emerge when the dilemma of under development is refracted into a given society perceived in a certain way; and then acted upon (1977:100). And the medium through which this occurs is invariably, in the first place, an intelligentsia-functioning of course, as the most
conscious and awakened part of the middle classes. But how were the relatively poor middle class and intelligentsia of the less advanced countries to resist the domination of foreign rich bourgeoisie; only by mobilising people along cultural lines and harping on their ethnic diversities.

On the basis of the situation obtaining in Trinidad and Guyana, Malcolm Cross (1978) argues that ethnicity is a complex phenomenon and structural variables must be considered as causative in ethnic resurgence or ethnic conflict. He harps on the point that structured inequalities with high correlations with ethnic groups will be conducive to ethnic resurgence whether the context is that of a developed or underdeveloped society. The implication being that modernisation or development need not reduce the salience of ethnicity.

Kasfir's (1979) main concern is to reject the primordialist approach to understand ethnicity. The primordialist approach treats, as explained elsewhere, ethnic ties as 'given' as having ineffable and affective significance. According to him, ethnic ties are invented depending upon circumstances. Hence his usage of the term ethnic entrepreneurs who consciously manipulate ethnicity. Modernisation opens up innumerable possibilities. In his own words, "ethnic identity or group may be carefully constructed by an upwardly mobile entrepreneur looking for a political base or by introducing ethnic disputes into the civil service or university".

The importance of 'structured contextuality' in producing specific race relations is elaborated in the early works of John Rex (1973, 1983).
From our point of view it will be useful to replace race relations with ethic relations in Rex's (1983) model. There are three characteristic elements in 'race relations' (ethnic relations) situation:

1. a situation of differentiation, inequality and pluralism between groups.

2. the possibility of clearly distinguishing between such groups by their physical appearance, their culture or occasionally merely by their ancestry.

3. the justification and explanation of this discrimination in terms of some kind of implicit or explicit theory, frequently but not always of a biological kind.

It is in specific economic and political contexts that ethnicity is materially and symbolically constructed. For example, in a situation where there is close correspondence between ethnic classification and economic functions, ethnicity is bound to happen. Historically, in the U.S.A. Africans were enslaved to carry out plantation field labour, in Fiji Indians were imported to tend the cane fields, in Malaysia the Chinese formed a class of traders and shopkeepers. In situations like these solidarity along ethnic groups would help in their economic activities. Similarly, different ethnic groups have differential access to political resources. To compete successfully for political power, ethnicity is invoked as a mobilizing tool. In other words, politics are 'ethnically-informed' in some characteristic settings.
According to one of his recent writings, one of the important factors promoting ethnicity is international migration whose pace has increased significantly (1996:103). There are groups migrating to a number of countries in search of better opportunities. He refers to Punjabi Sikh migration by way of illustration. According to him, Punjabi Sikhs are an enterprising group who are keen exploiting opportunities available to them. Modernist impulses are inbuilt in their way of looking at things. What is of interest to us is the fact that Sikkism remains an important basis of solidarity among them. It produces a degree of solidarity even among the families who would otherwise be simply competitors. In fact, the wider cultural (ethnic) networks are fully exploited by the Punjabi people in pursuance of their economic objective (Rex 1996:107). Those who can draw upon their own cultural resources usually tend to do better than those who can not in the nation state of settlement.

Anthony D. Smith (1984) takes the position that the two approaches primordial and instrumental should not be mutually exclusive and indeed, in concrete behavioral contexts one might find both cultural and strategic elements at play. Referring specifically to the context of nationalism Smith note: “We find that ethnic and national phenomena take so many forms and appear in so many milieu that neither a “Heraclitan” approach which regards them as completely malleable and subject to external flux, nor a “Paridean” standpoint that would view them as forever fixed and immutable, can do justice to their variety and complexity” (1984:288).
However, arguing from an instrumentalist position subsequently, he regards the rising ethnic consciousness as a result of the failure experienced by ethnic minority professionals to be co-opted into the state apparatus. In his view, as the modern scientific state expanded, aspirants flocked to the new opportunities in the bureaucracy because though recruitment is supposed to be based on merit, some prior communal sentiments persisted. Perceiving that they were systematically barred from the avenues of social mobility, the frustrated ethnic minority professionals sought alternatives to the existing state structure. Themselves proponents of the scientific state, they were uncomfortable with reversion to a traditional order dominated by discredited religious doctrine. Hence they invoked common ethnicity as a kind of primordial tie. This ethnic revival, then becomes the basis for a new form of political radicalism. Thus he clearly identifies modernization (development of scientific state) as being responsible for the growth of ethnicity.

