Introduction

The creation of new states particularly after World War II has made nation and state as synonyms. It is very often heard countries being described as nations when actually the word states should have been used for them. The Constitution of the Republic of Argentina bears the title of the "Argentine Nation." Similarly, the name United Nations is a misnomer, for it is an international organisation of sovereign states and not nations.

Inspite of the general acceptance of the principle of a 'Nation-State,' there are quite a good number of states in which the population is heterogeneous. Asia and Africa are ethnically more heterogeneous than Europe. As Emerson observes, "The new states of Asia and Africa are not yet nations in being but only nations in hope." This is because much of Europe's nationality problem was 'solved' by wars and population transfers over the span of several centuries, particularly after industrial revolution.

1. Rupert Emerson, From Empire to Nation, Boston, Harvard University Press, 1960, p.34.

However, as the prevalence of numerous ethnic movements in Western Europe illustrates, not all ethnic aspirations were satisfied. Especially notable are the problems in United Kingdom with Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, in Spain with the Basques, and Catalans; and in France with Bretons, Corsicans, and also with the Basques.

In the former Soviet Union, the advent of Glasnost under Mikhail Gorbachev unleashed movements for secession. The Union of Soviet Republics is dead and the fourteen non-Russian republics are now independent, although twelve of them have joined a loose common-wealth. However, since many of the republics contain ethnic minorities, independence has not ended ethnic tensions in the region. Ethnic problems have reached explosive levels in other former socialist countries of Europe, particularly the erstwhile Yugoslavia. Four of its republics have declared independence (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Macedonia). Czechs and Slovaks have partitioned the former Czechoslovakia into its respective parts; the Hungarian minority in Romania

faces discrimination, as does the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. In the United States, such demand tended to be less legitimate because of preference for individual rights against group rights. But in recent years affirmative actions and policies have legitimized and encouraged such group claims.

By the time, the states of Asia and Africa got their independence, the process of nation-building had taken a long span in the Western countries. Nationalism in third world countries came as a new phenomenon. It was a movement more against western colonialism than for a positive, coherent national identity. Unlike the European countries, where nationalism accompanied or followed industrial and democratic revolutions, and common language and culture were key elements in the growth of nation states, the states of third world found nationalism planted in essentially diverse traditional social soil.

In Asia, the South Asian countries have witnessed, many ghastly spectacles of bloodshed and conflicts among the ethnic minorities and the

The problem is serious in the region as is evident from the emergence of Bangladesh. There are obvious common features in the history and shared culture of the region—a region which is populated by more than a billion people and which reflects an extraordinary ethnic and religious diversity. There has also been a common history of conquest, of migration, of religious tolerance and persecution and a rich and shared cultural tradition. The most common history of conquest, known to the entire region is the history of British colonialism and the imposition of a unitary state on a complex and plural sub-continent. It is this creation of a modern state that heralded the widespread assertion of ethnic and communal identity. Both during colonial rule and after the imposition of the nation-state system following independence, statecraft implied the homogenisation of society. All forms of identity and the different modes of social cohesion were seen as transitional modes which had to be subsumed with the state-citizen discourse. It is being argued here that it is precisely


6. For details, see *Ibid*.

7. For details, see Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*. Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994 (Chapter IV).
this external act of artificial boundary making and of the uneven development of capitalism that created the counter demand for the recognition of different identities - a demand that those in power attempted to cynically manipulate or crush. Britain was the only single colonial power which succeeded in creating a single administrative unit, and which throughout its colonial rule of over two hundred years, converted the entire economy into a colonial economy while preserving subsistence agriculture. In some regions, it introduced plantation enclaves with migrant and native labour, along with some industrial pockets near the ports. How was a relatively small and distant colonial power, able to rule over such a vast empire? It was a colossal exercise in managing ethnic diversity and religious pluralism.

It was not only the British superiority in weaponry and sea power, but also the way in which the British were able to play on the mosaic of religious and ethnic diversities in the region. Playing one against the other was the centerpiece of British diplomacy. To secure loyalty and allegiance, the British succeeded in building a web of Patron-Client connections.

relationship which spanned entire ethnic networks. The policy of divide and rule however, was not uniform, for it naturally adapted to existing ethnic balance and tensions within each given territory.

Some of the nations in the region such as India and Pakistan, and later Bangladesh were born out of extraordinary violence and bloodshed. Only Sri Lanka and Burma escaped the baptism of blood and painful cauterisation. India has all types of pluralities—religious, ethnic linguistic, cultural, tribal, regional etc. which have posed serious

problem in the process of nation-building and in some cases nationality based secessionist movements have taken place.