Pi-Sunyer's (1985) analysis of the use of primordial cultural symbols by political leadership in a bid to capture power makes an interesting reading. His analysis is based on an examination of 1977 Parliamentary elections in Spain. His analysis is neither purely primordialist nor instrumentalist. His argument is that new societies or those undergoing a process of transformation reshape old meanings (of symbols) or invent new ones to satisfy the requirements of social cohesion, corporate action and individual conduct. Political leadership tends to use primordial symbols to
further their own goals. These symbols are already endowed with a general meaning long before the election; making his theory sound primordialist. However he subsequently argues that these symbols become politically salient when they are manipulated by the political leadership. What emerges from this analysis is that he treats the conscious use of symbols by the political leadership as being circumstantial, while implying that the meaning of these same symbols to the masses is primordial.

The 1960s and 1970s saw the 'revival' of ethnicity in the United States, a fact that was noticed and celebrated by authors such as Glazer and Moynihan, as we have already noted. Anthony Cohen (1985) too notices this but approaches it from a different perspective. According to him, 'community' as a term and focus of attention had been replaced by 'class' in 1960s among sociologists and that in turn 'class' had been displaced by a focus on gender, race and employment status (1985:76). But he argues that these so-called shifts could be due to use of some academic categories at the cost of others. By contrast, "it is empirically undeniable that the 10970s and 1980s have seen in the Western World a massive upsurge in sub-national militancies founded on ethnic and local communities" (1985:76). On the whole, his approach to ethnicity could broadly be described as instrumentalist. This would logically lead to the conclusion that ethnic assertiveness can happen in a modern setting. For example, he says that faced by national and international units (such as the European Union), people become "politically introspective and reach back to a more
convincing level of society with which to identify” (1985:106). Which particular level they reach back to would appear to depend on the specificities of local context: it could be an ethnic identity a sub-national one, or simply the familiarity of a local community. Whatever it is, it is in preference to a national identity. The clear suggestion is, then, that people assert community, whether in the form of ethnicity or of locality, when they recognise in it the most adequate medium for the expression of their interests.

The question which motivates Wallman to study ethnicity is: Why does ethnicity appear more salient in some contexts than in others? The question is posed as much for its practical policy relevance as for its theoretical significance and arises out of her observation and ethnographic investigation in the areas of London: Battersea and Bow. Both have similarly 'mixed' ethnic population and superficially resemble each other in other ways. Yet Battersea is represented as an area in which 'ethnicity counts for rather little' while Bow is represented as an area of continuous race conflicts and polarisation. She says a number of variables are responsible for this but insist that all variables are interlinked and non is overly determinate.

She does not presuppose the universal significance of ethnicity but seeks to identify the kinds of contexts within it is likely to be manifest regardless of whether to the analyst there is any obvious 'rationality' or
instrumental gain at work. The implication is quite clear. Ethnicity can manifest even in context which can be described as modern.

J. Pathy (1988) examines the situation of ethnic minorities in Orissa from the perspective of political economy, considering ethnic expression a product of uneven development in the process of nation-building and approaching the class dimension of ethnic phenomena. The instrumentality of ethnicity is stressed.

Rajini Kothari (1988) argues along similar lines. The growing salience of ethnicity is attributed to the homogenizing thrust of the process of modernisation. Modernisation with its emphasis on homogenisation is perceived to pose a great danger to the distinct cultural traditions of a group and mobilisation of people along ethnic lines is a response to this.

The recent research conducted by Leila (1989) on the Gujaratis in Madras city also deals with the persistence of ethnicity in an urban context. She makes the point that despite modernisation and urbanisation ethnicity continues. She demonstrates this among the Gujaratis. She argues that ethnicity has more salience than ever before because of the increased pace of migration. She has been able to prove quite convincingly that ethnicity comes out clearly as reflected in the interaction pattern between a migrant group (Gujaratis) and other groups in the city of Madras (now known as Chennai).

Eugene Roosens in his recent book Creating Ethnicity (1989) takes the position that leaders in different ethnic groups do not simply sue
symbols to evoke a feeling of ethnic belonging for its own sake, having conscious purposes (a clear instrumentalist position), deliberately draw selectively on an ethnic heritage in order to unite the members of a collectivity in the service of some purpose. This is the theory of ethonogenesis which suggests that ethnicity is simply not 'given', but is more or less deliberately created in order to create a solitary group to pursue a project. One can usefully employ such a conceptualisation to account for the frequency and intensity with which communal riots take place in India. It is clear for a student of contemporary history political and economic elites play a great role in mobilising people along religious lines to be able to pursue their own agenda.

Paul Brass (1991) argues that ethnicity and nationalism are not 'given' but social and political constructions. They have become major forces shaping the modern world and structure and stability of contemporary states. They arise under particular circumstances and he has tried to identify those circumstances which give rise to ethnicity and nationalism. One of such situations is the one in which there is competition between elites of the dominant groups and those of the non-dominant groups and between the State and elites. The modern democratic framework provides ample opportunities for groups aspiring to go up the political ladder provided they are able to organise themselves better. Elites of the non-dominant groups tend to harp on the cultural forms, values, practices of their groups to mobilize the members of their groups thereby strengthening their political
base. He takes pains to emphasise the fact that his understanding of ethnicity comes closer to the 'instrumentalist' rather than 'primordialist' view of ethnicity. Talking about the rise of Muslim separatism in South Asia, he argues that instrumentalist rather than primordialist explanation serves to explain better the rise of Muslim Separatism in South Asia. He clearly shows how Muslim ethnic identity evolved out of elite competition between Hindus and Muslims.

The fact that a group of people share certain things in common such as ancestry, language and culture by itself does not produce ethnic identity. It depends upon how ancestry is viewed, culture is constructed and language is used. Thus ethnicity or ethnic identities are essentially constructed categories. The construction of these identities is a continuous process. Political modernisation does in fact contribute to the construction of ethnic categories instead of blocking it. This fact comes out clearly from the Khan and Loh Kok Wah's account of the Malaysian situation (1992). There are a group of people known as Kadazans who have sought to distinguish themselves from Malay Muslim. The political leaders sought to emphasise the similarities among themselves and common differences from the Malay Muslims and by doing that they began to achieve a measure of Kadazan unity.

But their position began to be threatened when the early Kadazan government was replaced by a Muslim-led govt. in Sahah (where they are based). Some of the steps such as declaration of Islam as the official
language of Sahah taken by the Muslim Govt. in Sahah began to create a feeling of uncertainty about their status in Sahah. When Malays began to benefit immensely from the openings which development provides, the loss of position felt by Kadazans began to express itself as the defence of Kadazan language and the promotion of cultural activities such as the encouragement of the celebration of the Harvest Festival. One can not conceive of ethnicity unless the so-called shared attributes are mobilised in social transactions. Such a mobilisation can take place in modern settings also.

Taylor (1922, 1992) examines how the French in Canada who were historically subordinated to the Anglo British (Protestant), began to become conscious of their inferior position and to assert their distinctive identity. To buttress their claim, they drew on their separate history, language and culture. They gradually began to demand autonomy or independence for the province of Quebec. It was made in the context of increasing modernisation among the French in Canada. French-Canadianness was constantly being invented and reinvented, but it was not simply an invented ethnicity: it was grounded in the historical and present experience of a population who have some basis on which to call themselves a people.

S.L. Sharma attributes the growing salience of ethnicity to three important modern trends viz., politicisation, centralisation and development-orientation. Growing politicisation enhances awareness about political significance of ethnic groups thus stimulating ethnic impulses. Increasing
centralisation is perceived to pose dangers to the ethnic distinctiveness and hence the tendency of various ethnic groups to make renewed efforts to protect their cultural distinctiveness. The skewed development process initiated by the Indian State has engendered inter-ethnic disparities. The deprived ethnic groups take recourse to ethnic militancy.