Most of the movements for autonomy in India since independence do not constitute national movements. But certain mass movements (for example, in Nagaland and Tamil Nadu) have arisen with a definite thrust towards secession which justifies their designation as a national movement and their participation as a nationality. Elsewhere in the sub-continent, the national question is crucial—there are nationalities within the multi-national state of Pakistan and there is the emergence of Tamil nationality in Sri Lanka. But, since such entities as nationality or nation are 'state of mind', they are all subject to potential transformation, to birth and to disappearance. The state can become a nation-state.

And the nation-state, with more difficulty, can regress


11. Achin Vanaik, *op. cit.* pp 5-6. However, I do not agree with this formulation of Vanaik, because in contemporary world once an ethnic national group emerges and launches its struggle, it is almost impossible that it will ever disappear i.e. the Tamil nationality and Naga nationality on the one hand and Kashmiri nationality on the other hand have always been active.
to simple statehood.

It was only in India that serious attempts were made to discuss a constitution which accommodated the plurality of its cultural heritage, in the creation of federal system based on linguistic and national diversity.

In Sri Lanka however, despite Tamil reservations and the demand for a federal system, or for greater regional autonomy, the Donoughmore Commission, transferred the British Constitutional model, with majoritarian rule, to the Sinhalese elite. The question of dealing with a major linguistic and religious minority was left entirely to the discretion of the ruling Sinhalese elite. The constitution under which the new dominion of Ceylon began its political existence, was the Saulbury Constitution, which was of British origin and was in contrast to the constitution drafted for India by her constituent assembly. The constitution adopted by Sri Lanka was the closest to the Westminster model than most other commonwealth constitutions.

The guiding principle behind the Saulbury constitution was that Sri Lanka was a

12. Ibid.
multi-racial democracy with a commitment to the maintenance of a liberal concept of a secular state. However, the rights of minorities were not adequately provided for in the Constitution. It did not incorporate a bill of rights. Nevertheless, at the time of the transfer of power the constitutional guarantees against discriminatory legislation seemed sufficiently reassuring for the minorities, largely because of the trust and confidence they reposed in D.S. Senanaike. However, the ethnic minority of Tamils concentrated in the North-East of Sri Lanka felt increasingly ignored because of discrimination against them within a few decades of transfer of power and consequently several Tamil political parties and other groups emerged on the political horizon for the protection of Tamil cultural and economic interests and also to fight against all sorts of discrimination. By the end of 1970 and the beginning of 1980 Tamil militant organisation virtually replaced the mainstream Tamil political parties participating in the democratic processes and the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) has established its supremacy for last two decades, inspite of the ruthless
supression by majority Sinhala government as also by the IPKP (Indian Peace Keeping Force) sent there under Rajiv-Jayewardene Accord.

It would not be too much of a generalisation to suggest that the ruling classes in the region, which inhabited the political space of the state were for a time at least secularist and modernist in their approach to state formation. With


political independence, the elites promised rapid modernisation and industrialisation along with increased political participation. The state was defined to be strongly interventionist, particularly in the management and direction of economic life irrespective of majority-minority composition. This is why, particularly during the first phase of the post-Independence programmes the plans and programmes for development were generally successful.

But the rhetoric of secular elites, with their liberal and individualist values and their vision of the modern enlightenment was strongly at odds with the primordialist and group claims of a heterogeneous and plural society. It was also at odds with the growing perception of unfulfilled promises among the oppressed who increasingly resorted to seek their self-validation in religion and ethnicity. It is precisely in the business of nation building and state formation, that ethnicity assumes a particular salience.

In the process of state formation, the various political structures allowed for the ethnici-
sation of the state. The majority communities be they religious or ethnic, captured the instruments of the state and gained hegemonic control over the state
apparatus. What evolved was a type of state formation, which was strongly bound by patron-client loyalties which became all pervasive where some groups are included in and the others are excluded.

State formation evolved by increasing the powers of the centre at the expense of the peripheries. And it is precisely in the mediation of the relations between hegemonic majorities and minorities by the Centre, that ethnic conflict has assumed prominence. Another tendency, which has acquired almost policy status is the way in which the state has interpreted ethnic or minority claims. Over the years, the degree of suspicion and intolerance had increased to a point where minority grievances have been met with increased police and military repression.

What is emerging in the region is the breakdown of state. There is a collapse of political authority at the lower strata of society. Consequent upon its increasing centralisation and tendency to look outward and the feeling of the consequent vacuum by a new 'genre' of politics that combines communal crimes, fundamentalist slogans and pure terrorism that is no longer extremist in any political sense but simply aims at killing, maiming and looting. Violence in many parts of the region has become an end in
itself. What is also emerging is that the dominant ethnic group which controls state power to the increasing exclusion of others is denouncing ethnicity as parochial and appealing to larger categories such as the 'nation-state.' There is a disturbing convergence in the region that has taken place where the legitimate criticism of a government action by, say, a minority, is perceived as a "threat to the national Integrity" and dealt with as such.

India and Sri Lanka have different political, social and cultural heritage. One of the common factors between the two is Tamil community. The Tamils as a minority exist both in India and Sri Lanka. Even Sri Lankan Tamil have their origin in

15. Forexample when the AASU (All Assam Students Union) and AGP (Assam Gana Parishad) started their agitation against foreigners, it was initially dubbed as 'anti-national' by the Government of India, though it is a different matter that late Rajiv Gandhi signed an Accord with the AASU and AGP to restore peace and normalcy there. The condition of the deprived and oppressed sections like the tribals, scheduled castes, the women, the landless labour etc. is miserable not only within the nation-state but also within their own national groups. For details of the oppressed groups within their own nations, see chapter Sixth, "The Nation and its Women," chapter Eighth, "the Nation and its Peasants," and chapter Ninth, "The Nation and its Outcasts" of Partha Chatterjee's book, op.cit. pp.116-134, pp.158-172 and pp.173-199.
India. Being a minority in both countries, the Tamil national question becomes important. The crux of my research problem is the "Question of Tamil Nationality in India and Sri Lanka during the period 1970-93." I have made an humble attempt to study the problem in a comparative perspective. Though there is a huge literature on Tamil problem, yet, there is a substantial scope for further research in this field, particularly in the context, of India and Sri Lanka, because the existing studies do not cover the question of Tamil nationality in India and Sri Lanka in comparative perspective. There are some aspects which need to be explored and have not been studied so far.

It is in this context that I feel my study, though a modest attempt, will make some contribution to the existing literature on this question. I am also of the opinion that the study of a theme like this has its own significance both academic and social. Academically, it is significant because, as stated earlier, hardly any study on the problem in a comparative perspective have been conducted so far. Socially, it is indeed a very significant problem affecting the relation between India and Sri Lanka and the people of both the states feel concerned about this problem.
The universe of my study covers both India and Sri Lanka. Since the problem of my research is question of Tamil nationality, thus by delimitisation, universe of my study is confined to the Tamils in these two states i.e. Tamil Nadu in India and North-Eastern part of Sri Lanka.

In executing the present research work, data have been collected from both primary as well as secondary sources. The study of documents, reports and agreements are considered as primary sources and that of the published books, articles published in research journals, magazines and newspapers as the secondary sources. However, the study has also some limitations. Firstly, the study lacks field work, because, it is conducted without any financial help from any agency, which constrained me from conducting field survey and made me dependent mostly on documents, reports and agreements as primary sources. Secondly, I had also to do away with review of literature, which was in around hundred typed pages on the specific instruction of my supervisor, because, in his opinion most of these books are referred in the text of the dissertation and therefore, it is an exercise in futility and only increases the bulk and size of the thesis. However, I want to mention here that, I have gone through the relevant literature. Thirdly, one full chapter
regarding the debate on nationality question both by liberal and marxist thinkers (foreigner and Indian) was also deleted.

To investigate the above mentioned issues, the study is divided into seven chapters including introduction and conclusion.

In the second chapter entitled "Theoretical Perspectives", different perspectives have been examined and an effort has been made to evolved a frame work to study the problem.

The third chapter, "Historical Perspective", traces the genesis and growth of the present problem. The social-economic and political structure of Tamils have also been studied in detail.

The fourth chapter, "Crystallisation of Tamil Nationality in India," gives a picture of the Tamil movements and struggles in India. It also studies the role played by tamil political parties in TamilNadu politics in India.

16. The view of my supervisor is that the various aspects of this debate are well known to all the scholars dealing with nationality question. There is no need of including a chapter of more than hundred pages on this debate. However, I am well aware of intricacies of this debate. Thus the first limitation is because of me, the other two are because of instructions of my supervisor.
The fifth Chapter, "Crystallisation of Tamil Nationality in Sri Lanka," examines the developments before and after independence which have crystallised the Tamil national question in Sri Lanka. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part deals with various acts of omission and commission on the part of majority Sinhalese ruling elites and reaction of different Tamil political parties and militant groups. The second part is exclusively devoted to the activities of militant organisations.

The Eighth chapter, "Indo-Srilanka relations in the context of Tamils 1980-93," provides a brief overview of the relations between India and Sri Lanka in the context of Tamils. It gives the details of various stresses and strains between the two countries because of this problem.

In the last chapter "Conclusion and Findings", I have briefly stated the main conclusions as also the findings which emerge out of this study.