One of the recent books on ethnicity comes from Marcus Banks (1996). Though one does not notice an attempt to understand the relationship between modernisation and ethnicity in a direct way, one derives valuable insights about their relationship from his effort to compile a number of studies, both descriptive and analytical, on ethnicity, racism and nationalism, particularly in the context of the United States and Britain. The persistence of ethnicity even in a modern context is constantly stressed and a number of studies are mentioned to substantiate his point of view. 'The 'modernity of ethnicity,' if one may use that expression is harped on in his book, though in an indirect way.

Though one does not get original inputs on the relationship between modernisation and ethnicity from Banks, one finds his book extremely interesting as he draws heavily on different studies. One also notices that his own position, if one can try to understand him, is instrumentalist.

Though Oomen (1997) in his book Citizenship, Nationality and Ethnicity basically attempts to make a clear conceptual distinction among ethnic group, nation and states which he believes are subsumed under one another. Some of the cases which he mentions would throw a lot of light on
the growing salience of ethnicity in the contemporary times. Let us take his analysis of the Fijian situation as an illustration. The main actors in Fiji are Fiji-Fijians (natives) and Fiji-Indians (Indians who went to Fiji and settled down there). Though equality was promised, Indians could not own the land they cultivated. This is paradoxical because the Indians were engaged mainly in agriculture, that is, as workers in sugar plantation. Thus ownership and cultivation of land was clearly disengaged.

There has always been a political tussle between these groups, each fighting for political supremacy. Fiji-Fijians think it is their natural right to rule in their ancestral homeland whereas Fiji-Indians say Fiji is their adopted homeland and therefore they too have every right to rule the country. What has accentuated the ethnicity among Fiji-Indians is that fact that though, in general, they are more educated than the Fiji-Fijians, they are systematically excluded from certain crucial sectors of the State. The fact that they are not allowed to own the land they cultivate and also they are not allowed to assume important responsibilities in the governance of the State can not but aggravate feelings between Fiji-Fijians and Fiji-Indians leading to the assertion of their ethnicity as reflected in the support they extend to the National Federation Party (N.F.P.) which represents their interests.

Considerable body of evidence has been accumulated by Valery Tishkov (1997) on the then Soviet Union indicates that cultural differences had significantly diminished under the influence of the centralised state and ‘official’ communist values. The then Soviet State undoubtedly mistrusted
religion and discouraged, suppressed and persecuted the faithful and Russification brought Russian as the lingua franca to a multilingual country. But it was also part of a process of secularization and modernisation as people across the Soviet Union adopted Russian as the language of social mobility. In Muslim areas of the country, he argues, Islamic faith and observance was minimal and remains so after the collapse of the Soviet State.

But the new political elites in different local states (which emerged as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union) seek to restore religious observance and faith—at least outwardly among a largely indifferent population and to preserve the titular language as a cultural confirmation of the new nation-state. Cultural particularism is the construction of a State elite conscious of the value of cultural identities in securing support for the state. It is this, rather than the theory of the upsurge of suppressed cultural difference as a result of freedom from Imperial control, that is the key factor here.

The ethnicity paradox, used by Lal (1983, 1990, 1995) refers to the finding that in American society participation in ethnic institutions and the celebration of separate group identities, although valued in and of themselves are at the same time strategic devices for facilitating full participation in economic, political and social life and a fair share of those resources and values that are sought by members of the wider community. The concept of an ethnicity paradox stems from the observations of Park,
Thomas, Znanieck and Wirth (1995). The support the organised immigrant communities render to members is of two kinds. Firsts, it provides practical services such as getting accommodation etc. Secondly, the organised immigrant communities contribute to the self-esteem of the otherwise demoralised (and deracinated) individuals by raising the status of the group as a whole. The whole point he is trying to make is that ethnicity is used as a device to secure certain benefits.

Fenton (1999) in an attempt to locate ethnicity in the modern context speaks of three key historical trajectories within which ethnic formations have emerged in the modern world: Slavery and its aftermath, colonialism and post-colonial social orders and the formation of modern national states. Within these, he defines, following Eriksen (1993b) five types of ethnic groups in the modern world: urban minorities, proto-nations, ethnic groups in plural societies, indigenous minorities and post-slavery minorities. Urban minorities, ethnic groups in plural societies and post-slavery minorities have all arisen from the context of labour migration, varying from free movement, through degrees of compulsion, to unfree movement. Among proto-nations the central problematic is political and among indigenous peoples there are leading interests at stake which are both economic and political-economic marginalisation, land dispossession and political autonomy. Among urban minorities, one can include migrant worker population in American and European cities and in the economies of the newly industrialising societies as an example. Proto-nations include those peoples who have and make a
claim to be nations. The French-speaking Quebecois within Malaysia can be a good example of ethnic groups in plural societies. They have migrated due to both voluntary and involuntary reasons. Indigenous minorities are those people who have been disposed by colonial settlement. Maoris of New Zealand can be a good example. Post-slavery minorities include those people who are descendants of people formerly enslaved in the New World of which blacks of African-American are a classic instance.

Then he proceeds to mention economic and political factors as the main factors for the increased salience of ethnicity. In this context he looks at the relationship between ethnicity and class structure in Malaysia, Hawaii’ and Britain and ethnicity and political institutions in Hawaii, Britain and Continent Europe (p.192.).

If one looks at the relationship between ethnicity and class structure in the case of Malaysia, for example, Malayas who consider themselves as the ‘natural’ indigenous people of the country are identified with rural peasantry, though some have entered the low middle-class clerical and service occupations. The Chinese and Indians, on the other hand, are identified with two sectors-tin mining and rubber production. Both have subsequently diversified into business and trade and began to form a major chunk of commercial and capitalist class and also professional occupations such as the law and media.
Looking at the disadvantageous position of Malayas, they are being favoured as a calculated instance of State Policy (Lin 1985). There has been sustained pressure by Malayas to extract as much benefits as possible from the Government. Needless to add, they use their Malaya ethnicity as a mobilising tool to reap political and economic benefits. Sometimes their overzealousness results in ethnic riots (Fenton 1999: 146).

Nagel (1995) in a review of resource competition theories that explain the growing ethnicity in terms of competition for resources puts forward three important propositions.

1. Ethnicity is a problematic social category, the boundaries and meaning of which are negotiated by in-group and out-group members.

2. To the extent that resource competition in society is organised along ethnic (rather than class, gender, age etc.) lines, increased competition (increases the likelihood of)
   a. ethnic identification (strengthened ethnic boundaries)
   b. racism and prejudice (discrimination and hatred)
   c. inter-ethnic conflict (international and inter-group violence)
   d. ethnic mobilisation (movements and collective action)

3. Increased interethnic contact (integration) in the presence of ethnic resource competition increases the likelihood of
   a. ethnic identification
   b. racism and prejudice
c. interethnic conflict
d. ethnic mobilisation

Then he proceeds to enumerate both historical factors such as cultural division of labour, spilt labour market etc. and contemporary factors such as struggle for access to political office and control over political policies which are responsible for ethnic competition resulting in a heightened sense of ethnicity. The point to be remembered is that such factors are present in all the societies both modern and the so-called "non-modern societies." To give one example, affirmative action policies are followed both in India and USA. In both countries, political policies are used to provide some reparation for historically exploited and disadvantaged groups, untouchables in India and the African-Americans in the USA. In both countries, these affirmative action policies promoted ethnic mobilisation among the other non-designated minorities who wished to receive similar treatment: religious and linguistic minorities in India and Latin Native Americans and Asian Americans in the United States (Darnell and Parikh 1988: Lopez and Espirit 1990). In both countries, these political reparation policies promoted a backlash movement by the dominant majority. Upper caste Hindus in India and whites in the United States (Burstein 1991: Desai 1992). One conclusion that emerges from his essay is that ethnicity in the modern world remains a dynamic and viable basis for acquiring home rule or obtaining favourable political policies within the existing nation-state.
A variant of the instrumental position is the rational-choice theory (Banton 1983, 1995). The rational-choice theory, in its application to racial and ethnic relations and probably in most sociological application, rests on four presuppositions (Banton 1995: 479). First, individuals act so as to obtain maximum net advantages. Secondly action at one moment in time influences and modify the alternatives between which individuals will have to choose at subsequent moments. Thirdly, socialisation causes humans to recognise their dependence on others and the need to forge selfish gratification at times. Humans can develop their potential only if they are brought up in social groups. Fourthly, to attain their ends, individuals will at times be obliged to join with others in collective action. The theory proposed by Banton can be used to explain, for example, the persistence of ethnic identifies which will help them gain maximum advantage.

In this context, one can also refer to the optional-situational perspective on ethnicity whose philosophical roots can be traced to symbolic-interactionism. The main argument put forward by those subscribing to the optional situational perspective is that ethnicity can and within certain limits be assumed or put aside by conscious choice (Gleason as quoted in Lal 1995: 434). The optional situational perspective sees ethnic identity as a process “continuously created and recreated adopted and shed, according to the requirements of different social situations” (Peter Berger quoted in Lal 1995: 434).
The emphasis on choice and context is reiterated in the American sociologist Orando Patterson (1975) contention that “the ethnic group only exists where members consider themselves to belong to such as a group: a conscious sense of belonging is critical” (p.309). The optional situational concept of identity can, as Patterson suggests in his essay, accommodates the phenomenon of “ethnicity by consent”.

This perspective draws our attention to why and how identities do or do not get constructed in situations of varying degrees of constraint. As Ballard and Kalra succinctly observed “Exclusion constraints, that is what is all about. What is too often forgotten, however, is that no matter what their focus - be it descent, physical appearance, nationality, gender, occupational, age, caste or whatever - our human capacity to resist these forces is not only immense, but it tends to increase as conditions become ever more severe. Hence behaviour is never wholly determined by forces that constraint it, such that people become helpless pawns, wholly unable to negotiate the terms of their own existence”. (1994: 485).

What is really important to understand about this perspective is that it conceives of construction ethnic identities as an ongoing process in which individuals or groups see themselves and define themselves with respect to others in many different ways. From this perspective, ethnicity is an ongoing process and it would not decline. Its form may change, however, depending upon the situation.
This approach is preferred by some for essentially four reasons. First, because it is grounded in a subjectivist sociological framework that takes into account the points of view of the actor rather than relying on the sense that the sociologist makes of the actor’s world: the optional situational approach is less likely to overlook the complexity in the ways in which people see themselves and others, especially in seemingly homogenous groups. Secondly, the optional-situational perspective treats the emergence of identities such as Black, mixed race, or ethnicity by consent as normal features of multi-ethnic societies (Black 1993b: Benson 1980: Tizard and Phonix 1993). Thirdly, because it is based on the process of collective definition discussed earlier in the optional-situational approach. Ethnic identity is able to anticipate and deal with changes in self-definition and redefinition of others as an instance of emergent meaning and as a usual feature of collective life. Fourthly, the optional situational approach brings into the ambit of discussions an aspect of identity that has almost been eclipsed in the literature during the 1970s and 1980s namely “the significant exit” (Lal 1995: 436). It is possible that under certain circumstances, an individual might wish to leave his or her ethnic identity behind to replace it with another or to refuse either the support or the disabilities conferred by such an identity. For example, Dalits have tried to escape from the punishing features of casteism through a conversion to Buddhism. Modern urban societies, unlike many traditional rural societies have offered opportunities for individual and groups to effect ‘significant exits.’
There have been some attempts to transcend the primordialist-instrumentalist dichotomy. Prominent among them is the oppositional approach suggested by Edward Spicer (1971). The oppositional approach is supposed to provide the basis for the unification of primordial and instrumental positions. According to it neither the primordialist approach nor the instrumentalist approach alone would satisfactorily explain the persistence of ethnicity. He makes use of two central concepts: the persistent identity system and the oppositional process. The oppositional process or the situation of conflict between groups over resources both structural and cultural, leads to consolidation of ethnic sentiments and this in turn leads to a high degree of internal solidarity. In the absence of oppositional process, persistent identity systems fail to develop. He cites as an example the Jews, Basque, Irish, Welsh etc. who faced constant pressures for economic, political or religious assimilation into the larger societies and successfully resisted those pressures. By applying this model, one can gain a better understanding of the situation obtaining in Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Sri Lanka and the then Soviet Union.

Having reviewed some of the relevant studies concerned with both the decline and the persistence of ethnicity in the context of modernisation, we now proceed to our first empirical step of identifying the persons who could be regarded as modern. Subsequently we would examine their views on different issues which are reflective of their ethnic consciousness or the lack of it.